Resource Guide for National Associations

How to establish a National Association

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1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose of the guide

This resource guide has been prepared by the Civicus Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA). In 2006, AGNA conducted a survey aimed at scoping national associations' needs, interests and activities[1]. This identified capacity building as a priority area of concern, for both national associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that compose their memberships. This resource guide has been developed in response to member feedback and suggestions.

The guide is intended to enable the board and staff of existing national associations to manage their organisations more effectively, and also to guide civil society leaders in countries where national associations of NPOs and NGOs do not exist. In this way, we hope that this resource guide will reduce the learning curve, avoid re-inventing the wheel and strengthen national associations around of the world.

This guide sets out to
- Provide basic information on national associations
- Spell out the process of establishing a national association
- Provide guidelines on how to run a national association
- Outline possible services offered by national associations
- Discuss relationships with other sectors and stakeholders

Within each of these sections the resource guide aims to:
- Equip you with essential tools
- Deepen your understanding with background information and facts and figures on the sector
- Provide inspiration through case studies
- Motivate you with practical hints and tips

It should be noted, however, that there is no single formula for success. Contexts and conditions vary and determine what is needed and possible. For that reason, we have focused on providing guidelines based on the experiences of existing national associations.

This document also intends to raise the profile of national associations by outlining the unique role that national associations play in civil society around the globe, as well as by highlighting their relations with the government and voluntary sectors, and their potential to contribute to the development and growth of a vibrant civil society.

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1 The survey results are based on responses from 47 national associations.

> **Information box: AGNA background**
> The CIVICUS Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) was launched in June 2004. This Affinity Group is designed to strengthen the key role that national associations play in fostering a strong and vibrant civil society. AGNA seeks to promote greater co-operation across national and regional boundaries and to strengthen the capacity of national associations' to pursue mutual interests.[1] AGNA provides a forum for national associations to share knowledge and experience in order to improve individual and collective impacts, and to create opportunities for joint actions on issues of mutual concern. AGNA seeks to increase the knowledge base of/about national associations in order to enable more informed and targeted activities by national associations in the future, and in order to capture lessons-learned and prevent the reinvention of the wheel.

1.2   Methodology

Primary and secondary resources were used to inform this toolkit. A review of literature was conducted on national associations, civil society and coalitions. Direct experiences in establishing and running national associations were collected from the websites of AGNA members, along with input from AGNA surveys, member questionnaires and consultations and in depth interviews with six AGNA members. Further a draft of the resource guide underwent a peer-review at AGNA's Annual General Meeting held on the 23rd of May, 2007.[2]

1.3   Structure of the guide

The guide begins in Section 2 with an overview of the sector. This includes a definition of a national association; an examination of the reasons people and organisations set up national associations; and an outline of the benefits of an association. In Section 3, the guide outlines the process of establishing a national association, including from clarifying strategic intent, setting up the core group, and developing an action plan to finance the plan. Section 4 explores various institutional arrangements and governance. Section 5 focuses on the management of a national association and covers issues of strategic planning, membership, staffing, marketing, accountability, finances, sustainability of the organisation and monitoring and evaluation. Section 6 deals with relationships with other associations, government, donors and the private sector and pulls this together with some thoughts on building coalitions and networks. The guide concludes with some final thoughts from the team in Section 7.

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2   Additional relevant toolkits can be found on the CIVICUS website. http://www.civicus.org/new/default.asp

2 Understanding national associations

2.1 What is a national association?

"National associations are formed to fill a gap that might be identified as a collective voice. National policies are not developed or influenced by a single organisation, hence the need for the formation of national associations. The coordination of the sector helps prohibit the government from being able to divide and rule".[3] Cephas Zinhumwe, Secretary General of the National Association of NGOs in Zimbabwe

National associations are country-based membership networks whose raison d'être is to represent the collective interests of members and the not-for-profit community more generally.

National associations play a critical part in bringing the sector together. They exist to strengthen the voluntary sector; create an enabling environment for civil society; convene the sector; serve the needs of civil society organisations; and advocate on behalf of the sector on specific industry-wide issues. As representatives of the civil society community at a national level, national associations serve as vehicles for a constructive and coordinated voice for civil society. They are well placed to play the role of interlocutor between governments and civil society, and are in a position of strength to influence public policy.

National associations generally play a lead role in addressing issues that have reverberating impact on the sector as a whole (e.g. not-for-profit legislation). In issues that are more specific to a sub-sector (e.g. children's rights), national associations play more of a facilitating role by providing a forum for members with similar interests to collaborate, and by supporting member initiatives.

2.2 Why do people and organisations set up national associations?

There are a number of motivations to establish a national association. Some of these may include: transforming the fragmented and weakened nature of the sector; holding governments to account; overcoming restrictions on the freedoms of the sector; maximising resources and creating a forum where diverse civil society organisations can meet; exchanging knowledge and experience and jointly devising solutions to challenges plaguing the sector.

The catalyst for establishing a national association varies from country to country. It may be civil society leaders responding to favourable conditions, or civil society leaders wishing to protect the sector from external threats; or it may be in response to a request from a donor or government; or some combination of these factors.

Regardless of the specific motivation, the goals behind the establishment of a national association are likely to include advancing citizen participation and opening up spaces for civil society engagement. In some countries this is the sole mission, while in other it is linked to other goals such as ending poverty or promoting democratisation.

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Information box: Rise of National Associations

The first association was set up in 1919 in England, followed in the next few decades by similar associations in other developed countries. The real growth in the sector occurred in the 1980's and 1990's when most of the AGNA members were established.

A national association is an NGO which builds links among various fields of concern to NGOs and responds to issues which impact on the national voluntary sector as a whole. "These NGOs have been variously termed as "intermediary NGOs," (Carroll, 1992); "bridging organisations" (Brown, 1991), and "support organisations" (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002)".[1]

The rise of National Associations is an integral aspect of the more general burgeoning of civil society. "The expansion of civil society can be described as "a growth industry" and a "veritable association revolution underway at the global level that may constitute as significant a social and political development of the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation state was of the nineteenth century."[1]

Case study box: Motivation behind the establishment of three national associations

Here we provide three brief case studies that explain the impetus behind the establishment of three different national associations, one set up in response to favourable conditions and two set up in respect to a threat.

Barbados Association of NGOs (BANGO)

The Barbados Association of NGOs (BANGO) process was formally initiated in 1994 despite the idea being mooted in the 1980s. The process was helped by the availability of a building, given by Government to the now defunct Commonwealth Liaison Unit of Barbados (CLUB). CLUB was fully equipped and under utilised and offered to the BANGO initiators.

This immediately provided NGOs with an address, a telephone number that never changed, a fax number, secretariat and secretarial services and other technical assistance such as the design of logos, letterheads, newsletters, fliers, brochures, call cards and other printed materials, assistance with registration and advocacy. These services were offered by a team of five volunteers.

NGO Federation of Nepal

With the dawn of democracy in 1990 in Nepal NGOs expected policy changes and an enabling environment for the sector. But it did not happen. Instead there were cosmetic changes such as changing the name of the old Social Service National Coordination Council to the Social Welfare Council. Sadly, the rule and regulations stayed the same. In response NGOs organised a two day national convention of the sector in Kathmandu. The convention decided that there was a need to unite to protect the sectors freedom and autonomy. This was the birth of the NGO Federation of Nepal, an umbrella organisation of all NGOs of Nepal. The association started with 50 members and now has more than 400 members.

Pakistan National Federation

In 1994, the government of Pakistan introduced restrictive legislation aimed at regulating the activities of NGO and increasing government control over NGOs' funding, activities and operations. In response collaborative efforts among CBOs and NGOs emerged. Civil society leaders across the country mobilised their own constituencies to prevent the passage of restrictive legislation. Not only were they successful in their initial aim, but they also capitalised on the network created for the purpose of circumventing government control to develop a permanent national association with the mission of defending the interest of civil society and of bringing greater credibility and effectiveness to Pakistan's voluntary sector.

> ***Toolbox: Factors leading to the successful establishment of a NA***
> There are a number of factors that lead to the successful establishment of a national association. Some of the more generic ones are:
> - Good leadership
> - Common threats (e.g. passage of restrictive legislation) or opportunities (e.g. negotiation of a compact between government and civil society) binding diverse civil society actors within the sector together
> - A common vision
> - Buy-in and dedication of credible civil society leaders who are willing to devote time and resources to implementing the idea
> - Commitment to placing the collective interest above individual interests
> - Support from donors and/or government
> - Excellent communication systems
> - The establishment of transparent and inclusive processes when conceptualising and effectuating the national association
> - Recognition of the role of individual organisations, exemplified by a commitment to add value,and not duplicate the role
> - The realisation that the process will be time-consuming and challenging

Some NGOs may be concerned that the national association will duplicate their work, and as such will be a competitor and undermine their efforts. Consequently, it is important for national associations to articulate their objectives clearly and transparently, and to include a wide spectrum of civil society organisations in the process.

2.3 Benefits of a national association

There are many possible benefits to setting up a national association. Amongst the most significant of these is that a national association provides a more cohesive, credible and powerful voice for civil society. However, a range of other benefits are provided, depending on the focus and services of the association. In this section we list possible benefits national associations offer members, the sector and the country.

National Associations can benefit member organisations and individuals by:
- Generating knowledge, and facilitating the exchange of helpful tools, frameworks and guidelines to strengthen the work of member organisations
- Supporting members in important areas such as fundraising, programme development, human resources, etc
- Providing CSOs with financial benefits such as discounts for services or products (e.g. conferences and publications)
- Helping members and the sector at large by identifying and fostering best practices
- Channelling of resources more effectively through collective efforts
- Strengthening the message of CSOs by providing a collective voice which is more likely to be heard and acknowledged as legitimate by others, particularly decision makers
- Affording their members the capacity building expertise
- Facilitating regular communication between members, and orchestrating opportunities for face-to-face discussions and collaboration
- Helping to convene the sector

- Creating networking opportunities that enable organisations working in the same field or on related causes to collaborate and launch joint actions.

National associations also benefit the voluntary or non-profit sector as a whole by:
- Providing a powerful avenue for a stronger, more cohesive and more credible voice for civil society
- Providing a platform to consider and develop viable alternatives for policy makers, and to create greater opportunities to influence government and public policy
- Helping to raise and maintain the profile and legitimacy of the non-profit sector
- Acting as interlocutors between civil society and other sectors, and helping to link the non-profit sector with key institutions
- Defending the interests of civil society against oppressive regulations, coordinating a more effective response to external threats.
- Serving the sector by undertaking action research that aims to improve civil society organisations' individual and collective impacts
- Helping to build the capacity of civil society, and promoting citizen participation in improving in communities by sharing skills, knowledge and information
- Protecting and strengthening the rights and independence of NGOs and NPOs
- Providing a vehicle for self-regulation to both foster good practices and monitor the sector
- Serving as platforms to collectively monitor developments that affect the sector.

National associations are often considered resource-efficient and capable of achieving greater impact for the benefit of the sector than individual NGOs. However, national associations need to ensure that their resource mobilisation strategies are not achieved by competing with or diverting resources from individual CSOs.

Finally, a country benefits from a national association. A robust country requires a strong state and civil society, each holding the other accountable and balancing power to prevent any abuse. National associations have an important role to play in helping to strengthen the civil society component. For example:
- National associations coordinate the sector demands and create a joint platform for engagement and negotiations, thus making interaction easier for government
- National associations are a vehicle for sharing the experience and expertise of civil society organisations, without which the public debate will never be fully informed
- National associations provide a single platform for communicating with civil society enabling effective information dissemination.

Toolbox: Questions to enhance the benefits
- What is the agreed platform of action?
- What are members doing around the issue? And how can you harness this strength?
- What are the gaps and how can they best be addressed?
- How can the national association add value to the agreed platform of action?
- What will be the benefits for participating organisations?
- On what other issues should the national association add value for members?

> **Case study box: An example of the benefits of a national association, PNF and SCVO**
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> PNF has provided several benefits to members. It has linked members with donors, built the capacity of the sector through training, raised awareness of violations and most importantly successfully lobbied for the scrapping of a proposed Government crafted NGO Code of Conduct.
>
> SCVO has expanded its services over the years and lobbies for the ongoing and expanded recognition of the sector. It provides members with access to decision makers, opportunities to participate in campaigns, information, training and services for a fee like recruitment, advertisement, payroll that a lot of members use. The strategy has been to provide as broad a range of services to meet many different members' needs.

3   Establishing a national association

3.1   The process

"It is important to understand that the (conceived) association will never cover up all the shortfalls within the sector, hence it is important for (potential) members to contribute effectively to the sustenance of the sector. It's important to know the vision, needs and aspirations of the (potential) members so that the association would aspire to fulfil those needs." National Association of NGOs, Zimbabwe (NANGO) response to 2007 AGNA questionnaire.

The process of launching a national association often begins informally. National associations emerge and become operational in the context of networking among civil society leaders and practitioners who recognise their common challenges, interests and aspirations. Often these processes begin informally, and then take on a more structured approach as they evolve.

> **Toolbox: Key questions to ask when setting up an association**
> - What are the major concerns/ challenges/ opportunities facing the sector?
> - What is the burning issue motivating for the establishment of the association?
> - Is there an advantage to addressing these issues collectively?
> - Are there other organisations better situated to fill the proposed functions?
> - What sectoral and regional organisations need to be approached to achieve equitable representation and legitimacy?
> - What is a common minimal platform for action that the majority of NGOs and NPOs would support?
> - Who needs to be part of forming the national association?
> - What challenges should be anticipated?
> - What other issues could you address collectively?
> - What will be the role of members?
> - How will you deal with disagreements and conflict?
> - Who will be threatened by the establishment of a national association and what is your strategy to mitigate this?
> - Who will be enthused by the establishment of a national association and what is your strategy to harness this energy?
> - Who will provide the initial resources?
> - How will the activities be sustained?
> - What lessons can you draw on from other national associations globally?

Regardless of the process, you need: a clear strategic intent; a core group; an action plan and some resources to implement the plan. You also need a clear process that guarantees inclusion, transparency and professionalism. This will increase the legitimacy of the effort as well as the likelihood of its success.

In this section we provide some ideas on each these requirements, based on the experiences of the global movement.

3.1.1 Strategic intent

The first and most important step is to know what you are intending to achieve. Organisations with no clear reason for existing do not add value to the civil society sector and generally do not survive.

The first step to developing a strategic plan is answering the question: what is our business? An organisation needs to be able to define its vision– its view of what society or a community could or should be like. It also needs to know what it plans to do to turn this vision into a reality – i.e. its mission. Closely linked to the vision and mission is the question of values, and of the shared belief about the way you plan to operate. Together these provide a high-level framework for operation. Good organisations will revisit these every few years to ensure they are still relevant.

As stated earlier, there are many catalysts and reasons for establishing a national association. As illustrated by the case studies below, some national associations focus on being a voice for the voluntary sector; others on being a resource; and yet others on pursuing a common national goal – for example social justice or an end to poverty –- through the medium of a strong civil society sector.

Case study box: Examples of different types of strategic intent

NCVO

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) founded in 1919, is the oldest national association. It was set up after the first World War, thanks to a legacy from slain solider Edward Vivian Birchall, who recognised the need to bring voluntary organisations together and into closer collaboration with government. Over the years it broadened its mission and changed its name to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Today, its vision is of a society in which people are inspired to make a positive difference to their communities. This requires a vibrant voluntary and community sector which deserves a strong voice and the best support. NCVO aims to be that support and voice.

The Wheel

The Wheel is a support and representative body connecting Community and Voluntary organisations across Ireland. Established in 2001 with a mandate from over 200 organisations and individuals, The Wheel has evolved to become a resource centre and forum for the Community and Voluntary sector. The Wheel's vision is of a society characterised by the active participation of people in communities all over Ireland who are connected to each other on a local and national level. Its mission is to enable Community and Voluntary organisations achieve their maximum potential, increase benefit to the public, and in the process create a better Ireland. It achieves this through acting as a resource centre supporting community and voluntary organisations, advocating community and voluntary activity and providing leadership to meet the needs of the sector.

CEMEFI

The mission of El Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía (CEMEFI) is to promote the philanthropic culture as well as the social responsibility in Mexico. At the time of its founding in 1988, there was little coordination in the sector and almost no coordination between the NGO sector and business or government. CEMEFI was the initiative of a Mexican philanthropist who invited three to five other institutions to set up the initiative with him. The aim was to unite the third sector, deepen the rights of civil society and change the vision of the government vis-à-vis the non-profit sector. It does this through mobilising resources for the sector, strengthening the legal framework, building the capacity of NGOs and creating platforms for engagement with the government and the business sector.

Among the most important challenges confronting founding members of a national association is to set realistic goals for the network and to agree on priorities. The "founding" members of the national associations must articulate very clearly the proposed mission, objectives and initial activities of the national association. The process of developing a strategic plan is detailed in section 5.1.

Toolbox: Guidelines for developing your strategy
Any good strategy involves: knowing what your challenge is or what you are fighting against; understanding the context; setting clear goals; agreeing on activities and interventions and sequencing these; having good systems; having the flexibility to be able to adapt to changing contexts and securing resources and leadership.

When initiating a new organisation the key questions are:
- Understanding and analysing the context
- Identifying the problem or opportunity clearly
- Knowing in whose interests it is to retain the status quo and why.
- Understanding what opportunities exist for changing the situation and why.
- Listing your strategic options and the possible impact of each
- Knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are. This combined with understanding how each goal will impact on the situation allows you to prioritise.
- Prioritising the options and selecting a focus
- Double checking your reasoning behind the selection
- Identifying what the critical elements to success are in respect of who needs to be involved, what information you need, timing and sequencing
- Agreeing on the strategic intent and focus

Clearly expressing the mission of a national association is instrumental in building trust and confidence among other civil society practitioners, in particular in easing misconceptions that national associations create the risk of competition, duplication and marginalisation of other civil society organisations' work.

3.1.2 Core group

A newly formed network or association takes time, dedication and coordinated effort to grow. It requires the willing involvement of civil society practitioners in establishing the structures and devising policies to help the association to flourish. Frequently, these civil society leaders do so on a voluntary basis and in addition to their own organisational commitments.

We have called this initiating group the core team. The composition of or inclusion in the core team is voluntary. While familiarity and homogeneity between core team members may facilitate faster decision-making, it comes at a cost of being less representative of the broader sector. This not only has a negative impact on the legitimacy of the national association as "the voice of the sector", but also creates the risk of overlooking the needs and interests of the broader sector. Therefore it is

helpful for the main leaders or drivers of the process to involve a diverse range of civil society organisations and leaders and to ensure sub-sectoral and regional representation. As mentioned above, while it is important to secure the participation of strategic, powerful and respected leaders within civil society; efforts also need to be made to attract marginalised communities and the organisations that represent them. Investing in this early outreach may be time-consuming, but engaging all sub-sectors will strengthen the association's ability to become an effective and more fully representative body.

Toolbox: Tips when setting up a core group
- Try to involve a diversity of skills (e.g. strategic, planning, media, team building) and a spread across networks as this help build the base
- Involve recognised national NGO leaders as this provides a powerful base to start from
- Involve a member with experience in interfacing with the state as most new organisations need to engage with and establish their legitimacy with the state.
- Ensure you have a mix of recognised leaders and people with time to do the work
- Ensure you involve people who are good at building networks and relationships
- Secure a person with legal expertise to assist you in drafting the necessary legal documents
- Ensure the representation of marginalized groups (e.g. women, minorities, people with disabilities)
- Try to co-opt as many people as possible into doing something to broaden the ownership base

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Information box
Many existing national associations have difficulties in engaging with two distinct sub-sectors of civil society, namely: faith based organisations and labour unions. The inclusion of representatives of these two groups in the core team can help to strengthen relations and build bridges in areas where traditionally there have been weaker relationships for national associations. Inviting and involving them from inception facilitates trust-building and sends a clear message that the nascent organisation does not seek to dominate civil society, but rather to create a space where different actors, with at times divergent agendas, can meet and find a common ground and interest.

It is important to develop clear terms of reference for this team, specifying: the group's mandate; the envisaged scope of work; their rights and responsibilities; as well as the decisions making processes. The toolbox below provides some examples of possible roles that might be needed in the core group.

Toolbox: Different roles needed in most core groups

Role	Key Functions
Core Team Coordinator	Guides the process and leads the team. Provides the team with some consistency, and a person to go to. Keeps people in touch with one another and keeps plans on track.
Financial management	Manages all income and expenses. Retains accurate and complete records of all elements of the emerging operations.
Legal	Researches legal documents and various statuses to consider. Drafts legal documents, e.g. the assoc. constitution for team

Framework	consideration.
Professional Regulations	Works with other associations to pursue professional excellence and complies with government legislation and donor regulations.
Fund raising	Brainstorms sources for funding. Fosters relations with all relevant parties. Secures investments to support civil society and the new vision. Prepares initial budgets and proposals for foundations, governments, international bodies and individual donors.
Membership	Researches various membership structures, criteria, and regulations. Drafts and presents research to team. Commences outreach strategies. Tests perceptions.
Media relations	Develops a media relations strategy and a public education plan. Develops relations with all relevant parties. Drafts materials to attract media coverage
Government Liaison	Liaises with all levels of government, including with standing committee members and department staff. Uses contacts to open up access to government. Find champions and committee workers in government.
Advocacy, lobbying	Studies and prepares papers on public policy plans and strategies for civil society. Engages other parties as required.
Search Committee for ED and Board	Puts in place ToR and process. Implements the agreed upon strategy.

You may be faced with opposition from other civil society organisations and leaders who feel threatened by the idea of the new national association. It helps to anticipate who might oppose the idea and plan how you will respond.

Case study
n Poland those working to set up a national association were confronted with opposition from within the sector. There were already a number of strong players involved in advocacy around the third sector. They did not want to make space for a federation which they believed could replace them. However the initiators felt strongly that there was a need for a mandated national association. They pursued the vision despite the withdrawal of some members just before the launch, the personal conflict and the attempts by some to block Ogólnopolska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych (OFOP).

For OFOP the lessons learnt focus on identifying key partners, working with these partners, engaging leaders and building slowly. Another important lesson is the need to secure start up resources.

3.1.3   Action plan

Once you have decided on your strategic intent and have a core team who can drive the process, you need an action plan for launching the association. This can take many forms, for example an event or general convention, an advocacy intervention or the roll out of a service. Regardless of the agreed action, you need to decide who will do what when. You also need to be clear who you are targeting with each action - be it potential members, decision makers, donors, partners or the general public. Finally, you need to ensure the selected action is best suited to achieve your strategic goals and raise the initial profile of the national association.

Toolbox: Checklist for developing your action plan
- How will you launch the association?
- What impact do you anticipate?
- Are there other actions you could engage in which would achieve the same impact?
- How will the core group respond to the action?
- Who will be involved?
- Who will you target as possible members and how will you recruit and involve these members?
- How will government respond to the action?
- How will the media respond to the action?
- Once you have completed the action what will do you?
- How will you sustain interest in the association?

Case study
BANGO core group worked in two committees to carry out specific tasks. One drafted the constitution and the other canvassed NGOs to support the formation of BANGO. This committee also engaged Government to recognise NGOs as stakeholders and notify them of the formation of BANGO as a focal point for NGOs. Once established, BANGO focused its initial actions on sharing information, training, building dialogue between government and the NGO sector, and the establishment of sector based partnerships.

3.1.4   Financing the plan

In their initial stages most national associations operate through the generosity of participants who provide donations in-kind, largely through giving their time to the development of the association. Other such contributions include providing work and meeting space, access to equipment and the donation of specialised skills. As the activities of the association expand, financial support may also come from donors, membership fees and services.

The core team plays a significant part in securing early investments to support the association. Members of the core team can use their networks to identify and build relations with various sources for funding. This may include applying for or lobbying for more organisation and sector wide funding. In the initial stages, if the organisation is not incorporated or does not yet have official registration, a member of the core team who is registered may apply for charitable donations or public funds on behalf of the association.

Raising funds for civil society can be a great challenge – and a tremendous impediment for some. Two of the most often cited challenges members indicated in the 2007 AGNA questionnaire were the difficulty in securing financial support (More

details on this topic can be found in Section 5.8 on sustaining a national association) and adequately engaging a sufficient number of members.

Toolbox: Sources of funding to set up a national association
- Core group/ members in kind contributions
- Core group/ members donations
- Donor grant
- Government grant
- Bequest
- Proceeds from a fund-raising event

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4 Institutional arrangements

Once launched, the challenge facing any national association is to ensure that it has the right structure, system and programmes to sustain itself. It is not possible to provide guidelines on the exact institutional form as this will depend on the functions of the association and on the social, economic and political landscape of the country in which the association is based. Therefore this section focuses on tools that help you weigh up the options.

4.1 Institutional form and structure

There are a number of factors that influence the decision around legal form and structure.

Firstly, form follows function. Therefore, before deciding on the institutional form, a national association needs to decide on its strategic intent, services and activities. Once these have been agreed, serious thought needs to be given to how the membership, governance, legal requirements and registration are structured, to ensure the long term success of the organisation.

Secondly, the national requirements for registering a NGO/NPO will have an impact on the legal structure options of national associations and their boards. Legal registration under certain jurisdiction places obligations on a national association, and may predetermine the governance structure, specify financial reporting and set limitations on what non-profit boards might be engaged in. The legal registration may stipulate, among other things, the structure of the Board, the focus of the association, the schedule and methods of Board selection, (whether it be through open elections), annual financial reporting and the means of scrutiny of and accountability for its affairs.

Thirdly, the institutional arrangements need to be tailored to address the challenges facing the association. Associations working in a hostile political environment where the rights of members are continually infringed may chose a very different structure to those operating in a democracy.

Fourthly, the structure needs to be tailored to suit the needs of members. Associations with a strong membership base may opt to decentralise a lot of their functions whereas those with weak members may prefer to centralise more of the activities.

Based on these four considerations the national association will need to make a decision around its legal form, structure, governance and decision making processes.

Usually in the early stages of an organisation's life there is less formality. However as an organisation grows and develops it becomes more formalised. The diagram below provides an example of the different stages in the life of many organisations and its impact on levels of formality.

Phases of organisational development

1. The pioneering phase
- Small
- Organised around the pioneer
- Highly motivated & committed
- Flexible flat structure

growth

Informal structure cannot cope with growing complexity and demands

2. The rational phase
- Formalisation of structure and function
- Policy formulation
- Reviewing and evaluating
- Pioneer leaves or changes role

growth

Becomes too mechanisms and procedure driven and requires move flexibility

3. The integration phase
- Renew aims, value and culture
- Strong external associations and dialogue
- Human centred processes and structures
- Decentralised, flatter structure
- Distributed leadership (many pioneers)

Adapted from CDRA, SA

There are also internal questions that need to be answered in relation to the structure, for example how centralised or decentralised the organisation should be. Some associations opt for a decentralised structure with local branches that build up into a national structure. This might work well in established democracies where the rights of the not-for-profit sector are entrenched and/or in countries that span vast geographic areas.

Others retain the principle of decentralising but do this on the basis of sectors not geographic regions. These local chapters or offices have varying levels of autonomy. Yet others opt for a more centralised structure with one single national centre and membership spread across the geographic area. This works well in small countries or those that face a repressive state where a single platform provides protection to members. The toolbox below provides some guidance on what needs to be considered when deciding on the most beneficial option.

Toolbox: Questions to help guide institutional arrangements
- What is the operating freedom offered by each option?
- Which option will offer the greatest autonomy?
- What is the public perception of each option and how will this affect the association?
- What are the financial costs and benefits of each option?
- What option provides for the best checks and balances?
- What option best harnesses the capacity and context of members?
- What option provides the best protection to members?
- What rights and responsibilities does each option accord the organisation?
- What option best facilitates members' involvement?
- What option do members feel most comfortable with?

Information box: The challenges of structure
"Among those who study it (civil society organisations) there is a divide between those who argue that centralised bureaucratic organisations are comparatively more effective in mobilising resources and sustaining collective action (Gamson, 1975; McCarthy & Zald, 1977) than decentralised informal organisations sharing an overarching ideology (Gerlach & Hine, 1970). However, while centralised structures facilitate technical expertise and coordination that are essential for successful mobilisation and institutional change, they are less effective in engaging grassroots participation."[1] This quote highlights the challenges that national associations face in balancing the need to be both an effective coordinating body as well as a network that ensures the engagement and participation of a diverse array of civil society organisations.

Case study box: Structure
Civic Initiative (CI)
Serbia is a small country of just over 10 million people. Therefore when Civic Initiatives (CI) Serbia established its membership and organisational structure, it actively reached out to smaller cities and rural localities throughout Serbia and Montenegro without establishing provincial offices. They believed it was important to connect local groups with those in the capital but did not believe they needed regional offices. Instead they based their work on cooperation with strong and independent local partners.

PNF
The Pakistan National Federation (PNF) has five provincial offices. Each office falls under a coordinator. Members join through these provincial offices. Small CBOs have to pay 100 rupees, while NGOs pay around 1500 rupees. This is one source of funding for the provincial offices. There are provincial councils and working councils which meet regularly to look at issues facing the provinces. Every province is represented on the national executive. The national executive focuses on provincial issues, NGO registration, a common vision and programmes, links with the South Asia NGO forum and other international groups, and other generic issues.

NANGO
In another example in Zimbabwe, NGOs leaders have organized themselves into the NGO Director's Forum for information-sharing. NANGO also is structured into sectors and regions. The work at these levels identifies the key issues; provides the needed information from the field; and creates dialogue within and among members, drawing on member expertise. NANGO's National Executive then implements the strategies formulated by their Sector Sub-Committees.

4.2 Registering a national association

Once the national association has been initiated, the next step is generally to legalise the structure. This will be governed by the national legal and regulatory environment. It is therefore important to understand the regulations and the implications for NPOs in the country in which the national association wishes to operate. In some countries, national associations may have no choice as to how they are to register, while in others a number of options might be available such as charitable organisation, not-for-profit company, public interest organisation, non-governmental organisation, civic association, foundation, etc.[4] Also sponsoring bodies, such as foundations or government departments, may specify the regulatory or legal status required for associations to be eligible for funding.

Toolbox: Legal assistance

Those national associations struggling with legal form could contact the international network, Lawyers without Borders, to obtain their legal guidance. Their details are available via the web address: http://www.lawyerswithoutborders.org . Alternatively, assistance can be sought in country from pro-bono legal advisers.

Working with these legal parameters, the next step for national associations is to draft a constitution which spells out how the association is to be governed. This should contain safeguards against institutional derailment, including mechanisms for mediation and dispute resolution[5].

Toolbox: Drafting a constitution

A constitution is the 'user manual' for an organisation, set out in a form determined by its chosen structure. A constitution will usually include [1]
- The purpose of the organisation
- What (within the law) it has the power to do.
- Who can and cannot be a member of the organisation.
- The powers and responsibilities of members.
- The powers delegated to the governing committee by the membership.
- How many people will sit on the governing committee, for how long and by what process they will be selected?

How the relationship between the governing committee and membership will work

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4.3 Governance

Governance involves setting a long term direction for an organisation, making sure everything is in place for it to follow this direction, and continually checking that the this direction is followed.

Governance is a team task – no one person has the skills, wisdom and credibility to do it alone. The Governing Team may be known as the board of trustees, board of directors or management committee. Whatever the name, it will act as the ultimate authority in an organisation. [6]

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4 Please note that different countries may attribute different definitions and legal statuses to each of the listed legal entities.

5 Tools for developing a constitution are available on the World Wide Web. One example is available at: http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/start-ngo/startngo-4.html

6 Introduction lifted from http://www.scvo.org.uk/Images/Publications/Your%20Mission%20-%20Governance.doc

4.3.1 The Governing team or board

Establishing a well-functioning governance mechanism is essential to a national association's success and longevity. The national association constitution and bylaws spell out the role and function of the governing body. We will refer to this body as the board for the rest of this section. Below is a list of the primary obligations of most boards:

- Developing and managing the organisation's strategic planning and direction;
- Gauging external constraints and harnessing opportunities;
- Providing financial stewardship and oversight;
- Ensuring transparency;
- Focusing on services to and monitoring members;
- Striving for sustainability;
- Managing the elements of self-governance.[7]

Toolkit: Governance hazards[1]

- *Muddling governance and management*
  Governance is about setting and safeguarding long-term direction. Management is about operational details such as supervising people and developing work-plans. The more staff you employ the more you should focus on governance and delegate management to them.

- *Conflict of interest*
  If a decision might benefit (or disadvantage) you, or an organisation or individual you are strongly connected with, openly acknowledge divided loyalties and sit out the decision.

- *Rubber stamping*
  Do not allow an 'inner circle' to take key decisions and expect you to nod these through. This is poor practice and could land you in legal difficulties if things go wrong.

- *Overload*
  If your agenda is getting too long and complex, form sub-groups and delegate tasks to them so you can all provide the required oversight. Ensure sub-groups report back the key points to the full team.

Generally, unlike the initial core team, the appointment of board members requires some kind of transparent and democratic process. The specific process of either electing or appointing the board varies from institution to institution. Below are some useful pointers to assist you in planning an appropriate board process.

- How will you guard the institutional memory?
  - Provide training for new board members
  - Allow for a proper handover between the old and new board
  - Think about the length of service of board members and ensure it is suitable
  - Consider designating a portion of the Board seats to be vacated each year, thus offering some assurance that new and different voices will be included and institutional memory will be protected
- How will you ensure diversity and inclusiveness?
  - Ensure board members do not 'reign over' or become fixtures of the board of directors. Often such people may be resistant to new or different ideas.
  - Schedule elections in such a manner to afford members suitable avenues to express their democratic rights; to maintain some

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7 Public Administration Review May, June 2007.

continuity of the board's work; and to provide the Secretariat sufficient time between elections to carry out the board's strategic direction
- How will you plan for succession?
    o Establish maximum terms of service to recognise and respect the value of knowledgeable leadership, while protecting against over-reliance on a few capable people
    o Proactively prepare members to assume roles in governance by for example, inviting them to volunteer for a committee or be appointed to head up a task force. Through these proactive measures members become educated about the issues and knowledgeable of the politics and may become better equipped to move into officer positions when needed.
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Toolbox: Tips for broadening participation and for safe-guarding institutional memory
- Outline the process and time-frames in advance and give members adequate time to prepare for the election
- Clearly define the terms of service and responsibilities of the board to allow members to make an informed decision about participating
- Ensure the term of each board member is not the same by specifying that a portion of posts to be filled each year (e.g. one third). This allows for a mix of new and older members at any point in the life of the board
- Set a maximum length of service for any single board member
- Provide for sub-committees that allow new potential board members become familiar with the work of the Board
- Actively lobby people to participate
- If there are regional structures, allow each structure to appoint a member of the Board to ensure geographic spread
- Provide training for new board members on their roles and responsibilities
- Ensure you have clear policies and procedures in place that assist the Board in performing its functions
- Ensure the existence of mechanisms to evaluate Board performance.

4.3.2   Decision making

It is important to specify what latitude and authority the board has to make decisions on behalf of the entire membership.

Clarifying decision-making processes enables things to get done most expeditiously. The national association may determine that different issues require different decision makers. The decision-making process may be expedited if some decisions rest with the executive committee or a sub-committee rather than the entire board. However some issues, such as the strategic direction should involve the whole board in the decision making. Others, for example a controversial campaign, may also require canvassing members.

Any decision-making structure the board adopts should be inclusive of the various interests and extensive capabilities of members. For example, if the Board structure includes regional and sectoral representation, the interests of the broad membership will have a better chance of being represented through the board.

4.4   Secretariat

While an association is involved in establishing itself and its reputation, it may be necessary for the board to be actively involved in all operations. However, in the longer term the management of a national association is better served by the expertise of professional staff. The secretariat of the national association will then be mandated by the board to be the central coordinating body, and to conduct the day-to- day business of the association. Most operational decisions are delegated to the secretariat staff. The CEO may consult the board executive on decisions with significant financial or public relations implications, or those that are politically sensitive.

The staff implements the board's vision through executing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the work of the national association. The subsequent sections of the toolkit expound on these functions.

Information Box- Staffing of National Associations
Results of the 2006 AGNA survey, completed by 47 national associations, showed that all respondents with the exception of ANGOA and NISC employ full-time staff. Most national associations rely on a small staff. Less than 20% of surveyed national associations reported having more than 20 full-time employees. The average number of staff employed by the surveyed national associations amounts to 17, while the median stands at 7.

Further, 28 national associations employ minimal part-time staff. The average of part-time staff is stands at 6, while the median equals 3.

Thirty-two surveyed national associations use volunteers to further their work. The average number of volunteers in these 32 national associations stands at 91. This figure is elevated due to the fact that the Pakistan NGO Forum indicated having the support 2500 volunteers. The median of 5 points to the fact that the number of volunteers most respondents employ is much more modest.

Over 40% of surveyed national associations reported using consultancy services for short term projects, albeit on a minimal basis with both average and median equalling 3.

The secretariat team will vary from association to association depending on its mission, activities and funding. It is important to clarify which functions will be

undertaken by the secretariat, and which by members themselves, as this influences the structure and staffing requirements of the association.

Deciding which functions will be performed by the secretariat and which will be left to members is a delicate balancing act. If the association assumes functions which members either are doing, or could do, this may result in competition and a lack of ownership. As far as possible, it is important to draw on members' skills and capacity. An example of a function that an association might choose to outsource is the management of a campaign on a specific issue.

However members do not always deliver. In such instances either the national association must find another member to fulfil the role or the secretariat needs to step in to fill the vacuum. This is frustrating for the secretariat, and inefficient. The national association of Poland, OFOP, cautions other national associations to anticipate higher costs in terms of staff time, opportunity costs and resources in cases where the Secretariat needs to assume the work that members fail to deliver.

In order to minimise the risks of these negative implications, clear terms of reference or memoranda of understanding need to be adopted in situations where members undertake work on behalf of the national association. These should clearly stipulate the roles and responsibilities of members and the Secretariat and the consequences of breech of agreement.

As stated earlier there is no ideal structure for an association. Some of the more generic functions and positions within a secretariat are:

CEO	Responsible for directing the organisation
Finance	Responsible for financial management
Services/Membership	Responsible for membership and services to members
Communications	Responsible for publicity and marketing

The structure of the secretariat is likely to change over time. Typically, as the association's legitimacy and standing grows so too does its membership base and programmes. This often requires an expanded team to manage the increased workload. Some of the other possible functions which could be included in the secretariat structure are:

Networking	Responsible for building alliances, partnerships and relationships
Programmes/ advocacy	Responsible for campaigns and or programmes
Advocacy	Responsible for lobbying and advocacy with the state or private sector
Branch management	Responsible for the regional structures
Research & development	Responsible for research into priority areas and development of new programmes
Capacity building	Responsible for training and development of members

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Toolbox: Questions to help a national association determine what staff it needs
- Is a member performing the function already and if so can they expand this role and service the association?
- Is there a member that could perform the required function and would be better equipped to do this?
- Can the function be added to an existing staff member's job description and does the person have the capacity to take on more?
- Is the need a short term need, and, if so, could a consultant be employed to meet the need?
- If the answer to all the above is no, then do you have the funds to finance the new position?
- Do you have the management capacity to manage the additional staff member?

As the association develops its capacity and increases its staffing component, systems need to be developed to support the secretariat in its work. This includes developing operating, human resource and financial policies and procedures.

"We recommend that a national association clearly establish management rules and operating policies. Doing so has helped CEMEFI to function well and to offer to its members a model that increases organizational efficacy." Staff of the Mexican NA, Centro Mexicano para la Filantripia/ Mexican Center for Philanthropy (CEMEFI)

Toolbox: List of policies and procedures typically needed by an organisation[8]

Policy Area	Key things to include
Legal issues	Constitution or relevant legal document constituting the association
Disciplinary and grievance	Definition of misconduct along with the organisational process for dealing with misconduct and the appeals processes. (Often minimum standards for these are determined by law).
Diversity, gender equity and equal opportunities	This outlines the organisation's commitment to ensure everyone is afforded an equal opportunity and no person or group of persons is discriminated against.
Health and safety	Based on risk assessment. Assigns safety roles. Must comply with law.
Recruitment	An objective process for advertising, application, short listing and interview.
Termination of	Stipulates the basis on which the contract for the secretariat

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8 Adapted from http://www.scvo.org.uk/Images/Publications/Your%20Mission%20-%20Governance.doc

Policy Area	Key things to include
contract	can be terminated.
Pay and benefits	Salaries, pay scales, holiday pay, sick pay, pensions, benefits.
Working hours	Consistent with working time regulations and health and safety law.
Performance and support	Support, supervision monitoring performance, appraisal, training.
Absence	Notification process, absence monitoring, return to work interview.
Staff development	Training, personal development, promotion.
Staff exit	Dismissal, redundancy and resignations.
Client/customer relations	Confidentiality, complaints and process for abusive clients
Interns and Volunteers	Roles, recruitment, supervision, training, support and expenses.
Accounts	Responsibilities for keeping accounts and for reporting to regulators and funders.
Handling cash	Procedures for recording, banking and reducing risk of theft.
Cheques	Who signs/countersigns and for what amounts. Process for incoming cheques.
Budget setting	Who prepares and presents budgets for Governing Team approval, and when.
Ordering and payment	Who can order supplies and services and authorise payments at various levels. Who deals with invoices and when. How you will apply Value Added Tax rules.
Financial reports	Reports the Governing Team will receive, when, in what format and from whom.
Payroll and	In line with 'Pay As You Earn' personal tax rules. Process for

Policy Area	Key things to include
expenses	claiming, verifying and authorising expenses and floats.
Reserves	Target and process for building reserves, based on an assessment of financial risk.
Assets	An inventory and a replacement and maintenance schedule for all equipment.
Fundraising	How and from whom you will fundraise. Check charity law rules if necessary.
Membership Policy	Criteria for who can and cannot be a member. Membership rights (e.g. voting in Board elections) and obligations (e.g. membership fees).
Governing team	Mandate and authority of the governing team, how it will operate and how it is chosen (for example by election).

Once the secretariat structure has been decided, the next challenge is recruiting the staff. Staff recruitment can occur through a variety of means, including advertising in the media, use of membership networks, websites and use of recruitment agencies. The active network of networks is also a superb mechanism through which to recruit staff. It is important not to weaken the membership base by recruiting the best staff from member organisations. At the same time an association benefits from staff with experience in the sector and a working knowledge of the membership base. Again this is a balancing act that needs to secure both a strong secretariat and retain membership human resource capacity.

Suitable staff can also be nurtured through the many volunteering and internship programmes available to CSOs. A national association can orchestrate its own internship program, and partner with other CSOs in the area to foster, a culture of teaching and enabling young leaders in the field. Candidates may also become equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge through diverse volunteer experiences. A national association could offer short-term postings for people to fill on a voluntary basis. This could be attractive to potential volunteers, as they are aware of the breadth of influence and exposure of a national association and they recognise that serving a respected national association would be professionally advantageous. At the same time, the association would gain the professional assistance of capable and willing workers.

Succession planning is also helpful in preparing for changes in senior staff roles. It is important to devise plans for passing on the leadership of a national association. Can institutional memory be taught or passed on? From the perspective of Graham Benfield, CEO of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), *"These skills and abilities are passed on through mentoring and purposefully preparing staff for the future."* Succession planning might also include tailored orientation and training.

5   Running a national association

5.1   Strategic Planning

It is important to have some agreement about why the organisation exists, what you want to do and how you are going to do it.

Strategy formulation refers to the entire function of establishing the organisation's direction, setting objectives and devising a management game plan to achieve the objectives. Usually this involves five distinctive steps:

a. Deciding why the organisation exists and where it wants to head – the vision and mission,
b. Translating this into specific performance objectives,
c. Crafting the strategy of how the targeted results will be achieved,
d. Implementing the strategy
e. Reviewing the strategy, evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments.

Step 1: Vision and mission
Deciding on the strategic intent – vision and mission – was detailed in section three. In this section the balance of the strategic planning process is discussed.

Step 2: Objectives
The second step focuses on translating the mission into a set of specific performance objectives. Both short-range and long-range objectives are needed. Short range objectives draw attention to what immediate results are needed while long range objectives focus on the longer term goals.

Objectives should be short, simple and clear; they should be realistic and you must be able to monitor progress or measure the objective. Individually, the objective must point to a key results area; collectively they should contribute to the achievement of the organisation's mission.

Case study box on examples of national association objectives.

VANI, Voluntary Action Network India, has four objectives namely:
- Influencing national government policies and laws that regulate or restrict the role and space of civil society;
- Influencing multilateral and bilateral donor agencies' policies and programmes that impinge on civil society's role in promoting the rights and livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged;
- Improving governance in civil society organisations;
- Building and strengthening state-level coalitions.

OFOP has the following objectives:
- Promoting standards of high quality and effectiveness in the undertaken actions and strengthening a sense of identity among NGOs.
- Conducting actions aimed at changing legal regulations that affect the non-governmental sector and inhibit its growth and development.
- Encouraging affirmative attitude towards civil initiatives.

> **The Lebanese NGO Forum's (LNF's)** primary objective is to promote specific programs which will help consolidate social cohesion and integration in Lebanon. In order to achieve this, the Forum has adopted the following guidelines:
> - It focuses on humanitarian social work, more specifically providing assistance to the needy in emergency situations. Its efforts also involve helping humanitarian associations.
> - It works at upholding the rights of the underprivileged and vulnerable groups. * It coordinates, when required, the humanitarian and social efforts of Lebanese NGOs, and acts as a clearing house for information necessary to enhance their operations.
> - It collaborates regularly with state institutions, at times complementing their activities. It cooperates with UN agencies as well as with foreign humanitarian and voluntary organisations, and other associations.

The strategic directions and overarching purposes of national associations are informed by the CSOs and others who make up its membership, and are guided by the operating environment, needs and interests of the national civil society sector.

Step 3: Crafting the strategy

This is the blueprint for all the important organisational moves and managerial approaches that are to be taken to achieve the objectives and carry out the mission. Generally the task begins with an analysis of the organisation's external and internal situation and a diagnosis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is followed by the identification of the stakeholders and options for action. Finally, you need to decide between the options and develop a game plan specifying who will do what, when and with what anticipated results.

> **Toolbox: Key questions the strategy must address**
> - What actions you plan to take to achieve the mission
> - How you intend responding to the external conditions
> - What kind of competitive advantage you are trying to secure
> - What approaches and actions to take in each major functional unit to complement and flesh out the details of the overall strategy
> - What moves to take in dealing with the organisation's own internal problems and issues

Developing and driving the development of the strategy (steps 1-3) is a central function of the governance structure. How the strategic vision is realised is best left to professional staff.

Step 4: Implementing the strategy

Once the strategy has been agreed the next task is to institutionalise the strategy. This involves setting concrete timelines and priorities.

It also involves.
- Building an organisation capable of carrying out the strategic plan
- Developing aligned budgets
- Instilling an organisational culture that is committed to and facilitates the strategy
- Ensuring policies and procedures that facilitate the strategy implementation
- Developing an information and reporting system to track progress and monitor performance

- Providing the leadership to drive implementation
- Sequencing the actions

The better the alignment, the better the chances of succeeding with the strategy. Typically implementation is left to management.

Step 5: Monitoring, reviewing and renewing the strategy
The final step involves monitoring the strategy's success, adjusting the strategy to respond to changing circumstances and learning from both the successes and mistakes. This function needs to be jointly done by the governance body and staff. Section 5.9 provides more details on monitoring and evaluation.

5.2 Membership

Membership is central and integral to the purpose of national associations. National associations are made up of members whose interests coalesce into a national association.

The composition of the membership of national associations largely determines what they are able to achieve. National associations define membership parameters to indicate who is included and excluded and why. The organisation's strategy, along with the historical, cultural and political context, helps shape the association's approach to membership criteria and categories. To claim legitimacy, the national association must represent a significant number of CSOs and must serve their priority concerns.

5.2.1 Criteria, Composition & Structure

Organisations join an association believing it will be worthwhile and add significant value to their work. They want to know that membership is well thought out so as to ensure that their own aspirations and the goals of the membership of the association are complementary. Thus it is important for a national association to establish and communicate its membership criteria in order to inform potential members of who would best be served by joining the association.

Membership criteria also provide the association with an objective filter for selecting appropriate members, thereby extending some measure of quality control and guaranteeing the organisation's credibility, legitimacy and independence. Additionally, having clear membership criteria ensures that members share common interests and concerns to which the national associations seek to respond. The criteria for membership will vary from association to association depending on the purpose and programmes of the national association.

The criteria for national association membership are often categorised into two types: those that accept a broad range of organisations as members as long as members support the values and mission of the national association; and those that require proof of organisational alignment with the role of the national association.[9]

While membership criteria vary from association to association, they often encompass the following common requirements:

- A voluntary organisation or one that serves the public good
- Legal registration

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9 AGNA. Survey Report (Draft). Johannesburg: CIVICUS, 2007.

- Demonstration of financial soundness, good governance and annual reporting
- Track record in social services, philanthropy or volunteerism
- Willingness to pay membership fees
- Consenting to abide by the national associations code of ethics or stated values
- Be willing to be involved in the leadership and the programmes of the association

Some associations, such as the Samoa Umbrella Group for NGOs (SUNGO), also require an application for membership to be accompanied by a letter indicating why the NGO is interested in becoming a member of the national association. These applications then are vetted and approved by SUNGO's board.

A number of national associations specify additional conditions such as proof of political independence (CEMEFI and CNSC), possession of a minimal number of members (TONGA), participation in a specific field of activity (Lebanon NGO Forum) and recommendations from current members (Kyrgyzstan NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society).[10]

Most associations offer varying types of membership and differentiated fees to ensure more accessibility to members. Membership types can be designated for different degrees of involvement, and may include full, network, associate and expert members. Others, such as donors or government officials, may fall under the category of observer. Involvement in the association also may be possible on a project basis within a defined time and purpose. While national associations may offer a selection of membership types, generally only full organisational members have a stake in the national association's governance.

Case study: The membership categories of the SCVO.
Full members – usually access all privileges and benefits, like being able to seek election to the Board.
Associate members – have access to most members' benefits but have no voting rights, nor can stand for election. Includes individuals, private sector members, professional associations and non Scottish organisations

***Grassroots members* – open to all NGOs and provides access to benefits and services**
Network members – any network body/intermediary organisation may make designated benefits of SCVO membership available to its own members.
Branch memberships – would be available to national voluntary organisations with multiple premises or branches with branch members also eligible to utilize some of the benefits of SCVO membership.

Surveys of national associations indicate a wide diversity in membership compositions. Most national associations include individual NGOs and NPOs as members. A few associations, like Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) and Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) have been formed to support the work of membership-based network organisations. A number of national associations (a third of AGNA members) also include non-affiliated individuals who support the vision and mission of the national association among their members. A number of national associations also reach out to other sectors. For example, as the 2007 AGNA survey synthesis indicates, a fifth of AGNA members extend their membership to businesses, while government organisations were found only in four national associations' membership, namely PIANGO, the Wheel, SCVO and NCVO. Others such as VANI limit their membership to the civil society sector and have explicit policies to exclude religious and political organisations, local and foreign

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10   AGNA, Survey Report, 2007, pp. 10-11

corporations, government and funding agencies, family trusts and international organisations from their membership.

Within the civil society sector, the bulk of the membership composition comes from NGOs and NPOS, as well as community-based organisations. To a lesser degree, national associations include faith-based organisations, and labour unions in their membership composition.[11] For some national associations, the lack of faith-based organisations is an explicit policy in response to the country's specific political and religious context (e.g. sectarian strife or perceptions that secular and faith-based civil societies espouse different values). For other national associations, the lack of certain sub-sectors of civil society, such as faith-based organisations and labour unions, is merely a reflection of reality that these sub-sectors have varying interests and are subject to different legislative and regulatory requirements from NGOs. Additionally, labour unions and faith based organisations frequently have their own mechanisms and platforms to defend their interests.

Given these realities, forming project-specific partnerships with labour and faith-based organisations may be a viable alternative to membership within the association. For example, BANGO's reputation is such that it is regularly consulted by and forms working relations with leaders of government, labour and the private sector on issues of national importance. To maximize civil society participation in the implementation of national plans and activities, BANGO forms special arrangements with non-members inviting particular input and involvement in specific tasks.

The size of a national association's membership depends on a number of factors, including the infrastructure of a country's civil society sector, the legitimacy and strength of the national association and the types of organisations that compose its membership. The membership numbers can differ dramatically among associations. Responses to the 2006 AGNA survey indicate a full range of membership size, with the average number of organisational members equalling 511, while the median stands lower at 99 members.[12]

Membership can be structured in different ways, for example on a geographic basis, on a sector basis, or according to the category of membership.

Case study on different membership structures

There are many different types of membership structures within the AGNA group of national associations. Some like CODE-NGO in the Philippines is a tertiary network of eleven member networks. Collectively these organisations represent over 3 000 NGOs. The organisation is coordinated through its national office and then the offices of its members.

Yet others are organised on a sector basis with sector representatives on the Board or a regional basis with regional structures building up into a national structure. NANGO in Zimbabwe combines both, with sector representatives on the Board reflecting the sector structure and regional coordinators on the staff reflecting the different geographic regions.

Others such as ANGOA in New Zealand will enrol any member who supports the objects of the association and who is willing to pay the membership fee of $50 per annum. ANGOA member organisations come from across the range of NGOs in Aotearoa New Zealand and include national associations, regional networks, and local NGOs. The organisation communicates directly from its national office with all members.

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11 Results from the 2004 and 2006 AGNA survey of members indicated that 9/10 respondents included NGOs in their membership; 5/10 included CBOs; 3/10 included faith-based; 3/10 had NPOs and voluntary organisations among members; 2/10 included academic institutions; 4/10 include businesses with one including them as 'observers'; 4/10 had grant makers among their list and 3/10 included labor or trade unions.

12 AGNA Survey Report, February 2007, p. 2

5.2.2 Membership Development Strategy

"The more members we have the stronger we feel", Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Membership development strategies clarify who the association wants to attract as members and the various ways to attract and retain them. The membership development strategy helps national associations to decide which sub-sectors it wants to attract and how to most effectively and strategically invest their recruitment energies.

Toolbox: Strategies and activities to attract and strengthen members' participation in the association

- Regular outreach practices, such as making calls to members to hear how they are doing or sending an email with a help attachment
- Offer members tools materials, seminars, workshops, annual meetings
- Offer opportunities for reflection and sharing experiences and extending leadership
- Form committees in areas of interest, i.e., Government Relations Committee
- Publicly recognise the work of individuals and organisations
- Facilitate the formation of grant making organisations and convene donors to learn about the sector's pressures and priorities
- Provide avenues for the membership to get together, share experiences and enjoy networking opportunities including face to face meetings and online encounters such as blogs and e-learning opportunities
- Invite participation in research and studies
- Peer exchanges and reviews
- Organise work/study tours and arrange secondments or work exchanges for in-depth learning
- Access to subsidised capacity building programmes and organisational development support
- A membership certificate, which increases credibility of the organisation
- Opportunities to network with other civil society organisations and colleagues in business and government sectors
- Opportunities to participate in lobbying and advocacy campaigns
- Access to information and research documents (policy, databases and other resources)
- Access to job and development opportunities through posting member profiles on the website
- Quarterly receipt of an authoritative news letter
- Protect advocacy rights of nonprofits, promoting tax incentives for charitable giving, and addressing federal and state budget concerns.
- Develop and disseminate strategies to strengthen volunteering, donating, voting, and other forms of citizen engagement.
- Frequent consultations with members to better identify and respond to their needs and priorities

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Personal invitations to join a national association are more likely to engage potential members.[13] However given the costs, national associations also employ other recruitment modes including written invitations, the distribution of literature and information about the national association at strategic civil society events, outreach through the media, existent members, etc.

While various outreach strategies have an impact on membership recruitment, the strongest mechanism for attracting and retaining members is for a national association to remain relevant and respond to the needs and interests of its membership base and the civil society sector at large. Contented members, and discontented ones, both spread the word about whether or not to join the national association. Satisfied members have tremendous influence on enticing potential members. Similarly, members who feel they do not get value for their investment of time and money will spread negative messages about the association. A national association therefore must be vigilant in ensuring that members strongly value their association membership.

Considering the variety of reasons why members join a national association will help not only in targeting outreach messages, but also in ensuring needed services are delivered to a level that satisfies members.

Case Study: Adding value for members

A national Canadian association, Tamarack, An Institute for Community Engagement with its Learning Centre and Vibrant Communities has proven its effectiveness in increasing active participation of members by remaining vigilant around integrating the lessons-learned of successful engagement. The association commits itself to identifying and capturing stories of members' progress. These can be achieved only by regularly connecting with members through diverse two-way communication streams. Through these streams members share their challenges and successes. The national organisation then organizes the learning and captures insights into usable tools. These tools are used in learning and animation processes. Members are afforded numerous learning avenues: monthly tele-conferences on topics of importance, a bi-weekly newsletter, facilitated and active communities of practice and annual face-to-face events.[1]

5.2.3   Representation and participation

"Inclusive means ensuring that a wide range of organisations and individuals are able

To contribute their skills, expertise and opinions to governance, at the right levels and in the most appropriate ways, and ensuring people from under-represented groups are involved."[14]

Representing its members and speaking for the sector, are key functions of a national association. As representation involves expressing the concerns of members and the sector, consulting members and incorporating their feedback and priorities is central to the work of a national association. When choosing a stance on a public policy issue, for instance, a national association would strategise on ways to support and balance the interests of members, as well as considering the views of and implications for the sector. Utilising open avenues and diverse mechanisms for

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13   Kevany, Kathleen. Building Stewardship Capacity, Service Above Self. Doctoral Thesis. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002.

14   NNNGO, "Brief on the NNNGO Repositioning/Reform Process", Nov 2006, p. 2

'checking in' with the members can increase the likelihood that their voices and issues will be more fairly and fully represented.

Toolbox: Mechanisms for checking in with members
- Phone members as ask their opinions
- Set up a telephone tree where each member calls 10 others to share and solicit their views
- Set up a toll-free or dedicated line where members can call in and share their views
- Email members and present the case and ask for feedback and ideas
- Sms members and provide an easy way for them to respond
- Set up a blog were members can share their views
- Do an annual survey of members views on issues
- Set-up committees on various policy issues where members can get involved

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As timely action on some issues is important, the association must have a clear understanding of the scope of its work, and have the liberty to launch actions as deemed appropriate. Thus, when issues arise that fall within the national association's mandate, the association can commence work immediately without needing to engage in extensive consultation and endorsement. This endorsement should be secured and articulated in the mandate of the association. In these situations, regular communication with members is critical to keep them abreast of developments and offer opportunities for feedback.

Case study: Examples of approaches to ensure representation

In establishing a stance on policy issues, SCVO considers its membership diversity and what will affect most of its members. "We are an imperfect democracy. All members get to vote and stand for election. The members can directly influence how we address policy and which policies we focus on."[1] SCVO focuses its attention on generic issues affecting the voluntary sector such as guarding the legitimacy of civil society, securing more support and funding, and governmental relations. As a national body, with a macro perspective, SCVO expands the public's perception of civil society and strengthens civil society infrastructure. Member organizations may address more micro issues like development or social issues or anti-poverty work.

NANGO strives to support the diversity of approaches and activities of members. NANGO doesn't [only] follow the opinion of the majority of its members, but also those engaged in the field to protect the rights/interests of minorities. At the same time NANGO consults with those more informed about the topic in question. For example, most of NANGO's membership supported the creation of the Human Rights Commission. But NANGO adopted a different position. It argued, along with other human rights bodies, that the Commission would not serve its purpose if certain pre-conditions to ensure its integrity were not fulfilled.[1] In another example some members chose to engage with government, others choose to demonstrate and distribute anti-government pamphlets. NANGO supports members in both cases.

Given the diversity of national association members, there will be times when not all members are content with decisions and actions of the national association.

Mediating member needs and expectations, and averting unnecessary tensions or misunderstandings, is part of the art and science of managing a national association. It is helpful to establish processes through which complaints or disputes can be addressed.

Representation does not equal participation. The second part of the challenge is ensuring that members participate.

A membership organisation serves to bring together its members and encourages links among and between members. A serious hurdle for any membership organisation is that of facilitating the active participation of members. Without proactive measures by the national association, the engagement of members is likely to decline. While these personal connections strengthen relations with members, they consume massive amounts of time and pull staff from other tasks. To conduct this type of outreach also requires a sufficient budget to reach members across the country. Therefore, a national association wisely generates innovative vehicles for participation at varying degrees of intensity.

Some members might prefer to participate only in activities that demand minimal resources, such as petitions, others might want to be move active and serve on a committee and yet others might only be interested in what they can gain from the association. Therefore it is important to weigh up the costs and benefits of each before deciding on your engagement strategy.

Case study box: Examples of national associations involve members

The Independent Sector (IS-USA) has 16 committees in which members are encouraged to engage. Some of the committees are: Executive Committee; Board Development Committee; Civic Engagement Task Force; Ethics and Accountability Committee; Communications and Marketing Advisory Task Force.

CEMEFI (Mexico) has ten committees for active member leadership: Communication; Management and Finance, Legal Framework, Social Corporate Responsibility, Community Foundations, Research, Professionalisation, Awards, Annual Meeting, Past-Chair of the Board Committee.

Information box: Participation

A national association relies on members' willingness and ability to suitably contribute to its functioning. Due to an emphasis on local priorities and resource shortages, some members are unable to contribute significantly to the functioning of the association. This is illustrated in sociologist David Sills' research that revealed that although organisational bylaws and constitutions specify full participation, the expectation that members would be active is often not met.[1] Meanwhile, Alexander indicates that national associations can manage even if a large percentage of membership is inactive, as long as the 'activist elite' are willing to continue to dedicate the necessary time and resources. In some cases, it may be that better resourced organisations are more able to contribute effectively to the working of a national association. There is however no doubt that the effectiveness of national associations and their capacity to represent and balance a diversity of interests occurs best with broad levels of member involvement. The recent questionnaire completed by a number of AGNA members indicated that existing associations have higher levels of involvement than the elite alone. High participation levels varied greatly and ranged from some indicating that less than 25% were active while others indicated 75% were active.[1]

In addition, different groups require different strategies. Often explicit strategies are needed to engage under-represented groups in the association. Failure to recognise this generally results in skewed patterns of engagement and uneven representation

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Toolbox/ case study: Examples of innovative strategies to engage under-represented groups
- Scope the sector and set up meetings with leaders of relevant organisations and ask them to join the association
- Set up special task teams and campaigns to focus on these members needs
- Share information. Send out regular briefings using appropriate technology such as cell phones
- Show members how their voices will be heard and used
- Think about who approaches the specified groups and target someone who they will identify with and trust to drive the engagement

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5.2.4   Membership services

Creating innovative ways to attract and retain members is a perpetual challenge faced by membership organisations and national associations. Potential members need to be sufficiently aware of the many benefits to be motivated to join a national association. Once a member they need to be convinced of the on-going benefits to remain active and renew their membership. It is important, therefore, to devise effective strategies in order to attract and retain interested members.

Information box: AGNA members services
A recent survey of 35% of AGNA members identified conferences and workshops followed by campaigns as the most popular and used membership events.

The same survey found newsletters and communication the most successful mechanism to engage members, flowed by meetings and subject specific task forces and events. [1]

Each association provides its own unique services to members. Some focus on services that help the sector to function more efficiently, such as NCVO's discounted pensions and operating services, while others focus on building the capacity of the sector, such as SCVO with its research and training services. Other associations prioritise mobilising resources and exchanges, yet others focus on networking through events. Most national associations provide members with opportunities to participate in campaigns and joint actions. Research and knowledge services are often used to support advocacy and policy work undertaken by the association or its members. Regardless of the services offered, it is important to remember the following points:

- Regularly communicate with your members so you know what services they need and how you can support them
- Listen to members' feedback on your services
- Ensure that each service offered is of a consistently high quality. This builds up trust in the association
- Advertise the services so that members know what benefits they can derive
- Clearly communicate your capabilities and do not raise unrealistic expectations that cannot be met

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Case study: NCVO discounted services
The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) works with many partner organisations to offer its members and the wider voluntary sector access to a range of discounts and preferential services which support the day-to-day running of organisations in the sector. It uses the bulk purchasing power of our members and its relationship with the business sector to drive down the costs of products and services, and to ensure that these are high quality and tailored to the needs of voluntary and community organisations. These services cover:

Case study: SCVO training services

SCVO is a major organiser of short courses for the Voluntary Sector in Scotland. Its courses cover a broad range of topics from IT to organisational governance, from personal development to capacity building to meet the training requirements of the Sector. Both face-to-face training and on-line training is offered. The aim of the courses is to build the voluntary sector in Scotland. Some examples of courses offered are:

- Demonstrating Impact
- Managing & Supervising People
- Knowledge Management - What You know and How You Use It
- Recruitment Interviewing Skills
- Effective leadership
- Introduction to strategic planning
- Introduction to project management
- Branding
- Marketing
- Planning and organizing your website
- Facilitation

The services provided can be financed through creative partnerships with the private sector, through donors and through membership fees.

5.2.5 Managing expectations

The process of incorporating member interests and inspiring their participation, can easily lead to raising false expectations. To prevent confusion or frustration, the national association must find ways to manage member expectations. Members will judge whether the association is serving their needs by how well services are provided, their views are represented and issues are advanced. It is essential to clarify precisely what members can anticipate from the national association. Having a realistic picture reduces frustration and prevents later attrition.

In some countries, a great onus is thrust upon civil society, particularly when the government is viewed as unreliable, as in Zimbabwe. This void substantially raises member expectations of or hopes for their national association. This predicament is further compounded in developing countries where the needs are extensive, but resources are lacking. Being fastidious about what the association can and has achieved demonstrates integrity and helps members to align their expectations with reality.

Case study box: Managing members expectations CEMEFI

CEMEFI offers a range of services to members. It has managed expectations by being clear about what it does and does not offer, making public the indicators for success and also through reporting back regularly. Regular and accurate communication is the key to managing expectations. CEMEFI has also focused on ensuring members get some benefits from participating in the association, such as experts who can provide advice and donor recognition.

Toolbox: Be clear on what you do and don't offer

Do provide a list of membership services	Don't exaggerate the offerings
Do detail what you expect of members who want to access the services	Don't promise things you are not 100% sure you can deliver
Do detail the process required to access the services	Don't rely on emails or newsletters as the only form of communication
Do communicate regularly and ask members what they think	Don't ignore members feedback

5.3   Profiling the association

Communication is crucial in development – whether in the form of dissemination, guidelines, prescriptions, recommendations, advocacy, promotion, persuasion, education, conversation, roundtables, consultations, dialogue, counselling or entertainment.[15]

Stakeholders, members and potential members and stakeholders will hear about the association and its work in a variety of ways. Initially, it is usually through some personal contact. As the association grows, members and stakeholders hear about the association through its marketing and reputation. At this stage it is useful to develop a communications strategy. Participants at the AGNA meeting at the 2007 World Assembly indicated that a national association needs to develop a

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15 http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Publications/Tools_Comms.html

communications strategy with an attractive and memorable message to entice potential members.

A communications strategy defines a variety of components: objectives, audiences, media relations, key messages, forms of delivery: print, electronic, in person and advertising campaigns, activities and materials selection, implementation of the action plan, and finally monitoring the action plan.

The first step once you have decided on your overall objective is to decide who you want to communicate with. National associations have multiple audiences, and you need to tailor the message and communications vehicles to suit the needs of different audiences. National association audiences can be broken down into internal audiences such as the board, influential members, general membership and staff; and external audiences such as decision makers, donors, the media, potential members and the general public.

Audience toolkit

Both internal and external audiences can be segmented using the pyramid model below.

Audience segmentation

Decision makers

Influencers

Multipliers

Membership or public
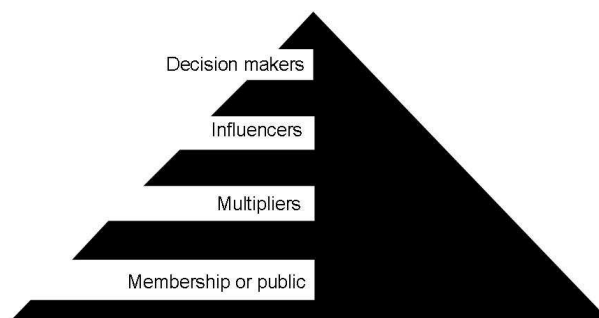
Adapted from Kellogg Foundation Communications toolkit: http://www.wkkf.org

In deciding on your key message you need to know who you are talking to and what you want to achieve. You also need to link your message to a distinct brand. To attract attention the brand, materials and message must be sufficiently "inspirational and aspirational".[16]

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[16] AGNA meeting notes, World Assembly, May 23, 2007.

Toolkit on developing your message[1]
1. Be clear about your communications *goals*: know what you are trying to accomplish and your time line. Be as specific as possible.
2. Determine your *audience(s)*.
3. Determine why they should care about your issue.
   - What are their *concerns* -- what about your issue is important to them?
   - What core *values* in your audience do these concerns speak to?
4. Articulate your *message* in a short paragraph that answers these questions:
   - Why is this issue important for your audience? (Refer to the values and concerns.)
   - What is the threat and who is responsible?
   - What action will address the need and the threat? *Give people something to do.*
5. Use *language* that speaks to your audience.
   - Combine the emotional and the rational.
   - Do not use jargon.
6. Your choice of *messenger* depends on your message and your target audience. All three must complement each other.
7. Use *images* to tell your story as well as words, but make sure your *facts* are handy. Be ready with *anecdotes*, i.e. real, human stories to illustrate and amplify your message.
8. Everything must be repeated. Stay on the message until the message gains power and influence. All actions and activities speak, and they must all speak the same message.
9. Distill the essence of your message into a *slogan*, a media "hook" or a sound bite that succinctly communicates your essential action.

Determine how you will get this message to your target audience. What are the *points of access* to this particular audience -- mass media, community organizations, trade publications, church groups, special interest magazines, the web, etc.?

The scope and medium of the media strategy is dictated by who the association is targeting, and with what message. The toolbox below provides some examples of possible media.

Toolbox: Some of the more common tools used are

Tool	Description
Office	A large part of an organisation's work happens through telephone contact and with visitors coming to your office. If you put people off with a negative attitude when people phone in or visit, you risk developing an organisational image not to your liking.[17]
Website	Today the internet is one of the most effective communication channels. Websites are useful tools to profile an organisation, give people access to your materials and test the public's interest in the issues you address. It is also possible to use the website as a membership interface with the use of passwords that provide access to more secure sections of the site.

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17 Civicus communications toolkit

Tool	Description
Blogs	A blog (an abridgment of the term 'web log') is a website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.
Press release	A press statement is used to give information or comment to the media on an important issue or event. Remember that news goes stale very quickly, so get your statement out as fast as you can.
Write a story	Find ways of telling the big story through the eyes or experience of someone who is directly involved. Stories are more interesting when there are photographs and words from human beings rather than just press statements from organisations.
Give an interview	Speaking on television, radio or in the print media is one of the more powerful and immediate ways of getting your message across. You need to be prepared. When asked for an interview at short notice do everything possible to meet the deadline. Also make your after-hours number available to the media. Always return media calls as soon as possible. If you make the effort and make it easy for the journalists, you could get prime time coverage.
Networks	Using networks of members to spread the word and recommend membership and market the association.
Events	Public events are an effective way to publicise the message of a campaign and gain media attention. This could include a conference, a seminar, an advocacy event, a campaign event or a members event.
Speeches	Giving a talk at a gathering can both disseminate information and broaden your audience.
Videos and documentaries	Videos and documentaries are a powerful visual medium to communicate your message. Remember to keep them short and captivating.
Release of research or materials	Undertaking research on the sector and releasing it and/or materials to highlight the work of the association and its members or the context in which you work.
Actions	Engaging in an advocacy action needs provides an opportunity to profile the association and its campaigns.
Newsletters	Regular news and analysis provided to subscribers and others.
Publications	Other publications printed or released online which profile the association, the context, the services and the work.

The strategy must take into account the national political context and the relationships of the core group and later the board and secretariat with the media and relevant stakeholders.

Once you have decided on the audience, message, and medium you now need to implement the plan: decide who will do what and when and who will monitor its impact, so the national association can learn from its own practice.

For most national associations the strategy will include an internal and an external plan. Below are some suggestions to assist you with your communications efforts.

Internal	*External*
Communicate regularly	Be consistent
Speak to members priorities	Keep it short and simple
Celebrate success	Include human stories
Acknowledge members contributions	Be culturally sensitive
Share lessons and best practices	Be credible
Share information, resources and tools	Be memorable
Don't overload members with information	Don't ever provide facts you cannot stand by

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Information box: Communications tips

Veteran community strategist, Makani Themba explains important tactics involved in framing an issue. It is important to describe the issue in a way that captures the audience's attention, and that highlights in intriguing ways the controversy, accomplishments, conflict or injustice. The story also needs to be unique and captivating. Ensure the message being presented appeals to the population of interest or the audience the medium is pursuing. It is recommended that by obtaining and reviewing their package to advertisers this will reveal whether there is a suitable match between the issue at hand and their consumer group. Demonstrate to the media outlets how the issue is serious and significantly impacts a great number of people. Widely promote milestones and breakthroughs to energize the media and the audience. Capitalising on the 'top of mind' effect created by high profile stories by finding a creative link to issues being addressed by the national association. Develop compelling visuals to illustrate the case and touch the hearts and minds of viewers.[1]

As part of the external communications strategy you need guidelines on dealing with the media. Most organisations have their own rules for who may speak to the press and their own policies for dealing with the media. We recommend the national association policy include:

- Who acts as spokesperson on specific issues

- Who issues and approves press statements
- Who may be interviewed on behalf of the organisation
- Most organisations have three types of people who speak to the press:
    ⇒ A spokesperson who stays in regular contact with reporters, briefs them, issues press statements, deals with questions and queries, and organises interviews
    ⇒ Leadership who are interviewed or asked questions, or are quoted when they speak in other forums like public meetings
    ⇒ Spokespeople on specific topics who have special knowledge about and experience of those topics.

Case study: SCVO press release that demonstrates the power of both research and press releases

CHARITIES ARE MAJOR PLAYERS WITH SCOTLAND'S MOST VULNERABLE

A report published today shows that charities and voluntary organisations are taking on both a significant and increasing role in Scottish society, with Scotland's vulnerable people coming to increasingly rely on the Third Sector to support them.

The research, conducted by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), paints a picture of a growing sector that now employs more people in Scotland in paid employment than the NHS, and more than the Scottish agriculture and fisheries industries combined.

In 2006 the third sector in Scotland generated over £3.2bn for the Scottish economy, up from £2.6bn in 2004. The 45,000 organisations that make up the voluntary sector employ close to 130,000 people in Scotland, and offer volunteering opportunities to over 1.2 million people in Scotland.

However for the third sector to continue to play this important role SCVO are calling for real change in all levels of government to provide the conditions for the third sector to flourish. Government must work to reduce bureaucracy for charities and voluntary organisations, funding must be provided on a sustainable basis, and public bodies must meet the full costs to organisations in delivering public services.

Martin Sime, Chief Executive, SCVO said:
    "The voluntary sector continues to grow and deliver more services for the people of Scotland. As a sector it is now a major employer and the biggest player in care and social housing sectors. But this research clearly amplifies the need to address the structural and funding weaknesses that underpin the sector so that we can continue to make our contribution and to place the association's central role in relation to Scotland and local government and sees the association improve the sustainability and performance of the third sector. The signs are encouraging but the full potential of this sector cannot be effectively realised too. This is just about their money it's about how the sector can govern itself and work together to meet the association could will need to be more innovative in its communications strategy.

The research is being officially revealed at The Gathering – the Scottish voluntary sector exhibition below and conference at the SECC in Glasgow. Over the course of the three day event 9,000 people are expected to attend.

Toolbox: Ideas to access media in repressive contexts
- Set up your own distribution lists and use technology to send out emails, sms's, etc. In this was you spread the message using your own media channels.
- Use the internet and its tools: websites, blogs, chatrooms and videos.
- Use the international media to help you raise the issue. Often local media only become interested in a story when it is an international event.

"Simply put, communications is critical to achieving your mission. Successful communications are vital to nonprofits because they can help increase awareness, generate support, and effect change."[18] Don't shy away from making the most out of your communications plan. Be strategic, targeted and bold.

## 5.4   Planning and running campaigns/ joint action[19]

"Civil society organisations have two primary sources of power: valuable information and the voices of people who care about legislative priorities. Direct lobbying and grassroots mobilising enable CSOs to use those two sources of power effectively."
(The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Non-profit organizations. M. Avner. Amherst H. Wilder foundation)

A campaign is an effort to bring about some change. It is not one single action, but a combination of a number of actions, reports and events put together in a sequenced plan.[20] By acting together, members are more likely to have an impact and achieve their goal. Therefore, most national associations run campaigns of some kind or another. Some focus on campaigns to improve the working environment of not-for-profit organisations, while others take up or support members' campaigns on specific issues such as poverty alleviation.

Toolbox on campaigning

The following are some universal truths about campaigns:

- The best public-issue campaigns are based on hopes and dreams, rather than fears and problems. If you want to involve people, it is best to inspire them and generate enthusiasm for the campaign. They must feel that something will improve if they support your campaign. Negative approaches that exploit emotions like fear or anger can sometimes mobilise people for a short period, but are much harder to use to build organisations or transform society.
- Campaigns will only succeed if your target audience identifies with your issue – make sure you know your target audience and have researched their concerns, values and views on the issue.
- Every successful campaign needs a clear identity, and a message which clearly summarises key points that you want the public to understand around your issue. Your message must be consistently conveyed in all public speeches and in any media you produce. The identity and message of your campaign can be popularised with effective and easily recognisable logos and slogans.
- Once your target audience identifies with the issue, you have to move them to take action. To do this you need a mobilising and organising strategy.
- A successful campaign never moves off its message. Do not get diverted by other issues, especially by opposition attacks. Stick to the positive message you want to get across, regardless of what other people say. This enables you to set the agenda.
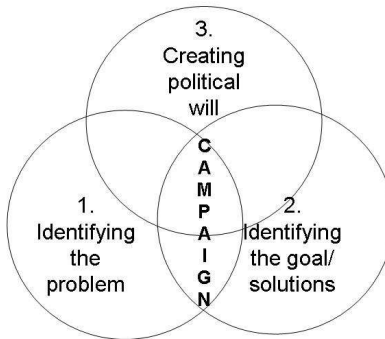
Adapted from SARA/AED Advocacy Training Guide by R Sharma

A campaign can succeed when, concurrently, a problem is recognised, the solution is accepted and there is political will to act. This overlap usually occurs during a short window of opportunity that must be seized.

Campaigns must be consistent with the aims of your organisation, and must have clear goals. A campaign must be well researched and properly planned. Each phase and action must have the human and financial resources needed to succeed.

Many campaigns get off to a great start and then fizzle out because of bad planning. Just as a successful campaign will strengthen your organisation and motivate people to get involved, a failed campaign will weaken your organisation and disillusion your supporters.

The diagram below illustrates all the steps you need to take in determining your campaign strategy and plan.

Adapted from SARA/AED Advocacy Training Guide by R Sharma
and Advocacy Institute Advocacy Resource Handbook, 2004

Most national associations have run one or more campaign. Many national associations have run campaigns to secure favourable legislation for NGOs. Sometimes this has been run together with other sectors in society. Section 6.4 talks about the important of, and tools to set up coalitions across sectors.

Case study: CEMEFI campaign

CEMEFI campaigned for ten years in collaboration with four other coalition partners for the passage of the Civil Society Activities Law in 2004. From its experiences, CEMEFI learned that coalition building and campaigning are time-consuming and complex processes and that in order to guarantee the success of a campaign and the effectiveness of a coalition, considerable amounts of time and energy need to be devoted to preparatory phases and to creating a framework within which a coalition and campaign can function transparently.

5.5   Advocacy and lobbying

Regardless of the context, national associations need to be skilled advocates and lobbyists when working with external stakeholders.

Advocacy means speaking out effectively on behalf of one's cause or community, and is a basic element of a democratic system. It is an effort to shape public perception or to effect change that may or may not require changes in the law.

Lobbying is a focused form of advocacy that shapes public policy in arenas of influence at the local, national or global level. Lobbying means persuading individuals

or groups with decision-making power to support a position you believe is right. Lobbying can be used to influence anyone with power.

Public policy is the combination of goals, laws, rules and funding priorities set by public officials that determines how government meets needs, solves problems and spends public funds. Public policy is formally set by elected officials at different levels through the legislative process. Public policy objectives and programmatic goals are set in law. Legislative bodies pass tax policies and budgets, and set revenue and spending priorities at every level of government.

Arenas of influence are those places where public policy is decided. Lobbying is most often targeted at arenas of legislative activity. The administrative branch of government is also an arena where changes are made through executive order, through changes in rules or administrative practices, and through the use of the veto by elected executives.

The Independent Sector (IS-USA) works with congressional/senate committees (elected officials) and the staff, which tends to remain constant regardless of changes in power. "Relationships have to be maintained as politicians, and thus priorities, change."[21] Many associations ask to be included on a mailing list to receive various government newsletters. These are good ways to stay in tune with the direction government processes are moving.

Toolbox: Advocacy and lobbying tips
- Be clear about your issue, your facts and your position.
- Use lobbying only for important issues that will improve life in the community and make very sure that your position is the right one before you start lobbying.
- Be careful not to speak "on behalf of" people unless you have consulted them and involved them in developing your lobbying strategy. Target the right people – analyse who has the power to make a decision on your issue and target your lobbying at these people.
- Build a lobby group – analyse who (individuals and organisations) can influence the decision-makers and try to mobilise them to support your issue – never try to lobby alone. People with political power are often most sensitive to grassroots mobilisation that represents their voters.
- Most decision-makers have staff (aides, PAs and secretaries) who deal with documents, do research, and prepare briefings and programmes. Sometimes it is as important to influence these people as their bosses. Make sure that you get to know them and spend time explaining your issues to them and building relationships. If they take you seriously it will be easier to get access to, and attention from, the decision-maker.
- Prepare for opposition – analyse the opposition's position and develop counter-arguments to theirs, since they may also be lobbying the same person
- Think about your target audience, and how the decision-maker can benefit from agreeing with you. Include this in your arguments – most decision-makers will agree more easily if they can see how your proposals link to their concerns.
- Get to the point and stick to it.
- Make sure you hear what is said, rather than what you want to hear.
- Never take anything for granted.
- Try to personalise the issue. Decision-makers are concerned about the impact on their constituency.
- Never use blackmail or bribery, or even gifts and favours, to persuade someone. That is corruption, not lobbying.
- Keep very careful records of all your communications with the decision-makers.
- Maintain your relationship with decision-makers by sending them information, offering to help them, thanking them when they comment supportively on an issue and inviting them to events.

> **Case study:**
> In Nigeria the Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO) uses a broad consultative process prior to taking a policy stance, which includes a wide range of member consultations in the aim of arriving at a deeper understanding of member needs, interests and expectations from the campaign. Information and feedback are solicited from members and other CSOs which are knowledgeable in the specific campaigning issue. NNNGO's initial concerns lie with adopting a policy position that reflects a balance of the sector's views, rather than identifying champions for the cause and coalition partners. Upon the termination of the consultative process and the integration of member feedback, the NNNGO's Executive Council adopts a position to endorse.
>
> Once a campaign is launched, NNNGO continues to seek member inputs and ensures its members are updated on a regular basis on campaign developments and means of involvement. In NNNGO's experience, maintaining a loose campaign structure while having clear objectives, transparent decision-making processes, and clear terms of reference provides stimulus for national associations' members as well as other CSOs to participate in a campaign. On a practical level, having dedicated staff to carry out the day to day work is crucial to guarantee the sustainability of the campaign.
>
> NNNGO used this approach in its advocacy campaign for the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI), which has been debated in the Nigerian National Assembly since 1999. Oluseyi believes that support from a wide array of civil society actors and NNNGO's establishment of and compliance to a clear strategy outlined in a 12 action-point document have proven critical in maintaining the credibility of the campaign, in raising the profile of the coalition and in receiving media and legislators' continual attention.

5.6   Maintaining accountability and legitimacy

5.6.1   Understanding and building legitimacy

Legitimacy is a core question that needs to be continually addressed. Legitimacy involves the recognition and approval of rights as seen by yourself and others. If one party may only be seen as legitimate through the consent of another party. The legitimacy of a national association involves recognising, and having others recognise, their rights.

There are several sources of legitimacy that are important for a national association, namely:
   • Legitimacy of purpose or moral legitimacy – demonstrating the worthiness of the cause and the association's role in promoting it. This is most often called into question where associations take on a campaigning role that criticises political or commercial interests. For example: their right to represent or to criticise may not always be evident to others, particularly those on the receiving end of campaigns or criticisms who may ask: who do these national associations represent and to whom are they accountable?
   • Legitimacy of action is based on the association's willingness to take appropriate actions, such as protecting the interests of members and assuming a leadership role in situations of importance to civil society. It also comes from hard work and making inroads in providing direction and leadership within the sector.
   • Good standing legitimacy is based on clean administration and legal compliance. National associations must strive to conform to the highest standards of conduct. This serves both as an example to members, and

protects their work from being undermined by those opposed to their programmes.

- A key source of legitimacy (but possibly one of the trickiest) is claiming to be representative.[22] National associations may claim large voting blocks; intellectual, social and political capital; or political and moral influence, and extensive 'people power'. A sign of growing legitimacy would be an increase in numbers of organisations persuaded to join the work of the association.
- A final source of legitimacy is that based on relationships, which in turn provides the national association with access to and opportunities for engaging with major sources of power.

Information box:

For Slim, an organisation's moral legitimacy is derived firstly, from its relationships with beneficiaries, funders, policy-makers and the public at large; secondly, from its expertise, including its knowledge of the field and experience of working in it; and thirdly from its effectiveness, how well it achieves its goals and the difference that it makes.

Case study box: SCVO builds legitimacy

SCVO has built up its legitimacy over time. Firstly, it has focused on building its own numbers. Secondly it has focused on good standing and developed a code and encouraged members to sign this. Thirdly, it has worked on building its profile and legitimacy with government. It has built relationships with local politicians, assisted with policy statements where it is in agreement with government and conducted staff exchanges. Fourthly, it has built is profile in the media and good relations with the media. Finally, it has built its international network adding to its local legitimacy.

This process has not been without its challenges. Some members feel that SCVO is too close to government, while others feel like it's not close enough. CSOs (particularly service delivery ones) do not want to risk cuts in their own funding so expect SCVO to be the bear of difficult messages to government. As a membership led organisation, SCVO tries to maintain a balance-work with government but keep some distance.

Legitimacy is not a once off activity. It is a continuous process. As the context changes so the demands change and associations need to build their legitimacy in the eyes of new and different actors.

Regardless of the source, national associations must work to establish both their own and their members' legitimacy. An important aspect of this endeavour is to understand, and build, both accountability and trust.

5.6.2 Understanding and building accountability

Accountability plays an important role in national associations as it is part of the mechanism that substantiates their legitimacy, credibility and respectability. As the voluntary sector's influence has grown, so too have demands on its accountability. This combined with growing awareness has resulted in increased scrutiny of the sector and increased demands of accountability. Similarly, as the influence of a national associations grows, so too will demands for accountability increase from those who support the associations' work, as well as from those who wish to curtail it.

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22 Florini, Ann M. (Ed.). The Third Force: the Rise of Transnational Civil Society. Tokyo: Japan Centre for International Exchange

and Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace., 2000, p. 233

Accountability refers to "the state of being answerable or responsible for tasks assigned or assumed."[23] It refers to the assessment of people and their conduct, particularly those in positions of authority and privilege. The behaviour of organisations and individual members is assessed against professional codes and social contracts. Accountability also implies a relationship: that there is one party that is owed an explanation or justification and one that has a duty to give it.[24]

Often legal requirements for adherence to codes of conduct and for financial reporting offer a minimum standard, and focus on accounting for the use of financial resources. National associations strive to remain in compliance with legal requirements, as well as pursue higher standards of accountability.

A national association needs to balance multiple accountabilities; it needs to fulfil (and, at times, defend) its mission and mandate, while remaining accountable to its board and staff, members, partners, government, donors and to the public. Donors, in particular, have a key role to play. Increasingly, funding to the sector is linked to the achievement of specified outputs or outcomes, and may be subject to assurances of the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness. For example, whether it has appropriate employment policies or an approved quality assurance system in place. Such demands are not unreasonable, provided that they are appropriate and proportionate. In a more competitive funding environment, it is in the organisation's own interest to be able to demonstrate what it does and how well it does it, as well as its financial probity. And it is entirely appropriate that they should be able to account for funds received, albeit in the form of a grant or contract, and show that the money has been used efficiently and effectively for the purposes for which it was given.[25]

Internal and external reporting requirements are often spelled out in the constitution or operating procedures of national associations. National associations monitor and evaluate their work, in order to convey the quality of outcomes to stakeholders and to integrate the lessons-learned into their future operations. Reporting and offering public disclosure about operations become avenues for reflection, conversation, and improvement. Organisational and project evaluations are effective accountability instruments. Processes for internal self-regulation and social auditing contribute to accountability.

Additional tools and processes for enhancing accountability are member feedback assessments, developmental evaluations, and analyses of cultural or political shifts. Members may be encouraged to provide feedback and candid remarks on the value of membership, and on what contributions they see the association making to the sector.

It is important for national associations to articulate member responsibilities, such as levels of participation, and to promote accountability standards for their members. It cannot be assumed that all civil society organisations are devoted to upholding and exemplifying the values and principles of trust, responsibility and integrity. The accountability of member organisations is important as their involvement in the national association is a form of an agreement, and is based on a shared commitment. Members need to be accountable for living up to this agreement. For example, members may commit to paying dues, supporting and undertaking some of the work of the association and to speaking positively about the role of the association.

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23 http://www.wrightresults.com/accountability.html

24 NCVO publication, Accountability and transparency

25 NCVO Publication, Accountability and transparency

The support from and participation by members helps determine the degree of legitimacy and credibility of the national association. Insufficient member contribution to the work of the association will greatly diminish its effectiveness, influence and legitimacy. The lack of accountability or integrity by a member or non-member CSO may reflect negatively on the sector and adversely affect the public reputation of the national association.

Sector accountability includes encouraging debates about accountability, creating sector-wide codes of conduct, and inspiring adherence to the highest standards of conduct. National associations also need to ensure that legislation is suitably demanding of accountability measures, but is not overly constraining.

Holding organisations to account is a necessary form of accountability, but by itself is limited. There is a need to develop approaches that recognise and address the complexity of voluntary sector accountability, the diversity of the sector, and the independence and autonomy of members. This requires a broader understanding of accountability and a greater emphasis on effective communication. It also requires that organisations themselves to take responsibility for their accountability and endeavour to be more transparent in what they do and how they do it.

Greater transparency is needed to:
- Maintain public trust and confidence in voluntary action and in the actions of voluntary and community organisations;
- Strengthen relationships with stakeholders, particularly donors (of time and money) and others who support an organisation's mission or cause;
- Generate a greater understanding of what individual organisations are for and how they achieve this;
- Generate a greater understanding of what the sector is for and how it operates, including understanding of the wider social and political roles that not for profit organisations undertake; and
- Justify the sector's expanding role in civil life and in providing public services as a consequence of government policies in these areas.

5.6.3 Self-regulation

Self-regulation provides the internal mechanisms to ensure proper and upstanding conduct. National associations play dual roles by regulating their own operations, as well as addressing the accountability challenges of their members and the third sector more broadly. National associations endeavour to raise the bar for the entire sector and for society more broadly by establishing standards and tools for accountability.

Several national associations have developed and implemented codes of conduct or other tools to prompt high performance and good governance for themselves and for member organisations. Codes of Conduct require a lot of development, interpretation and "buy in" before they can be effectively implemented. Following implementation, there is also extensive work involved in building the capacity of members to integrate the code into their operations.

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Case study box:
CEMEFI is an example of the need to build capacity. In 2006, it developed indicators of success and established ten benchmarks. The accountability measures included legal registration, tax return, contact information, annual reports, and financial reports. This was meant to increase donor trust. When CEMEFI inquired of its 350 members, only about 100 were compliant.

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A review of numerous codes of conduct of AGNA members revealed significant variations in content and types of codes. Some associations focused on board conduct, while most others emphasised the behaviour expected of members. To form their codes of conduct some national associations used national and international references. A number of countries based their codes on the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

When planning the introduction of a code for good conduct a national association may want to explore the following questions:

- What are the challenges of implementation?
- How are codes actually internalized in operations upon adoption?
- Who monitors the implementation of the code?
- Are there any mechanisms for complaints or redress?

Toolbox: Possible items to be included in a code of conduct

- *Values* - this will detail the shared values such as a commitment to non-discrimination and democracy
- *Effective governance practices* – might include operational procedures for the board of directors and how a CSO meets it fiduciary responsibilities and maintains oversight of its affairs and governance practices.
- *Financial oversight* – includes procedures a CSO would follow to demonstrate prudent stewardship of charitable resources.
- *Accountability* – this will include holding Annual General Membership meetings and other mechanisms to involve stakeholders in planning
- *Resource use* – guidelines for the sustainable and cost effective use of assets
- *Transparent fundraising* – may stipulate practices that the association should use to solicit funds from the public and the application of principles to build donor support and confidence.
- *Facilitating legal compliance* –these tools would help the association comply with their legal obligations and afford the public a means to access information about the national association operations.
- *Human resource practices* – procedures that ensure CSO boards and management are aware of their role in upholding good labour relations.
- *Relationships and networks* – guidelines for ensuring collaborative relationships and networks

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Within the AGNA membership, requirements for members to comply with a specific code of ethics vary significantly. PNF requires members to sign the code and to adhere to it. Additional codes are provided for member consideration and/or compliance. For example, IS encourages its members to adopt codes of ethics – but not necessarily the one IS applies to itself. It is important to consider that several members of a national association will have obligations under other regulatory bodies (such as state legislation in the case of IS-USA) in addition to what the national association would require.

Some have established mechanisms to deal with violations of codes of ethics and conduct, such as specific steps detailing the monitoring of violations, and redress action in case on non-compliance In most cases, reporting requirements are specified for members to be in compliance. Items addressed in this code may pertain

to financial management, human resource practices, advocacy and lobbying practices, along with environmental stewardship.

Case study: Applying the code

In 2006 PNF rallied all provinces to work together when Pakistan was faced with a politically motivated government bill that had "malafide intentions" to curtail the freedom of NGOs. Fortunately, in 1995 PNF proactively prepared an NGO Code of Conduct that outlined broad guidelines and basic values of development ethics and fundraising. Three committees – finance, accountability and coordination – were assigned to oversee the work of the provinces to ensure conformity. This code stipulated that coordinators in the provinces were required to submit reports to the executive council. Each provincial level built in a monitoring system. If organisations were interested in becoming part of PNF, they had to adopt the code of conduct. As PNF itself was already practicing self-regulation and required its members to do so as well it was in a stronger position to challenge proposed oppressive government legislation. After emergency meetings of the executive and several consultations were held all rejected the government's proposal. This was the official position presented to the government in PNF's name. When the government realized that the majority of the NGO community was against it, the plan was discontinued. The preparedness, professionalism, cooperative spirit and timely response among the NGO community were pivotal to achieving success. The success of the campaign by PNF increased the profile and credibility of the sector and highlighted the political acumen of its members.

If you decide to develop a code you need to anticipate the tasks of monitoring the code, and of managing a complaints mechanism.

Case study: NGO Codes

It is one thing to articulate a code; it is a much greater thing to adhere to it and to report to interested stakeholders how well these strict standards have been honoured. One illustration of a country active in promoting a code of conduct is the Philippines. The Caucus of Development NGO's (CODE-NGO) Code of Conduct was one of its founding documents. It was an attempt to implement and enforce the highest standards of conduct among development NGOs and to ensure their accountability to various stakeholders. All sectors were engaged in discussions about accountability measures. In the initial stages the organisation was popularizing and disseminating the code through publications and conferences. It also created guidelines to explain how to address violations, penalties and non-compliance. At a CODE-NGO National Assembly, a decision was adopted that all member networks had to become certified in their use of the National Code of Conduct by the end of 2006 and all affiliates by the end of 2014. This certification was the proof of the high standards of operation of the CSO. In the case of the Philippines, NGOs who do not achieve the certification become ineligible to offer tax deductions for donations. CODE-NGO continues to urge donors to abide by similar the highest of standards for community service.

5.7   Financing a national association

Financial resources are necessary to operate a growing national association and resource mobilisation is one of the key challenges faced by an association. Many funders want to know that a CBO or NGO is credible before they will consider funding it. In the case of a new national association, donors will want to know what their existing partners think of the initiative. Therefore, the first task in securing financial resources is establishing credibility with your members and potential members, and winning the support of influential people in the sector. The second step is building relationships with donors, and explaining to them the rational behind setting up a

national association. This takes time, effort and personal attention from the core groups.

"Funding was not easy. It took us three years to access funding to set up a professional office and move away from functioning part-time. All of us were volunteering our time to run the office. We are currently under three year funding." Civil Society Forum of Tonga.

Nascent associations are frequently initially sustained by core team members through in-kind contributions. At the inception phase, some also use office space and equipment of other NGOs. To maintain coordination of an emerging network, secretariats sometime move from one organisation to another. As it grows, the association develops both need for dedicated funding – and the capacity to raise it.

How these finances are secured and managed varies considerably among national associations. Some tap into existing relationships of members of the core group and board. Others tap into new donors that fund coordinating structures, yet others finance their activities from government grants.

Toolbox: Possible sources of funding
- Grants from government, donors and business
- Donations from individuals and organisations
- Membership fees
- Subscription fees for a newsletter or access to a website
- Product development and sales – like the production and dissemination of needed publications or the commissioning of research and reports.
- Fees from conference and events sales and management
- Fees for outsourced services such as database management or payroll services
- Selling services such as expertise to develop a new law or draft a report
- Bartering for services or products can be adapted with imagination. For example, tailored training may be provided in exchange for services from a member agency that would produce a monthly e-newsletter.

Information box/ Case study box: AGNA funding base
Based on the 2006 AGNA survey we can conclude the following about the funding base of existing national associations:
- All but one of the respondents indicated that some part of their revenue was sourced from membership dues. However it is generally only a small part, accounting for between 10 and 20 percent of funds raised.
- Government grants was the least mentioned source of revenue, with 68% of respondents receiving no government funding. However for those that do, particularly in the north, it is an important source of funding.
- A growing number of northern associations obtaining significant funds from government service agreements or from specific project funding.
- NNNGO was the only surveyed national association that reported drawing a significant portion of its funding (45%) from business support.[1]
- Thirteen or 68% of respondents were dependent for 50% or more of their revenues from a single source.[1]
- Ten respondents (out of 47) of a 2006 AGNA survey indicated they rely on international grants for 80 percent or more of their income. These ten were all national associations from the Global South or from countries in transition (Kyrgyzstan). Civic Initiatives, the Union of Arab Community Based Associations in Israel (Ittijah) and PIANGO solely draw their revenues from international grants.[1]
- Increasingly funds are being sought through innovative projects, like creating and marketing needed services or products. For example, SCVO contracts payroll services for numerous agencies.

As the national association evolves and establishes a record of fund-raising and years of service, it becomes more adept at approaching different donors. Various national associations assume the role of helping their members by lobbying for funding for civil society. National associations also provide capacity-building opportunities for their members in the areas of volunteer development, leadership training and fundraising skills.

Any funds provided to a national association come with their own terms. Some associations are reluctant to receive funds from sources that would restrict their activity or undermine their autonomy. For example, IS-USA follows a policy of not accepting government funding in order to preserve its independence. Most of its funding comes from private and corporate foundations and compulsory membership fees.

5.8 Sustaining a national association

Sustainability refers to maintaining a national association at a range of different levels. Here we identify sustainability of purpose, resources and impact. We have used the traditional triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental as a lens through which to expand on the issues of sustainability as detailed in the table below.

	Economic	*Social*	*Environmental*
Purpose	A funded accountable sector able to pursue its work	A coordinated sector in good standing able to defend its	A sector cognisant and responsive to its context and

		work	resource base
Resource	A financially secure association	A capacitated sector with systems to continue to build capacity and retain staff and volunteers	Efficient resource use that minimises the demand on natural and financial resources
Impact	Value added to members in the form of additional resources and reduced costs	Changes in the levels of awareness of the role and work of the voluntary sector	Contributions made to changes in the legal environment governing the voluntary sector to ensure its continuation for future generations

5.8.1 Sustaining the vision and strategy

Sustainability is first and foremost about sustaining the association's purpose. This includes retaining focus, and building a funded accountable sector able to pursue its work. It also involves ensuring sustainable mechanisms for coordination and self-regulation, and ensuring that external stakeholders recognise the role of the sector. Tools to facilitate this sustainability include:

- Using the media to profile the organisation
- Advocacy on behalf of the sector
- Building networks and relationships between members and between members and external stakeholders
- Developing codes and other regulatory instruments

5.8.2 Sustaining the resources

Traditionally, resource sustainability has focused on financial sustainability. This is not surprising. The John Hopkins Center for Civil Studies found that more than eighty percent of not for profits rate fundraising as their most significant challenge. There are many aspects at play, including possible competition over limited resources. "The number of non-profits raising money has increased exponentially in the last ten years."[26]

There are several tools that can be used to facilitate financial sustainability namely:

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26   Klein, Kim. Fundraising for Social Change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001, pp. vii-viii

- Diversifying your funding base so you are not reliant on a single source of funds. This will reduce your vulnerability to changing donor priorities, and to shifts in funds. It will ensure your autonomy.
- Focusing on building relationships – this protects your funding sources in the face of funding cuts.
- Identify strategies to increase your internally generated funding (for example through membership and service related fees, sales of products or intellectual property and renting out under-utilised assets) to create a balance between external and internal funding.
- Building up a reserve that can provide funding in times of financial dificultly. There are several different ways to do this including
  o Charging a 10 – 20% admin fee that you build into all funding contracts
  o Investing funds raised smartly to earn interest
  o Selling services
  o Raising private donations
- Securing an endowment or large donation that can provide a steady internal stream of income to the organisation
- Developing a cost containment strategy

In addition, national associations may focus on the environment – for example by lobbying for a culture of philanthropy, favourable tax laws and the creation of localised donor agencies.

Case study box: CEMEFI funding

CEMEFI sees part of their role as increasing access to funding or making the environment more favourable for funding. Currently government provides limited funding into the sector, that excludes those working in the civic education and human rights fields. There are a few private sector funds who focus on charities. CEMEFI strives for the establishment of more private foundations in Mexico where only 300 exist. Of course these efforts are not always successful. Finally, many NGOs still rely on international donations, which have been decreasing. The lack of resources has been a major cause of tension between organisations and also a constraint to the sector's growth.

Finances are part of the resource base. Assets and people are the rest of the resource base. Working out how to maximise the use and efficient use of your assets is part of the challenge of sustainability. These might include buildings, vehicles, equipment and intellectual property.

Sustainability also involves being able to compile the human resources, retain these resources and build further capacity. As with finances there are a range of tools available to assist national associations sustain their people resources including:

- Developing the profile and credibility of the sector so it is able to attract skilled personnel
- Creating opportunities for internships, volunteers and exchanges to expose people to the work of the sector
- Ensuring that you raise adequate resources to pay people
- Partnering with universities and other centres of learning to provide opportunities for personnel development
- Managing work loads to avoid overwork and burn out
- Abiding by the highest standards in employee rights and benefits

5.8.3 Sustaining the Impact

Finally, a national association needs to be concerned with sustained impact on and benefits for the sector. This can be measured by the value added to members, the new services secured, the changes in legislation and regulations and the changed level of awareness. It can also be measured using relationships and networks as an indicator.

Regardless of the focus of sustainability efforts, all require the collection of data and monitoring and evaluation. This is detailed in the next section.

5.9 Measurement, monitoring and evaluation

5.9.1 Why the need M&E

Both monitoring and evaluation are management tools. They are tools to improve management, learn from experience, ensure accountability, meet the requirements of donors and deliver on promises to constituencies. These tools afford associations the opportunity to capture their results and to tell their stories. Monitoring and evaluation are of little value if the organisation does not have a clearly defined mission and objectives, or appropriate indicators of success. For national associations M&E provides a useful tool for members to comment on the work, assess progress and review impact.

As the toolbox below demonstrates, monitoring and evaluation is a demanding process that involves investments of time and resources.

Information box: Defining monitoring and evaluation[27]

	MONITORING	EVALUATION
What:	Monitoring is a continuous function that aims to provide management and the main stakeholders with early indicators of progress (or lack thereof), in achieving the organisations objectives and programmes. It is used to inform decision making on project implementation.	Evaluation is a time-bound exercise which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specific objectives. It is a learning and action oriented tool for improving current activities and future planning and decision making
Why:	Keeping track or oversight	Assessment
Purpose:	Monitoring provides managers with information needed to analyse the current situation, identify and find solutions, discover trends and patterns, keep in schedule and measure progress towards expected outcomes. It allows an opportunity to make decisions regarding human, financial and material resources and minimise needless costs.	Evaluation is the formal process of documenting the organisation's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. It provides a benchmark against which the strategy can be reviewed and updated
When:	Monitoring is regular (daily, monthly, annually). Monitoring activities should be scheduled as part of the association's work	Evaluation is conducted periodically usually every 3 to 5 years: • At or near the mid-point of

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27 Source: Adapted from UNICEF guide to M&E, 1991 and the South African Western Cape Co-operative Strategy, 2007

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	MONITORING	EVALUATION
	plan and be a routine part of project implementation.	implementation of a strategic plan • At the end of a programme or plan
Who:	Monitoring can be carried out by staff and members through surveys, participatory events and through a Management Information System.	Internal evaluations can be carried out by the secretariat with members. External evaluations are generally conducted by external consultants, external agencies or donors.
Information gathered:	Information that tracks progress according to agreed plans and schedules is gathered. Discrepancies between actual and planned implementation are identified.	Facilitated by monitoring but uses additional sources of information. Generally focuses on specific questions related to effectiveness and impact.

Toolbox: Possible issues to be considered in an evaluation
- Achievement of results through assessing actual vs intended results
- Cost-effectiveness through comparing actual and planned costs
- Relevance of results to members needs, the objectives set and any other benchmarks
- Sustainability of results with members in the association and at a policy level in the country
- Partnerships and shared accountability between members and the association for the results
- Partnerships with other stakeholders around common objectives
- Appropriateness of design to meet the needs of the local context
- Appropriateness of resource utilisation human financial and physical
- Appropriateness of actions to manage risk
- Timeliness of actions

5.9.2 Guidelines for developing indicators

Indicators are the critical link between objectives and the type of data that needs to be collected and analysed during the M&E process.

Indicators should be S-M-A-R-T – namely specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and tracktable. In addition, you need to limit the number of indicators through negotiations among the stakeholders. The major considerations for selecting indicators are:
- Appropriateness of the indicator vis-à-vis the objectives
- Ownership by members and other stakeholders
- Cost-effectiveness of data collection

Developing indicators to measure performance against the association's mission is a challenge, as national associations are often focused on broad aims such as changing attitudes and society. However this does not preclude the development of indicators. Different associations and NGOs around the world have approached the task by identifying lower level indicators which collectively point to a change in attitude or society. Another method is to do a baseline survey and measure changes in this over time. Regardless of the approach, there are some common tools that can assist you develop your indicators as outlined in the toolbox.

5.9.3 Planning your M&E programme

A monitoring and evaluation plan must be prepared as an essential part of the strategic plan for the organisation. Typically this programme should include:
- Constructing a baseline data on the problems to be addressed
- Clarifying the programme or project objective and setting specific targets
- Establishing stakeholders consensus on indicators
- Defining data collection process requirements and usage
- Agreeing on the generation and utilisation of information
- Specifying reporting requirements (format, frequency and distribution)
- Establishing the M&E schedule
- Assigning M&E responsibilities
- Providing adequate budget for M&E

Information box: AGNA members' M&E status
According to a survey of about 25% of AGNA members most have some M&E system in place. Those that don't certainly plan to make it a priority suggesting it is an accepted need and function across the board. All those with systems use members to provide feedback. Only half also had some kind of independent external evaluation of their work. Interesting the funding for M&E is generally not dedicated; rather it is part of the general overhead budget. The result from the M&E work is used to inform members and the Board, to a lesser extent donors and staff and an even lesser extent the public.

5.9.4   Who should participate

Involving members in the M&E programme is essential, though often neglected. This should not be limited to just involving members to voice their views or gather information. It should also entail assisting members to analyse data themselves, articulate lessons and propose recommendations. This both taps into a diverse range of expertise, and enhances the members' own M&E skills and systems.

6   Relationships

One of the key roles of national associations as networks of NGOs and NPOs dedicated to strengthening the civil society sector is to act as an interlocutor between the sector and the state and business sectors. National associations' relationships to and terms of engagement with the state, donors and business sector impact on their work, success and influence In this section we explore each and provide some insights based on the experiences of members of AGNA.

6.1   Working with donors

Good relationships with donors are an essential for national associations.
Relationships with donors vary depending on the type of donor and its approach to funding the sector.

Toolbox: Different types of donor approaches[1]

1. *Laissez-faire*: Funded NGOs should be trusted to do as they say, and should not be harassed by donors. This view is possibly less common than in the past, and can be seen as a rationalisation of the minimalist position given below. Some church donors seem to take this position.
2. *Minimalist (defensive)*: Donor information demands can distract and undermine the effectiveness of NGOs in their work and therefore should be minimized. This view seems relatively widespread, especially amongst donor NGOs.
3. *Minimalist (self-interested)*: Donors are overwhelmed with the practical tasks associated with funding (identification, appraisal, approval, disbursement and documentation) and do not have enough time to read and make use of information about project activities and impact so they do not bother asking for much more than they already receive. This implicit rationale seems to be very common.
4. *Apologetic/realist:* Donors have obligations to their own donors and thus must ask for information from the NGOs they fund, though they feel/know that this can be a burden on the funded NGO. Again this seems to be fairly common rationale.
5. *Facilitator*: Information is needed from funded NGOs so that other NGOs can learn from their experiences. A related rationale is the need to support development education in the donors own country. This rationale, especially the former, is not widely used.
6. *Interventionist*: The process of requesting information can have a positive impact on NGOs' institutional development (defined as above in terms of increased responsiveness). This is uncommon but a rationale that needs much more attention.
7. *Hard-line*: Funded NGOs have signed a contract and therefore have an obligation to produce the goods, which in this case is information.

Regardless of the donor approach, national associations have an important role in establishing the needs and credibility of the sector for its members. Some associations work in partnership with donors to increase the capacity and legitimacy of the sector. In addition, the national association has a role lobbying for resources for the sector.

> **Toolbox: Tips for working with donors**
> - Build relationships
> - Share information and stories
> - Profile your members work along with the work of the association
> - Don't hide misdemeanours. Rather work with donors to investigate the problems
> - Be honest at all times
> - Acknowledge the role and contribution of donors
> - Don't play donors off against one another

6.2   Working with government

Relations between the state and civil society vary from country to country. Across AGNA members, the relationship between the association and the state ranges from on of partnership and service provision to one of critical engagement and even open hostility. Often, it is a combination of government's willingness to accept civil society as a legitimate player and the national association's eloquence, degree of organisation, effectiveness and influence, which determine the dynamics between civil society and government. Ideally, a national association needs to be independent of, but influential on, the State.

> **Information box: Rise of civil society**
> Relations between the State and citizen actors have changed over time. Significant shifts are occurring in the management of global, regional, national and local affairs. Many point to this being a time of significant shifting and sharing of powers.[1] "The end of the cold war has brought no mere adjustment among states, but a novel redistribution of power among states, markets, and civil society. National governments…are sharing powers – including political, social, and security roles at the core of sovereignty – which businesses, with international organizations, and with a multitude of citizens groups."[1] Governments are progressively including civil society as an accepted actor in politics. 'New "non-state" actors – a multitude of citizen organizations – have become part of the processes and institutions we call "governance." This change, this shift in governance, is one of the most intriguing phenomena that will determine the way humankind starts the next millennium.'[1]

 "The 1980s saw a growing rejection of the myth that government is the sole legitimate agent for development decision making and the management of development resources. It is now widely accepted that civil society has an essential, if not central role in both."[28]

Government's willingness to engage is determined by the extent of democracy, and the degree to which the government accepts that it is just one player in the process of development and governance. Very different tactics are used to engage governments that are open and those that are hostile. In this section we provide

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28   Korten, op cit., p.112

some thoughts on engaging in both favourable and in hostile conditions with the state.

6.2.1 State relations in a democracy

In a democracy, the state recognises the power of its citizens and sees itself as accountable to its citizens. Increasingly, it is recognised that civil society organisations, and national associations in particular, have an important role to play.

Toolbox: Some of the roles played by national associations in national political life
- Advocates and adversaries in the public policy process
- Information resource
- Provider of services
- Champion of unmet needs
- Weather bell of public opinion
- Steward of public goods and guardian of public space

Governments engage civil society and national associations in a variety of ways. They may consult them on relevant public policy issues, solicit input and advice; they may invite their participation in a range of accountability forums such as committees

and parliamentary forums; they may ask for their participation in reviews and international meetings; and they may request them to co-govern a programme.

In addition, governments, along with civil society, play a significant role in fostering an environment conducive to a vibrant civil society. Often, with this recognition comes a requirement that CSOs register and comply with regulations. This enables government to maintain checks and balances on the sector.

As governments expand their recognition of civil society, civil society engages more readily in governmental consultation processes. Similarly, government officials more readily engage civil society organisations in delivering services, developing policies and cooperating and collaborating in advancing some national objectives.

Case study
The national association in Mexico, CEMEFI was launched to defend the rights of civil society and to change the vision of the government's view of and relations with the non-profit sector. It helped to form good relations with the government that CEMEFI Board members had contacts with government functionaries particularly within the Ministry of Treasury. CEMEFI indicates that over the years the levels of trust have changed and relations at times were strained. For CEMEFI it took ten years to successfully advocate for the Law on Promotion of Activities of CSOs. CEMEFI has succeeded in securing tax exceptions for human rights organizations and in actively advocating for improved fiscal framework, and ensuring elections free of corruption. CEMEFI has high functioning relations within most ministries that deal with civil society, including lasting relations with leaders who previously worked in civil society.

National associations engage with government for a plethora of reasons. At minimum national associations want to build relations to exchange ideas and to foster a climate

of openness to policy issues. Keeping civil servants abreast of developments in civil society helps them to do their work within government more effectively. By staying in touch with elected officials, would-be-legislators and in communication with staff on governmental committees, national associations are able to offer insights, materials and tools that may be helpful and influential in deliberations.

Through opening avenues of communication, the national association may also extend their influence on governance style, and be able to hold the government to account. It may campaign for the allocation of needed resources or the development of policy. Collectively, these strategies help to protect and perhaps expand the role of civil society and its freedom to operate. The roles national associations play in advocacy are of great importance in securing and preserving this space for civil society. National associations may also be instrumental in fostering added accountability in government, including basing political policies and programmes on public needs and priorities.

Case study box: The challenges of maintaining legitimacy
CODE-NGO in the Philippines initially set up a good collaborative relationship with government both as advocates for changes and as partners in development projects and programmes. Many NGOs were active and open to engaging with government. This was helped by the numerous avenues for participation at both the national and local level. This situation changed with Estrada and many NGOs were involved in the campaign for his impeachment in 2001. After a change of power government -NGO relations improved again, but not for long. Following the electoral fraud scandals relations became tense.

Today civil society is divided vis a vis relations with the government. Some NGOs want change and a new President, others have not engaged, yet others have become partisan to one party. There is also public fatigue. CODE-NGO's position is to call for the resignation of the president and advocate against government abuses. Some members not comfortable with the position, but the majority endorses it. CODE-NGO itself is focusing on electoral monitoring to ensure that there is no fraud. Consequently there is an uneasy relationship with the national government.

Information box
Responses in the 2006 AGNA survey revealed that almost half of key roles identified by NAs related to developing relations with and influencing thinking and practice of government. For example, these four key association functions were often cited:
- Effective advocacy, participation and campaigning in influencing government policy
- Improving non-profit law and regulation
- Linking national and international agencies, governments, associations and institutions
- Increasing funding from government

> **Toolbox: Tips to enhance your work with government**
> - Get to know the people and identify who you can and who you cannot work with
> - Learn the language of government and use it in your communications
> - Demonstrate empathy for the bureaucratic, controlling, autocratic and centralised conditions that governments' face
> - Don't accuse, rather discuss
> - Remain non partisan
> - Do your homework
> - Know your argument. Don't provide facts unless you are confident of them

To continue to earn the respect of governments, national associations recognise the importance of remaining non-partisan, objective and professional. Maintaining credibility with government as well as with CSOs and the public is important to maintain legitimacy. National associations have to walk a fine line to be viewed as non-partisan. In some cases, the demands of national associations are in line with those of political opposition parties. Spending time and money to help elect people aligned with the values and goals has proven more advantageous for some CSOs than trying to change the views of elected officials. However, national associations must be ever-vigilant in guarding their objectivity and credibility. A more suitable role may be in promoting free and fair elections, as was exemplified by the work of CEMEFI and CODE-NGO.

Martin Sime of SCVO frames it this way, "*We see ourselves as needing to keep our distance, the space between us and government. Members may be particularly concerned if we make their position more vulnerable. We are sometimes criticised for not being close enough. 'It is a relationship thing.' Politicians change, priorities, and resources change. You have to accommodate. So in difficult times console yourself with the thought that another government will be along soon!*"[29]

As relationships with governments become more highly developed, more formal terms of engagement may be negotiated. Accords formed between the government and the voluntary sector in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Canada stipulate such terms of engagement. "Under the auspices of the Accord, very specific codes of good practice related to policy dialogue and funding have been developed that, if fully implemented, hold considerable promise to promote better working relationships in these areas."[30] These compacts or accords recognize the independence of the voluntary organisations, and the right of the voluntary sector to challenge government and advocate for suitable policies. In all cases, civil society should not be subject to hostility or adverse affects on funding as a result of advocating for change.

> **Case study**
> SCVO has forged a high-functioning relationship with the government. The Compact between government and voluntary sector lays out the rights and responsibilities of each. It states clearly that the voluntary sector has the right to be consulted and the right to criticize. The nature of the Compact is different from the English Model, which is used more as a last resort when government is not responsive. SCVO has been involved in drafting policy statements and has been engaged in legislation drafting. SCVO and the government have jointly taken-up non-contentious issues they share in common. The NGO Unit conducts staff exchanges that help to build understanding and appreciation of each others' challenges and pressures. In the Scottish case such engagement is possible (issues or scale), but it may be challenging to replicate it in other parts of the world.

[29] Sime, Martin. Private communication, following AGNA Workshop at World Assembly, May 2007
[30] Phillips, Susan Dr "In Accordance: Canada's Voluntary Sector Accord from Idea to Implementation", in Brock, Kathy L. (Ed.), Delicate Dances: Public Policy and the Nonprofit Sector, Kingston: School of Policy Studies, 2003

This works if both the goals and methods proposed by a national association are in harmony with government plans, and the government is willing to accept civil society as a partner. But if the goals or methods are in opposition to the interests of the parties in power, discrediting or even repressing this public association becomes possible in ill-functioning or non-democratic states.[31]

6.2.2   State relations in a hostile environment

Facing hostile governments is a mixed experience for national associations. At times, threats of government oppression provide the impetus for a national association to act through the support of and solidarity from its members. PNF demonstrates this point. "In the 1990s, NGOs united against the government, it was a great moment for NGO unity. They came together in one platform. Government came to realise that NGOs are important partners in development."[32] At other times working in a repressive context can be demanding and dangerous.

Circumventing repressive legislation and restrictive environments require innovation and ingenuity. In the face of oppression, demonstrating determination, tenacity and intelligent design are courageous and powerful acts.[33] Forming a national association does not replace other important methods of political action. But joining together in association is in itself a strong move that has political implications. It reveals coordinated effort and represents collective strength. The mere acts of forming a national association and exercising its rights are two such powerful acts.

Once formed, a national association has many options of how to engage. It can confront government on its actions. There are many different tactics for confronting government. This requires a bold membership ready to take risks.

Toolbox: Tactics for confronting government
- Direct action such as a march
- Forming alliances with other national actors
- Using independent media channels to raise the issues and put pressure on decision makers
- Using international networks to put pressure on your government
- Using the law and courts to force a decision

There are risks to this approach. Members may be detained, blacklisted and harassed. Also, the government may refuse to work with the national association.

Toolbox: Forms of government control
- Bring in the police and army to prevent the association from carrying out planned actions
- Banning or restricting an association or its campaigns
- Introducing restrictive legislation
- Harassment of members and staff
- Media campaigns to discredit or undermine the association
- Detention of leaders
- Blocking donations

In the experiences of NANGO and CODE-NGO some members distanced themselves from the national association when it took a position against the government.   Given the risks of working in a hostile context, some national associations refrain from a confrontational approached and rather utilise their energies to work within the system. This involves building relationships steadily through increased understanding and information-sharing to increase mutual trust on non-contentious issues where agreement exists between government and civil society. For example, NANGO has been involved in the delicate dance of managing multiple roles with government. It is active in collaborating with the government of Zimbabwe on development issues, while confronting the government on its lack of sufficient progress on democratization. To increase the comfort and agreement of government, an association would be wise to indicate that it was not looking for any credit for policy or programme change but would support the government in promoting productive policies and needed programmes.

Case study

CODE-NGO, like many other national associations, has the continual challenge of adjusting to dramatic political transitions. At times the sector was viewed as a partner by government and at other times it was viewed as an antagonist. Civil society too was divided in its views on how to manage relations with government. Uneasy relations with the national government continue due to extra-judicial killings, restrictive legislation, opposition stifling, and violent break-ups of peaceful protests. Still some collaborative work remains underway at the local level. The national association, CODE-NGO has taken the position to call for the resignation of the president and advocate against government abuses. Some members are not comfortable with the position, but the majority endorses it. CODE-NGO directs much of its attention to monitoring and advocating for free and fair elections.[1]

The dynamic relations with the government in Zimbabwe provide an example of a national association that needs to be able to work within a variety of political climates. After Zimbabwe's independence the relationship between civil society and the government was quite positive and collaborative. It deteriorated when NANGO and the sector were faced with hostility from government. The space for civil society was tightened under the governmental regime. Yet even in this repressive state civil society was successful in blocking the 2004 restrictive NGO Bill. NANGO continues to maintain its non-partisan and neutral relations. As NANGO is interested in achieving better outcomes from the legislator it provides MPs with information because they find poor information, not sinister motives, contribute to bad MP decisions.[1]

NGOs must often navigate very carefully in these waters to remain effective, and to continue advancing their agenda while avoiding being shunted aside into irrelevance or expulsion."[34]

While the voices of civil society are stifled or silenced in some regions, they cannot be deemed irrelevant or ignored for long. Civil society is increasingly becoming more influential.

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34   Wiarda, op cit., p. 185

6.3 Working with the business sector

Very few national associations actively work with the business sector. In fact, the voluntary sector is often hostile to the business sector. In general most national associations have not adequately focused on building relations with the corporate sector or tried to tap them for funding. Yet with increasing commitments to social responsibility and an increasing recognition of the influence of the business sector, there are opportunities for forging relations with this sector. These relations can focus on collaborating around a common goal, or on resourcing the national association and its members.

Toolbox: Why Corporate Social Responsibility occurs[1]
- For economic, social, and environmental bottom lines
- Community pressure to do so
- To enhance reputation
- As a branding exercise
- To improve community relations and public image
- To enable employees to enjoy new levels of responsibility and leadership skills
- To improve employee satisfaction, morale and loyalty
- To get a sense of fulfillment as a result of contributing to the community

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Case study; PNF

There is a lot of domestic philanthropy in Pakistan despite the impressions that most funds come from the outside. Therefore PNF set up a NGO, PCP, to build relationships with corporate sector in late 1990s to raise funds for the sector. PCP wanted to create a system to certify NGOs and to increase their legitimacy vis-à-vis donors. Initially there was a lot of opposition and mistrust from NGOs. Eventually they saw the benefits and PNF encourages its members to go through the

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Case study (NANGO)

For NANGO in Zimbabwe the private sector has a role, but a limited one. They have found that members of the private sector do supportive and donate money to civil society. Some banks provide micro-credit loans and there is a supermarket which is working with some NANGO members on joint projects. All the projects business engages with are development/charity focused. According to NANGO they would never work on human rights or good governance projects as they are too afraid to lose their privileges and antagonize the ruling party. Their advice is therefore to engage selectively and be pragmatic about what you can expect from the private sector.

6.4 Building coalitions and networks

6.4.1 Why associations build coalitions and networks

A network consists of individuals and organisations willing to assist one another or collaborate towards a mutual objective.

A coalition is a network that connects individuals or organisations more tightly, working in a co-ordinated fashion towards a common goal or objectives, while each member maintains its autonomy.

Coalitions come in all shapes and sizes. A coalition may be permanent or temporary. It may be based on a single issue, a geographical area or several issues. Coalitions range from being very fluid to being highly structured.

Forming coalitions expands the powers and reach of civil society. While coalitions are not essential to running a national association, they are a reality. Building strategic coalitions with diverse groups that help shape responses to national problems such as faith-based organizations, business alliances and labour unions, broadens the potential constituency and increases the leverage position of the national association.

Case study

CODE-NGO collaborated with the Conference of Bishops to challenge the governments' efforts to cover up corruption and ensure that government institutions disclose their spending. This anti-corruption project entailed training volunteers in 116 congressional districts to monitor elected representatives use of discretionary funds for stated purposes. The project's findings uncovered widespread and severe misuse and corruption as only 10% of sampled elected officials were willing to disclose information on public spending and of these 3% pointed to clear misappropriation of funds. The project was also able to expose a case of extreme overpricing of public computers.

6.4.2 Process of building coalitions and networks

"The success of coalition building and public campaigning rests on clear agreements from inception among coalition partners on campaign goals, timelines, and processes. It is crucial to arrive to a common understanding prior to launching a campaign on each partner's expectations as well as each partner's contributions and commitment levels to the campaign, " CEMEFI

Entering into coalitions requires careful consideration, and weighing up the costs and benefits. Networks and coalitions make sense when the issue you are campaigning around has broad appeal and you want to unite around a common goal. National associations can enter into short- or long-term alliances. Below are the suggested steps for setting up a coalition or network:

- Establish a basis of unity around the specific issue with clear purpose and objectives
- Conduct adequate consultation (via phone, email, in person and in-writing) to ensure the position taken adequately reflects the views of the coalition members and relevant stakeholders.
- Start by building links with those individuals and organisations that you know support your goals and solutions.
- Have an institutionalised mechanism for members' to be involved and represented either through topical committees/ working groups or consultations.
- Then begin looking for logical partners such as people or groups affected by the issue within civil society.
- Also look for people who might support you on this issue if you present it convincingly
- Use high profile and influential people who support you to help persuade others to join you.
- Set up a clear and transparent communications structure and process
- Prepare yourself to be patient

Toolbox: Selecting the issue
- The issue must be big enough to matter.
- The issue must be small enough to produce results.
- The issue must build the base for future campaigns.

Toolbox: Critical success factors
- Agree upfront on the shared values, objectives and timelines.
- Record the agreements in some way so that there is no confusion.
- Develop a trusting atmosphere, showing respect and regard for others, an appreciation of the context that others face, and a recognition of diversity
- Avoid heavy, formal structures as much as possible, as they tend to become cumbersome. The aim is not to establish another organisation but an alliance.
- Share the capacities and constraints of each member, so that tasks can be assigned accordingly.
- Delegate responsibility.
- Foster good interpersonal relations through informal gatherings and social events. The extending of hospitality helps to build social and professional bonds.
- Keep every member informed of progress and changes to avoid confusion or a lack of knowledge.
- Adopt a decision-making process that is clear and transparent from the beginning.
- Get to know the coalition members and their positions.
- Keep meetings focused and brief so it is easy for people to be involved.
- Demonstrate transparency by inviting differences of opinion to be shared in the open.
- Do not avoid difficult issues. Put the hard issues on the agenda and work through them or they will split the coalition.
- Engage well known organisations or people as spokespersons. This fosters the likelihood of more effective stories getting into the media

Coalitions can concentrate on coordinating individuals and groups around a specific activity or campaign, or have a multi-pronged approach. The structure of a coalition should be based on the specific goals being sought. Coalitions at times are managed in an ad hoc, non-hierarchical manner, or as a formalised arrangement. Some have a shared leadership approach and manage the terms collectively while others designate one or two leaders to the project. This may also include a formal board to guide the coalitions' work. Most parties to a coalition represent another group to whom they report progress.

During a workshop on coalition building at the 2007 CIVICUS World Assembly, AGNA members reflected on their coalition building experience and recommended endeavouring to achieve desired results without having to establish new coalitions. They also recommended that associations be less impulsive and first evaluate the benefits, and gauge the commitment of potential partners. They further suggest that communication approaches, values and expectations and budget implications be discussed prior to forming a coalition.

Unless assumptions and expected contributions are clarified up front, relations in the coalition could be strained. Below is a list of some of the more common obstacles and challenges faced by coalitions and networks:
- A coalition distracts from other work, as it takes time and energy to build and maintain relationships.
- It may require you to compromise on your position or tactics.

- Uneven commitment by members often means that some members carry a large share of the responsibility.
- Competition and territorialism between members can occur.
- Experienced members may try to dominate.
- Working in this way limits organisational visibility: you may not always get credit for your work.
- Poses risks to your reputation: if the coalition breaks down it can harm everyone's credibility

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Information box: Challenges of coalitions

Different mandates, histories of engagement with government, and previous collaborative experiences with other civil society actors (or lack thereof) can impact the ability of any particular stakeholder to work with other civil society groups to move a social policy issue forward…Indeed, there is some question as to whether or not a single common voice on a particular issue is even desirable. One of the strengths that civil society organisations bring to the table is a diverse range of thinking on a particular issue, which adds depth and veracity to the policy debate…On the other hand, if a group of civil society organisations can find common ground on a particular issue and collaborate in moving that issue forward, their larger, more unified voice can have a greater impact…and if maintained over a longer period of time, and perhaps on more than one specific issue, a shared sense of common purpose and history may lead to even greater influence.[1]

However there are also extended benefits from participating in a coalition or network. It provides an opportunity to broaden the base of a campaign and hopefully enhance the impact. Below is a list of some of the more common benefits.

A coalition may:
- Enlarge your base of support and provide strength in unity and numbers - you can win together what you cannot win alone
- Provide safety for advocacy efforts and protection for members who may not be able to take action alone
- Creates personal and professional networking opportunities
- Create opportunities for learning by working with other organisations on an issue
- Contribute to the long-term strength of civil society by building understanding and networks between organisations
- Enable sharing information and resources
- Broadens the base of experience and skills
- Increase capacity
- Create opportunities for new leaders when existing leaders assume positions in the coalition
- Magnify existing resources by pooling them
- Enhance the credibility and influence of the campaign.
- Accelerate civil society's interests and influence

7 Concluding Thoughts and Remarks

Forming and managing a national association can be a complicated process. It often takes years of preparation and negotiation. For example, BANGO was in formation for three years before it was registered as a national association.

Clearly, the role and influence of civil society is evolving significantly. National associations play a pivotal role in mobilising people-power by collaborating with all sectors to co-create prosperous, productive and peaceful environments. Through forming a widely representative network, the national association increases its ability to access more resources, obtain greater media exposure, secure technical assistance and earn political support. We have sufficient evidence of the exponential capacity gained when organisations work together. A national association may feel satisfied when it sees signs of success from its member organisations. These may include:

- Member organisations of the national association have developed plans for Membership and Capacity Development; Resource Development and Fundraising; along with plans for Public and Government Relations
- Membership is growing due to the satisfaction with the services provided and the success achieved by the national association.
- The member's constitution, by-laws or required legal documents have been initiated in consultation with a legal expert.
- An ongoing record of the processes and people involved in the establishment and management of the national association is continually being upgraded.
- National associations undergo reviews and evaluations that reveal valuable contributions and ways to improve their work.
- Changes in the external environment that make it easier for NGOs to work and grow.
- Increased recognition by government and business of the role of the sector.

This resource guide is a product of a community of professional practice. The invaluable insights of numerous practitioners provide its foundation. This toolkit has been designed to underscore the spirit, knowledge and skills necessary to create a high functioning national association.

Enjoy the journey; the work is hard but the rewards are far reaching.