RESOURCE GUIDE FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

RUNNING NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS 5

AFFINITY GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

CIVICUS | AGNA

CIVICUS

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:

1. **Deciding why the organisation exists and where it wants to head – the vision and mission,**
2. **Translating this into specific performance objectives,**
3. **Crafting the strategy of how the targeted results will be achieved,**
4. **Implementing the strategy,**
5. **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:

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**
- **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.

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

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

10 Kellogg Foundation Communications toolkit

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 faithbased 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:

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.

11 This section is adapted from Civicus MDG toolkit, 2004

12 UNDP Blue Book. 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

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.

CASE STUDY:

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

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

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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

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

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's 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:

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.

CASE STUDY:

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

TOOLBOX / CASE STUDY:

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 celLphones
- 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

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.

OFOP has the following objectives:

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

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**

TOOLBOX / 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:

- Scope the sector and set up meetings with leaders of relevant organisations and ask them to join the association
- 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:

SCVO training services

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

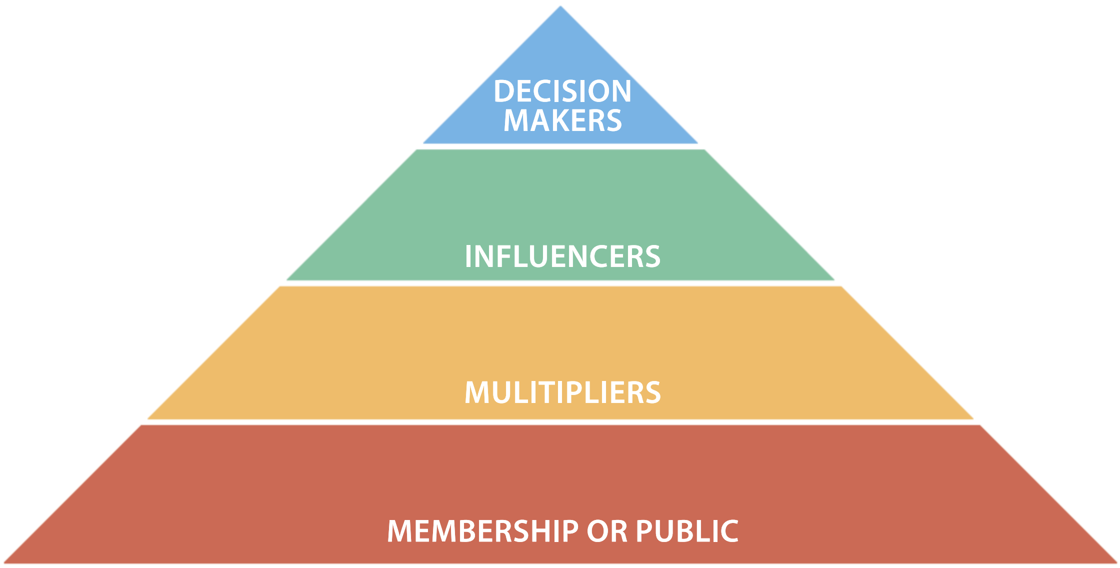
Communication is crucial in development – whether in the form of dissemination, guidelines, prescriptions, recommendations, advocacy, promotion, persuasion, education, conversation, round-tables, consultations, dialogue, counselling or entertainment.[15]

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 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 Segmentation



Adapted from Kellogg Foundation Communications toolkit: *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]

15 http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Publications/Tools_Comms.html
16 AGNA meeting notes, World Assembly, May 23, 2007.

TOOLKIT:

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.
Blog	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.

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TOOLBOX continued ...

Tool	Description
Speeches	Giving a talk at a gathering can both disseminate information and broaden your audience.
Videos & 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.
Advocacy	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

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.

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 undermine all of those who work and volunteer to make our country a better place. We need a fresh start in our relations with Scottish and local government in order to improve the sustainability and performance of the third sector. The signs are encouraging that the full potential of the sector to contribute effectively are understood. This isn't just about more money – it's about how the sector and government can work together better. It could and should be a win/win situation."*

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

Accessing the media in repressive contexts is a lot more challenging. A press release from a national association where the government controls the media and sees the association as a threat will not be published. In addition, the government frequently uses the state control media to launch attacks on civil society organisations and to undermine their public legitimacy and accountability. In these contexts the association will need to be more innovative in its communications strategy.

There are many different ways to communicate in such contexts. The toolbox below provides some examples of how you could access media in more repressive contexts.

TOOLKIT:

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.
- Take some action at a government event so you get publicity with the govern ment publicity.

CASE STUDY:

NANGO accesses the media

NANGO has faced difficulty getting its views into the media given the state control of most media. It has responded by developing working relations with the independent media – radio stations and internet sites based outside of Zimbabwe with a readership in the country. It has also paid for time on the radio.

"Simply put, good communication 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.

18 Kellogg Foundation Communications toolkit

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-forprofit organisations, while others take up or support members' campaigns on specific issues such as poverty alleviation.

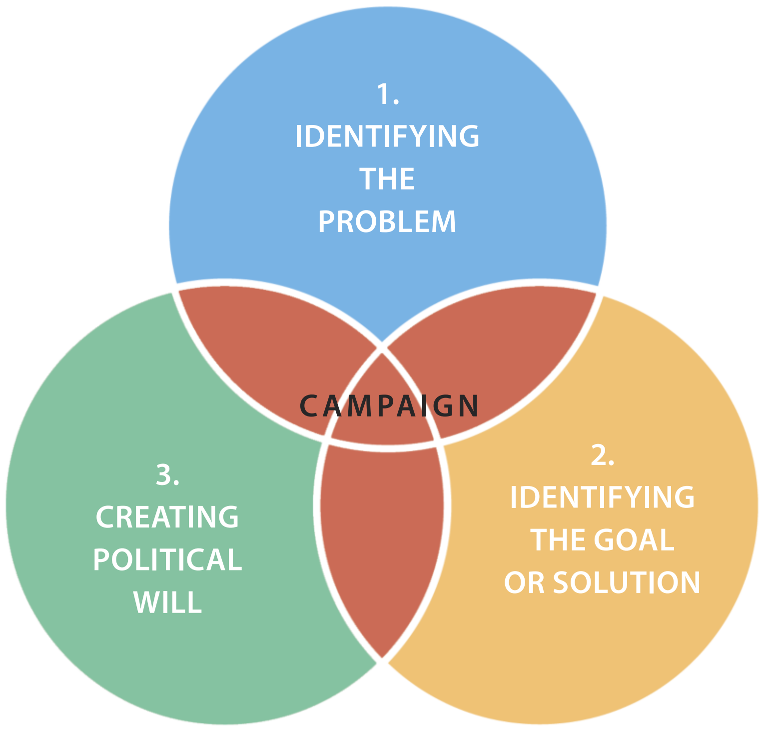
TOOLKIT:

Campaigning

- 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.

19 This section is adapted from Civicus MDG toolkit, 2004
20 UNDP Blue Book

Campaign



A campaign can succeed when:

1. a problem is recognised
2. the solution is accepted and;
3. 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.

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.

TOOLKIT:

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.

21 Sime, Martin. CEO, SCVO, Private communication at World Assembly, May 2007.

TOOLKIT continued ...

- 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:

Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO)

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.**

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.

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

CASE STUDY:

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.

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.

23 http://www.wrightresults.com/accountability.html
24 NCVO publication, Accountability and transparency

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.

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.

25 NCVO Publication, Accountability and transparency

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.

CASE STUDY:

CEMEFI builds capacity

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.

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?**

TOOLKIT:

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

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.

CASE STUDY:

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 pay roll services for numerous agencies.

Funding

Funding is influenced by international developments, like funding trends, as well as by national and local issues such as the ability of CSOs to prepare compelling proposals to secure needed resources. The availability and accessibility of funding for NGOs and national associations is influenced by the development agenda and the corresponding national and international agreements towards more support for economic development, democratic reforms and strengthened civil society. To ensure that it remains dedicated to its own mission, and does not deviate to meet funding terms, a national association must adhere to its accountability, strategic planning and performance and prosperity measures. This will assure the Board that a "line remains drawn between transparent compromise and blind co-option."[1]

International lobbying efforts too are important in this regard. The continuing failure of developed nations to live up to commitments to provide 0.6 percent of their GDP to developing countries continues to prolong and exacerbate this lack of resources, and maintains a global imbalance.

The experience of CODE-NGO can help to illustrate this point. It has noticed that in the Philippines more foreign donors are cutting back on funding NGOs, as aid now is more focused on government to government projects. CODE-NGO responded by trying to diversify its funding base. It has undertaken a broader strategy for sustainability, calling for more citizen contributions and conducting seminars and consultations on methods of resource mobilization. Japan is their largest national donor for civil society and they are working with Japanese NGOs to secure more funding. Networks within the Philippines, are striving to raise international awareness of developed government commitments to provide their percentage of GDP to developing countries.

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.

TOOLBOX:

Some of the more common tools used are:

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

Tools to facilitate this sustainability include:

- **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 difficultly. There are several different ways to do this including:**
    - **Charging a 10 – 20% admin fee that you build into all funding contracts**
    - **Investing funds raised smartly to earn interest**
    - **Selling services**
    - **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:

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.

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

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 for 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.

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 there- of), 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 sys- tematically and objectively as possi- ble 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

continued ...

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

	Monitoring	Evaluation
What	Monitoring is a continuous function that aims to provide management and the main stakeholders with early indicators of progress (or lack there- of), 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 plan and be a routine part of project implementation.	Evaluation is conducted periodically usually every 3 to 5 years: • At or near the mid-point of 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

Based on the 2006 AGNA survey we can conclude the following about the funding base of existing national associations:

- 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**

TOOLBOX:

Do's and don'ts of indicators

Based on the 2006 AGNA survey we can conclude the following about the funding base of existing national associations:

- Don't use only a single indicator
- Do limit the number of indicators by selecting a few key indicators
- Do be specific and focused
- Don't include multiple points in a single indicator, rather split it into two or more indicators
- Do ensure the indicator is easily measurable
- Don't select indicators that can't be measured
- Don't confuse the indicator measure with the outcome

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.

TOOLBOX:

Mechanisms to assist you with your M&E programme

- Develop friendly relations with universities, foundations and other philanthropic donors
- Use students to do baseline research for you
- Develop long term relationships with research institutions
- Link up with other national associations globally to share tools to measure return on investment and impact
- Engage in professional associations which can provide support, tools and networks

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**

TOOLBOX:

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.