

**APPENDIX IV**

***Introduction to Networks: a  
workshop designed for IANSA  
(International Action Network on  
Small Arms)***  
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# Workshop: Introduction to Networks

**Aim: the aim of this workshop is to look at the basics of working in networks, using some simple practical exercises. By the end, you should know more about what all those involved have to offer in terms of time, energy, resources, etc and how you can plan to work together on some activities.**

***The workshop includes:***

- ***Basic ideas of what a network is and how it operates***
- ***Contributions Assessment - the resources we can pool***
- ***Weaver's Triangle - How activities and process inter-relate***
- ***Leadership - qualities that are needed***

## ***Introductions***

Pair up with someone else and find out two things about them that you didn't know already. Make sure they are things they don't mind being repeated to the rest of the group.

Introduce your partner to the rest of the group, using their name, organisation and the two things you discovered in your chat

## ***Exercise 1***

This will give you a quick understanding of how those you are planning to work with see a network.

Draw your own image of a network. How would you represent a network?

After you have finished talk in pairs about your image and what it means to you.

Display these drawings where you can see them as you work through the rest of the workshop

## ***Input 1***

The basics of a network. [Using the Checklist for networks]

### **A network has:**

- ◆ **A common purpose** derived from shared perceived need for **action**
- ◆ **Clear objectives** and **focus**
- ◆ **A non-hierarchical** structure

### **A network encourages**

- ◆ **Voluntary participation** and **commitment**
- ◆ **The input** of resources by members for benefit of all

### **A network provides**

- ◆ **Benefit** derived from participation and linking

### **What does a network do?**

- ◆ Facilitate shared space for exchange, learning, development – the capacity-building aspect
- ◆ Act for change in areas where none of members is working in systematic way – the advocacy, lobbying and campaigning aspect
- ◆ Include a range of stakeholders – the diversity/ broad-reach aspect

### **What are the guiding principles and values?**

- ◆ Collaborative action - undertaking activities together linked to the common purpose. This does not mean all activities have to be done together
- ◆ Respect for diversity - we all do different things in different ways. This is what gives the network its dynamic, creative quality
- ◆ Enabling marginalised voices to be heard - everyone has something to contribute
- ◆ Acknowledgement of power differences, and commitment to equality

### **There are four Ds to remember**

***Diversity:*** we all do different things in different ways. This is what gives the network its dynamic, creative quality. Do not undermine or rubbish other people's work behind their back, even if you don't agree with it. Talk it through

***Dynamism:*** Have the minimum structure and rules necessary to do the work. Ensure governance is light, not strangling. The more rules you have, the more 'control' creeps in. Give members space to be dynamic, and encourage those who want to contribute to do so.

***Democracy:*** Ensure that those with least resources and power have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Stay away from voting if you can - this squeezes out the dissenting voices.

***Decentralisation:*** At the centre, make only the decisions that are vital to continued functioning. Make core decisions, not more decisions. Push decision-making outwards.

### **Discussion**

### ***Exercise 2: What contribution can we make?***

#### **Contributions Assessment The underlying philosophy**

A **network** thrives on the drive, commitment and passion of its members. It is the combination of **diversity** (many autonomous institutions and individuals) **and a common purpose**, which gives a network power and energy. It is thus vital for a network to know what resources its members have and would be prepared to contribute and share. The aim of a contributions assessment is to hook into where the energy lies for the members, and involve people through their passion and drive to make a difference.

A Contributions Assessment aims to find out what people might **contribute**.

Using index cards, write your name/name of organisation on the top, and your contribution underneath. Use a separate card for each input.  
Be as specific as possible. Avoid general categories at this stage

E.g: Name/Organisation

Contribution: collating and writing up the monitoring of our government's progress on Plan of Action

Contribution: training of grass-roots organisations in non-violent direct action

Contribution: coordination and facilitation of meetings with government

Contribution: research on flow of weapons in this region

Now work together to group the contributions under different headings. These might be research / lobbying / funding / office space / annual activities week....

### ***Discussion and Reality check:***

Can we actually contribute what we have said we will? Do we have lots of organisations contributing the same thing? Where are the gaps? Might we need to ask others to complement in areas where we are weaker?

You are not trying to answer everything and solve all issues at this stage. The exercise is intended to reveal how many resources you have and how you might best use them, and can be taken forward into a more detailed planning process later on.

### ***Exercise 3***

#### **Circles of Participation: valuing diversity and dynamism**

Given the thought you have put into what you might contribute, can you imagine where you might be on the circles? If you wish to participate a small amount, place yourself on the outer areas; if you think you can contribute a lot of energy and time, place yourself in the inner area. This will bring you all onto the same picture and tell you a lot about how much dynamic energy people have to offer. Again the idea here is to reveal in a different way how much people want to participate, so that we all know the level of commitment each might make. It also allows you a snapshot of where you are now. You can do this exercise again a year later, and compare the two to assess what has happened with participation levels in the network

### ***Exercise 4***

We decide what we are going to do together - this is what we our overall aim is  
We do not do everything together, just that particular aspect. The rest of our work we do individually

#### **Weaver's Triangle**

Work together as a group. You should put your overall aim for working together at the top.

You can then fill it in. You do not need to work in any particular order. Often it is easier to start with activities, then work upwards and think about why you are doing them. There is no right answer. The exercise is intended to show you how clear your thinking is, and how your activities link up to what you are trying to achieve in the longer term.

Process goals: these are very important in a network. They show how much work needs to be done if we are to work together effectively. Don't ignore them just because you want to get on and 'do' something. Think about how you will build trust, facilitate meetings and decision-making, share ideas and resources.

### **5 - Discussion: What do we mean by leadership in a network?**

Leadership is often talked about as if it is something a person does. This can mean that we think more about leaders and less about what the important aspects of leadership are.

Probably the most important and dynamic part of the success of a network is how we understand and foster leadership and co-ordination. This may well be best expressed as 'facilitative leadership'. **Such leadership may be shared out around the network.**

These are some aspects of leadership. These do not have to be something one person does. However, it helps if you have the capacity in the core of the network to cover them. If you have a secretariat, some of this can be done by them.

The discussion can add to / complement this basic list:

Knowing the territory: this includes a broad understanding of the range of members, other actors in the field, the resources available, the needs, and the history

Catching the opportunities: keeping an eye out for opportunities or international events that could bring people together, or provide a good moment for joint activities (such as the International Year of...., or an upcoming thematic conference)

Making connections outside the network: making the connections between regions, building and maintaining relationships with other networks

Seeing the assets and building on the strengths: when you know what people can offer you can work with those assets and existing resources, and build on those strengths

Keeping people engaged and finding ways to encourage those who may be excluded

Being inventive: providing something fresh and interesting

Being clear and transparent: clarity of aims or objectives helps everyone to see where they fit in

Mediating and building consensus: conflict is normal in a network. Leadership is required to help build consensus and to give space to everyone's ideas

### **6 - Close**

Return to the image of a network. Has your image changed? What might you add or take away? Would you like to redraw it? If so, how?

## **Hand-out 1**

### **NETWORK BASICS**

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#### **There are four Ds to remember**

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**Democracy:** Ensure that those with least resources and power have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Stay away from voting if you can - this squeezes out the dissenting voices.

**Decentralisation:** At the centre, make only the decisions that are vital to continued functioning. Make core decisions, not more decisions. Push decision-making outwards.

### **How do we do what we do, in accordance with our principles and values?**

#### **Building Participation**

- ◆ Knowing the membership, what each can put in, and what each seeks to gain
- ◆ Valuing what people can put in and making it possible for them to do so
- ◆ Ensuring membership is appropriate to the purpose and tasks
- ◆ Encouraging members to be realistic about what they can give
- ◆ Ensuring access to decision-making and opportunities to reflect on achievements

#### **Building Relationships and Trust**

- ◆ Spending time on members getting to know each other, especially face-to-face
- ◆ Coordination point/secretariat has relationship-building as vital part of work
- ◆ Members/secretariat build relations with others outside network - strategic individuals and institutions

#### **Facilitative Leadership (may be one person, or rotating, or a team)**

- ◆ Emphasis on quality of input rather than control
- ◆ Knowledgeable about issues, context and opportunities,
- ◆ Defining a vision and articulating aims
- ◆ Balancing the creation of forward momentum and action, with generating consensus
- ◆ Understanding the dynamics of conflict and how to transform relations
- ◆ Promoting regular monitoring and participatory evaluation

#### **Fostering diversity and dynamism**

'too loose a structure ..drains potential and continuity, and too heavy a structure .. stifles initiative and innovation'. (Networks for Development, 2000:28)

- ◆ Have the minimum structure and rules necessary to do the work. Ensure governance is light, not strangling. Give members space to be dynamic.
- ◆ Encourage all those who can make a contribution to the overall goal to do so, even if it is small.

#### **Working toward decentralised and democratic governance**

- ◆ At the centre, make only the decisions that are vital to continued functioning. Push decision-making outwards.
- ◆ Ensure that those with least resources and power have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way.

#### **Building Capacity**

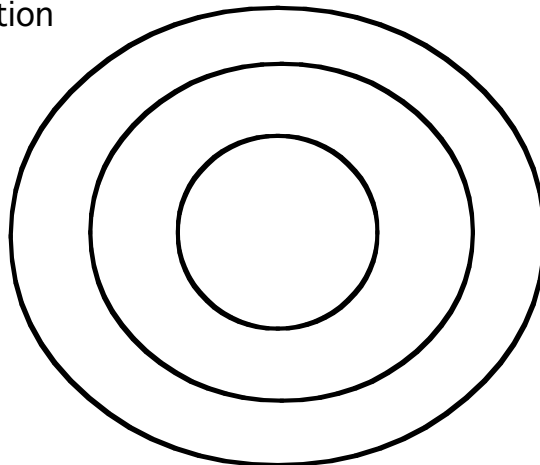
- ◆ Encourage all to share the expertise they have to offer. Seek out additional expertise that is missing.

## **Hand-out 2**

### **CIRCLES OF PARTICIPATION**

The outer ring indicates a more remote relationship with the network, while the inner one indicates a more active and involved relationship. Can you imagine where you might be on the circles? If you wish to participate a small amount, place yourself on the outer areas; if you think you can contribute a lot of energy and time, place yourself in the inner area. This will bring you all onto the same picture and tell you a lot about how much dynamic energy people have to offer. Again the idea here is to reveal in a different way how much people want to participate, so that we all know the level of commitment each might make. It also allows you a snapshot of where you are now. You can do this exercise again a year later, and compare the two to assess what has happened with participation levels in the network

Circles of  
participation





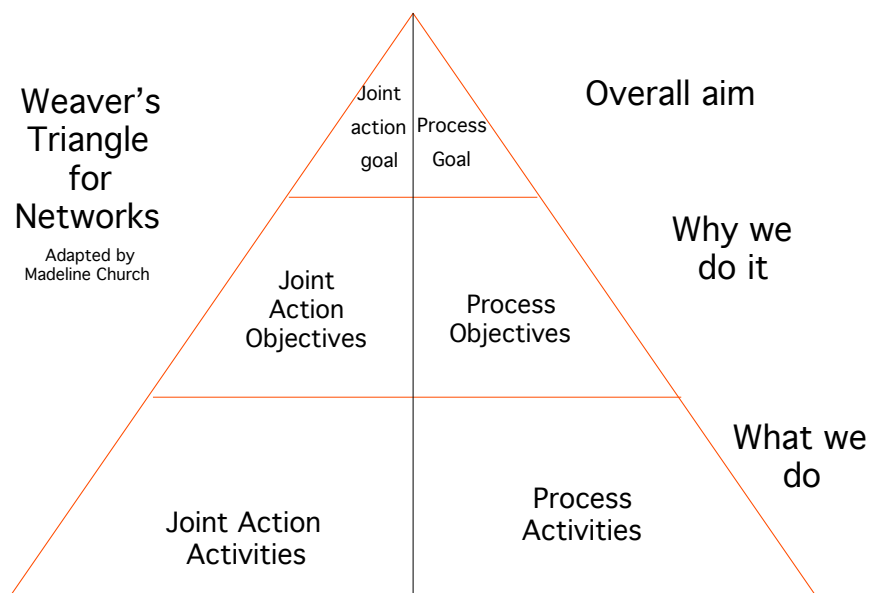
### Hand-out 3

## WEAVER'S TRIANGLE FOR NETWORKS A simple way to clarify aims, objectives and activities

This tool is a simple exercise to distinguish **what** you do from **why** you are doing it. It helps you to see how you **link** what you do to why you are doing it, and what the **underlying theory** of your work is.

Work together as a group. You should put your overall aim for working together at the top. You can then fill it in. You do not need to work in any particular order. Often it is easier to start with activities, then work upwards and think about why you are doing them. There is no right answer. The exercise is intended to show you how clear your thinking is, and how your activities link up to what you are trying to achieve in the longer term.

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## **Hand-out 4**

### **ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP**

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**Remember, leadership is about quality of input, rather than control.**