



September 2002

*Technical Intervention Area Summary Notes: TIA-B*

## **Networking, co-ordination & collaboration: Crucial processes to create integrated and holistic responses to address trafficking in children and women**

### **1 Context**

Networking and co-ordination are crucial in, among others, the following cases:

- When working on multi-dimensional issues including trafficking in children and women;
- When building ownership through participatory processes;
- When creating an enabling environment (read approval) for the project to zoom in on selected geographical areas for the direct assistance component of its interventions;
- When working towards holistic planning and policy making, and the identification of additional financial resources;
- When operating in an arena with many other (competing) stakeholders that could add value to each others work;
- When aiming to replicate and mainstream good practices and lessons learnt;

As the TICW-project employs process based approaches, works towards sustainability, and cannot be successful on its own, networking and co-ordination are crucial to our project staff and partner agencies.

### **2 Network typology**

There are many kinds of networks, which could be classified by membership, geographical scope, main activities, objectives, horizontal versus vertical dimension, and structural setting (formal versus informal). Networks form around joint goals or common interests, and are sustained through some form of communication. Most networks have information sharing as primary objective, whereas some go further to improve collaboration and co-operation among agencies – including joint planning, joint interventions and the development of common agendas.

### **3 Benefits of networking**

- Face problems together that are too large and multi-dimensional to face alone;
- Share the work;
- Reduce duplication of efforts and waste of resources;
- Provide a needed sense of solidarity, moral and psychological support, and peer support;
- Broaden the understanding of the issue by bringing together different constituencies;
- Promote the exchanges of ideas, insights, experiences and skills;
- Strengthen advocacy;
- Influence others - inside and outside the network;
- Mobilize financial resources (under certain conditions);
- Identify opportunities for meaningful collaboration and co-operation;

## 4 Starting a network

In general, the following questions need to be answered affirmatively before a network is started:

- Are there concrete common problems and constraints faced by potential members and are they aware of these?;
- Are there relevant results/experiences that could be shared?;
- Do potential members have a good idea of what a network is and what it would mean to them?;
- Are they prepared to spend the necessary time and energy in sharing and networking at the expense of their own programmes?;
- Is there an atmosphere of openness among potential members which allows them to admit mistakes;

### Eight steps to build and sustain a network:

1. Prepare a statement of purpose (or reason of a network's existence);
2. Define goals and objectives;
3. Create an action plan;
4. Establish ground rules;
5. Define a decision making process;
6. Choose an organizational structure;
7. Prepare a communications plan;
8. Secure resources (financial, human, material, time);

## 5 General guidelines for Networks

- *Objectives.* Networks objectives should be reviewed periodically in order to assess progress made towards meeting them and their continued relevance. Networks should be prepared to evolve over time and change their objectives as circumstances change and initial goals are met.
- *Concrete activities.* The driving force of a network can be maintained through enthusiastic participation at specific activities that allow member interaction and sharing.
- *Committed core groups.* As everyone is caught up by daily works, it is necessary to have a core group who will dedicate themselves to the network. Most successful networks are largely the result of a small groups of committed individuals.
- *Secretarial unit.* Such units take care of practical arrangements related to the functioning of networks and help to maintain them. Sufficient financial means are necessary to operate these units.
- *Avoiding centralization through delegation.* This will help avoid the dangers of excessive centralization, domination, isolation and passive membership. Network members should not expect all network activities to be arranged by the core group.
- *Decentralization of institution-based networks.* Central units should help to facilitate independently organized activities by network members in order to avoid being mere information disseminators. This will not only enhance the members' professional experience, status and responsibilities but also improve prospects for network sustainability in the event of the central unit closing down.
- *Sharing, belonging, and openness.* Decision making processes, the choice of network activities and their means of implementation should be democratic, and allow members to feel they can influence events.
- *Resources.* Members and agencies that contribute towards a network are likely to be committed to its success. The more a network can be user-supported, the stronger it will be. User-supplied resources do not have to be financial. They can be "in-kind".
- *Legitimacy.* Legitimacy attracts participation and facilitates funding. Legitimacy can be enhanced by involving well-respected people at networking events, and by well-targeted publicity. Legitimacy and recognition can be enhanced greatly by the repeated use of an easily identifiable name (or acronym) and network logo.

- *Complementarity and linkages.* There is scope for different networks tackling similar issues in different ways – for instance horizontally and vertically. Such networks will have their own ‘niches’ which should be complementary.
- *Monitoring and evaluation.* Though difficult, there is a need for regular monitoring and evaluation.
- *Learning and training.* Most people who work in networks learn by trial and error. Regionally-based training courses relating to networks could be beneficial.
- *Beneficiary involvement.* National and international networks are likely to gain from close association with area-specific or national beneficiary-based networks. Exchanges between countries, could be particularly valuable. Network members can help establish contacts between local groups and facilitate follow-up actions.
- *Network participation and benefits.* Members need to have a stake in the general objective, an interest in specific activities, a desire to contribute, a sense of belonging, respect for the network, trust in its leaders and a confident feeling of achievement and future possibilities.

## 6 Factors and conditions influencing networking dynamics

- *Network culture.* Members should have the awareness of themselves as part of a group, sharing a common purpose and mutual rights and responsibilities. That culture needs to be acknowledged, supported and nurtured as much as the reasons and content of the network.
- *Clear goals.* It takes time to build consensus among members on goals.
- *Remain pragmatic.* No network can be all things for all people.
- *Evolving nature.* Sometimes networks do form and fade away, membership does rise and fall, and goals and objectives do evolve.
- *Flexible.* Change in network priorities as members' own priorities change.
- *Not competition but collaboration.* It is vital that the network is not in competition with its members.
- *Ownership.* If there is no ownership feeling by members, commitments will be weak
- *Egalitarian relationship among members.* It can be damaging if any member or group of members dominates to the exclusion of others.
- *Volunteer work force.* Resource is scarce, there is a need of volunteer work force from members to keep network running.
- *Test.* Can a network exist, even informally, when donor funds are difficult to attract?
- *Communication is a common problem.* There needs to be a commitment of staff time and funds to cover communication costs.
- *Mutual trust and confidence.*

## 7 What works? – Some examples

### 7.1 International level: UNAIDS as example

Together with its co-sponsors, bilateral agencies and regional institutions, UNAIDS strengthens on-going efforts to support networking, using the following mutually reinforcing strategies:

- Development of resource materials to improve networking. Besides this document, there are other case studies of networks and networking activities (see next section and bibliography).
- Expanding the knowledge base. As more funds become available for HIV/AIDS control, the concern in many countries will shift from that of a lack of resources to that of effective programming and efficient use of resources. In recognition of this, UNAIDS is working to equip managers of National AIDS Control Programmes with tools and techniques for efficient allocation of resources.
- Initiating and supporting networks. The UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors will step up its support for existing networks and encourage the formation of new ones, with an emphasis on their potential to affect the course of the epidemic.
- Facilitating communication for networking. Electronic workspace (eWorkspace) has been dedicated to capacity building and technical resource strengthening for HIV/AIDS programmes at the sub-regional and regional levels. It is a tool to develop, document and

disseminate timely methods and examples in response to specific needs for technical support at the country and regional levels. It draws on expertise from UNAIDS cosponsors, regional institutions, partner agencies and client countries.

## **7.2 National level: The Thai Sub-committee on Elimination of Trafficking in Women and Children**

Structurally this is a good practice that witnesses the commitment of the Thai government in combating trafficking in women and children. The 38 members of this committee represent all concerned GOs, NGOs, and UN agencies in Thailand. It is chaired by Dr. Saisuri Chutikul, a former Minister of the Prime Minister's Office. More than one-third of the members are NGOs, including also GATTW, ECPAT, Asianet, MRLC, NYCD, FACE, and UN agencies, including UNICEF, ILO, and IOM. Government agencies include: The Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Public Health, The National Youth Bureau, Ministry of Commerce, The National Police Bureau, Attorney General, Immigration, Bordering Patrol Unit.

Success factors:

- Membership representing concerned GOs, NGOs (local and international) , UN agencies.
- Clear mandate and with support of the government.
- There are practically two coordinating units, one for GOs (NYB), and another for NGOs (NCYD) with necessary facilities, and resources.
- Common concrete agenda (e.g. advocate and prepare MOUs) whereby all members work also with other organizations who are sub-committee members.
- Policy advocacy, and adoption of good practices of GOs, NGOs and CBOs into national policy can be done effectively through vertical networking.

## **7.3 Provincial level: Provincial Steering Committee – Yunnan Province of China**

The structure of the steering committees at provincial and prefecture levels of ILO/IPEC TICW project in Yunnan, China is close to the Sub-committee on the Elimination of Trafficking in Women and Children in Thailand. Its members consist of representatives from all government organizations concerned (see details in former section). The committee is chaired by the chairperson of the Women's Federation of Yunnan Province, which is a mass organization. The comparative advantage of such structure is that the line of authority is clear. The vertical networking and coordination from provincial to prefecture, to country, to township and to village community is well set. The clear line and linkage is essential to "network" and networking, as it has to do with relationship.

Success factors:

- Political structure and political commitment of the government and all members.
- Clear mandate, goal, and workplan of each of the members.
- Vertical network is effective as it is directed from provincial to prefecture, and down to county, township, to village communities. Communication is done along the existing structure.
- Effective vertical coordination can result in policy advocacy, making use of good practices of interventions into policies of different levels.

## **7.4 Provincial level: Chiang Mai (Thailand) provincial working group to co-ordinate Child Right Protection**

This is a role model of multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary working group for child right protection, including protection against trafficking in women and children. It started from concrete cases of child abuse in a community, and commitment of some local government agencies and NGOs who started to work together without any budget. Since 1998, working group meetings took place monthly to share information, and plan joint action. As there was no budget at the beginning, all members contributed what they had. The members consist of social workers, psychologists, sociologists, counselors, policemen, lawyers, doctors, nurses, attorney general.

Success factors:

- It started with 'the will to do' and voluntarism rather with 'budget' and 'duty'.

- Government support regarding facilities and resources (space, staff, facilities).
- There is a clear coordinating centre, with committed staff.
- There is a clear joint work plan
- The members of the network know one another very well, and have been collaborating in some other areas too.
- The model is simple and cheap, and replicable in other provinces (such as Chiangrai).

### **7.5 District level - Thailand: Maesai District Centre of Network for Child Right Protection**

Members of the Board of Management consist of 30 members from local GOs, and NGOs, including most of head teachers of secondary schools and some important primary schools. The mandate of this board is to develop policy, guidelines and action plan of this centre together with the board of directors, and implementing action plan; to develop a system and working model of the centre; to increase efficiency in providing assistance to abused children, and to raise public awareness of the issue

The centre is now set up and functioning. It's activities and services include :

- 24 hours hotline centre at district level for child abuse cases
- prevention, protection, and rehabilitation of victims
- coordinate with GOs, NGOs, and all concerned parties to provide life security for children
- develop data system on situation, problems, and statistics to provide assistance due to children
- use the data for policy advocacy and public awareness raising
- share information with other provinces, regions, including other countries in the Mekong Sub-region.

Success factors:

- The strength of this centre is participation of all concerned GOs and the network of 19 NGOs in the district;
- Good leadership of the head official of the district administration, and an NGO leader, representing two dominant sectors;
- The scale of district is manageable. All members know one another well, and work together in many other areas. Trafficking is mainstreamed, and accepted not as 'in addition to' the ordinary work, but an essential part of ordinary works and duties;
- The network started with commitment to respond to the problems, and not with 'the project';
- Clear objectives of the network;

### **7.6 Local level - Local Community Networks: Northnet, Thailand**

Northnet is a consortium of NGOs and their projects working as a "network" in the upper Northern region of Thailand. The issues covered range from community mobilization, integrated farming, natural farming to community enterprise, environment, HIV/AIDs, women and children development. The project to combat trafficking is supported by the ILO TICW-project. It covers 5 villages in 2 sub-districts of Mae-ai and Fang districts, Chiang Mai, at the border with Myanmar. Northnet is implementing this project jointly with other 3 NGOs who provide technical assistance to the communities and children, one is on life skill training, the second is on community mobilization on community savings or community fund, the third uses drama to mobilize communities. Northnet's comparative advantage is its catalytic and facilitating role. Not only with other NGOs, but Northnet facilitates networking of communities, the CBOs, the community resource persons. Most importantly, Northnet is the main NGO involved in conscientizing the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAO), to be actively involved in local planning and socio-economic development.

Success factors:

- Committed staff, who work with voluntarism and dedication and coordinate activities with 'members' or all concerned parties, including their partners, alliances, GOs, NGOs, CBOs. Most of the coordinators have many years of direct experience in the issues. They coordinate on good knowledge of the matters concerned.

- It gradually shifts from implementing agencies to coordinating and facilitating learning process, from administrating projects to facilitating knowledge management process. This is the result of awareness of the potential of local people and their communities, or local youth groups that they only need more opportunities to learn and develop their potential.
- Northnet is a good example of how to raise awareness of local organizations and to use local resources, which will secure efficiency and sustainability.
- It operates in a limited geographical area and is pragmatic.

## 8 General problems faced by networks

- *Lack of clear objectives.* The networks become vulnerable to manipulation in the interests of dominant individuals or organizations.
- *Membership disparity.* Some individuals and organization may dominate the network. When strong-minded people with conflicting ideas meet, they can disrupt network meetings and progress with excessive ideological, methodological or technological debate. This can lead to alienation and withdrawal from the network by those who feel unjustly treated, or are simply bored.
- *Domination.* Networks can easily be dominated by particular organizations, interest groups, political persuasions, or other divisive influence, which may result in the effective isolation of particular individuals or groups.
- *Centralization and bureaucracy.* Centralization occurs when a network coordinator, secretariat, steering committee or board starts to control and run the network for its own sake, rather than coordinating and facilitating the activities of its members. This is often associated with network domination involving the secretariat, host organization or steering committee. The danger of centralization is that if network coordinator or secretariat become inactive, the network as a whole may simply cease to function.
- *Lack of trust.* It prevents open sharing of information.
- *Lack of authority to represent the organization.* Some members send representatives that are not authorized to make commitments on behalf of their agency, or their participation is not covered in their job description. This hampers commitment, motivation, and proper co-ordination.
- *Lack of resources.* Unless the network has a specific budget for assisting travel, only resource-rich individuals or organizations can regularly participate in activities.
- *Separate realities.* Only people with easy access to computers and e-mail can join electronic discussion groups. Although e-mail technology is spreading rapidly, its users are still mainly people in privileged organizations, and e-mail groups tend to be rather elitist – often far away from village realities.
- *Manipulation of resources.*
- *Misinformation in networks*
- *Competition.* Networks can be affected by competition from other networks or organizations with overlapping agendas. This can lead to creative collaboration, but it can also lead to competition for recognition, limited resources and membership.
- *Donor interference*
- *Monitoring and evaluation.* This is a difficult issue, as by their very nature, networks tend to be informal and loose structures that wish to emphasize future progress and not past experiences. Also, even highly centralized and structured networks have found it difficult to define reliable indicators of network success and to quantify the effects and the benefits of networking.
- *Political constraints.* National and international networks have to operate within the political realities of a country or region. In some countries, information exchange is viewed with suspicion, and government clearance is required for all correspondence, newsletter contributions, field trips and workshop attendance. Intolerance of criticism is also common, making it difficult for networks to advocate alternative policies toward development.