



**GLOBAL  
COALITIONS**

An introduction to working  
in international civil society  
partnerships

---

**This book is designed as a resource for people working within civil society coalitions, or thinking of establishing such coalitions. It is focused primarily on campaigning coalitions that are working for some distinct change in international policy or law. In particular it is focused on the internal organisation and mechanics of such coalitions. It does not provide guidance on campaigning or advocacy as such, but considers rather the practical challenges that arise when non-governmental organisations try to work together to achieve policy change.**

Both of the book's authors worked previously within the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). Reflecting this, specific examples from the CMC are used throughout the text. The profile given to examples from the CMC is not meant to indicate that the experience of that coalition was in any way more important than experiences from other coalitions, but simply that they are drawn from direct experience and so can be presented with greater confidence.

The book has also drawn heavily on interviews with people that have worked within coalitions on various issues and in various roles. The text here is in large part built up out of their insights and experiences.

For the most part the text is structured around questions that might arise at different points in a coalition's work. We have tried to reflect the very varied and complex nature of the subject matter by avoiding too many definitive statements of what should be done. It is important to recognise that every campaign and coalition will have certain unique features and circumstances. Rather than qualify every statement in the book with some recognition of this, it is hoped that readers will bear this in mind throughout.

However, there will still no doubt be areas where people strongly disagree with our comments. Whether people agree with them or not, we hope these thoughts will be useful to others in their efforts to work collectively for social change.

During the preparation of this book we consulted, amongst others, people with a background working in the following coalitions or campaigns:

- × Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC)
- × International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)
- × Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
- × Control Arms Campaign
- × The Kimberley Process
- × International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
- × International Campaign to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW)
- × Coalition for the International Criminal Court (ICC)
- × World Coalition Against the Death Penalty
- × International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW)
- × Publish What You Pay
- × International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
- × The Corston Coalition

An online version of this report, and related resources, is maintained at: [www.globalcoalitions.org](http://www.globalcoalitions.org)

---

---

<b>7</b>	<b>CHAPTER 1</b> Global civil society coalitions – partnerships for change
<b>13</b>	<b>CHAPTER 2</b> The challenges of starting something
<b>23</b>	<b>CHAPTER 3</b> Coalition structure
<b>35</b>	<b>CHAPTER 4</b> A first funding proposal
<b>41</b>	<b>CHAPTER 5</b> The external context
<b>49</b>	<b>CHAPTER 6</b> A collective voice
<b>61</b>	<b>CHAPTER 7</b> Organisation and logistics
<b>69</b>	<b>CHAPTER 8</b> The future of the coalition
<b>77</b>	<b>CHAPTER 9</b> Conclusion

---



1

---

**GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY  
COALITIONS – PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR CHANGE**

---

This chapter provides a short overview of what we mean by global civil society coalitions. We provide a very brief summary of some of the issues such coalitions have worked on, their major achievements and their subsequent development.

**Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations have become important actors in national and international politics. In many cases, where change is being sought to particular elements of policy or law, groups of NGOs have come together in coalitions in an effort to achieve that change. This has happened at the national, regional and international levels. Civil society coalitions mobilise resources – people, their time and their money – towards a collective goal. They work with varying degrees of coordination and joint activism and use a variety of terms to describe themselves, including coalitions, networks, campaigns, alliances, initiatives and so on. This book is concerned with civil society coalitions seeking to influence international policy or law, although many of the lessons it draws out are relevant to other types of coalition or network.**

“By building new links among actors in civil societies, states and international organisations, [civil society coalitions] multiply the opportunities for dialogue and exchange. In issue areas such as the environment and human rights, they also make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles. By blurring the boundaries between a state’s relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states have to the international system, advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty.”

*Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics*, Margaret E. Keck, Kathryn Sikkink, International Social Science Journal, Volume 51, Issue 159, pages 89–101, March 1999

## DEFINING CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

There is a great deal of academic literature related to the emergence of what has been called the ‘global civil society’ or ‘transnational civil society’ along with ‘transnational advocacy networks’. Coalitions of the type we are focusing on in this report have been situated by some alongside ‘loose networks’ and broader ‘social movements’.

When discussing a global civil society coalition in this book, we mean a group of separate NGOs, working together in multiple countries in a coordinated way as members of an identified coalition on the basis of a common purpose and seeking changes to government policies and practices or to international laws.

Mass membership organisations (such as Amnesty International), NGOs with affiliates in different countries (such as Oxfam) and political parties or trade unions are not considered global civil society coalitions for the purposes of this book. We are also not talking about organisations like AVAAZ, which are able to mobilise massive numbers of individuals to take online actions such as signing a petition or sending an email.<sup>1</sup> Yet all of these types of organisation may play important roles within coalitions.

Similarly, this book does not analyse the broader social or political initiatives of which coalitions are themselves a part. For example, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines is a global civil society coalition, but it is situated within a broader political movement to ban landmines that includes international organisations such as the UN and ICRC, parliamentarians, governments, academics, and others from outside the ICBL itself.

1. See About Us page on [www.avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org). AVAAZ had over nine million members in 193 countries in July 2011.

Global civil society coalitions have had a hand in a number of important successes such as helping the passage of international treaties over the last two decades. The table below focuses on some of the coalitions that have successfully achieved new international legal instruments.

ISSUE	COALITION ESTABLISHED	ACHIEVEMENT	NOTES
Anti-personnel landmines	1992: International Campaign to Ban Landmines established	1997: Mine Ban Treaty signed	The treaty places a comprehensive prohibition on antipersonnel landmines and requires States Parties to destroy stockpiles, clear land and cooperate to achieve these goals.
Impunity from serious international crimes	1995: Coalition for an International Criminal Court established	1998: Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court adopted	The Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court, which is a permanent international tribunal that exists to prosecute individuals accused of genocide and other serious international crimes, such as crimes against humanity and war crimes.
Child soldiers	1998: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers established	2000: Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted	The optional protocol requires States Parties to ensure no members of their armed forces under the age of 18 take a direct part in hostilities and prohibits the conscription of those under the age of 18.
Tobacco control	1999: Framework Convention Alliance established	2003: Framework Convention on Tobacco Control adopted	The treaty contains prohibitions on sales to minors and advertising, and contains obligations on tax increases, package labelling, smoke-free environments, and alternatives to tobacco production.
Cluster munitions	2003: Cluster Munition Coalition established	2008: Convention on Cluster Munitions signed	Modelled on the Mine Ban Treaty, this convention places comprehensive prohibitions on cluster munitions and requires States Parties to destroy stockpiles, clear land and assist victims.
Enforced disappearances	2007: International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances established	2010: International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance enters into force	The Convention on Enforced Disappearances prohibits the practice of enforced disappearance, requires states to investigate acts of enforced disappearance and ensure victims’ rights to reparation.

## COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

Global civil society coalitions tend to have the following characteristics:

### A MEMBERSHIP

The basic characteristic of all global civil society coalitions is the membership:

- ✗ A coalition's membership might include a handful of organisations or several hundred.
- ✗ Members might sign up to a charter with specific duties and responsibilities, or the affiliation might simply require endorsement of a common call.
- ✗ Members are usually organisations rather than individuals, but there are often ways to include individuals in the coalition in one way or another.

### A COMMON CALL FOR CHANGE

Global civil society coalitions come together in order to change practice, policy and sometimes laws at the global level:

- ✗ This purpose is usually expressed as a call or mission statement and endorsing it is often the core requirement for becoming a coalition member.
- ✗ This joint call is often the subject of negotiation among the members; it can be detailed or very broad but in any case it sets the parameters of the coalition's work.

### A LEADERSHIP

Many coalitions have in place a leadership to guide the policy and planning of the coalition and help facilitate the activities of the membership

- ✗ The roles and responsibilities of the leadership vary greatly among coalitions.
- ✗ Terms used to refer to the role of a coalition leadership include: advisory, governance, steering, executive, strategy and management.
- ✗ Terms used to describe the structure include: council, committee, board and group.
- ✗ Leadership groups are either elected or appointed.

Staff members are often employed to work on behalf of the coalition. Sometimes staff will be part of the leadership group and sometimes they may have a more administrative role.

### A COMMON PLAN TO ACHIEVE CHANGE

There is often a general plan of action to achieve the global change that the coalition seeks.

- ✗ Depending on the level of coherence within the coalition, this plan might be more or less detailed at the global level.
- ✗ It could be a set of objectives on which to lobby governments through a campaign of global meetings, or it could be a more detailed analysis of the power dynamics and political targets among decision makers at the international level.
- ✗ Members will often determine the best way to effect change in their own national or regional context.

### A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Coalitions often promote a collective identity for themselves.

- ✗ This can include a name, slogan, logo and visual identity.
- ✗ Individual member organisations may communicate on behalf of the coalition, or identify themselves as members when undertaking specific actions, such as talking to governments or the media.

A good encapsulation of some of the key elements in coalition campaigning is set out by Jody Williams and Stephen Goose in their article: Citizen Diplomacy and the Ottawa Process: A Lasting Model? contained in the book they co-edited with Mary Wareham, *Banning Landmines: Disarmament, Citizen Diplomacy and Human Security, 2008*.

#### The key elements for a successful coalition are:

- ✗ Know how to organise
- ✗ Maintain a flexible structure
- ✗ Understand the need for leadership and committed workers
- ✗ Always have an action plan and deadlines, with outcome-oriented meetings
- ✗ Communication, communication and more communication
- ✗ Follow-up and follow through
- ✗ Provide expertise and documentation
- ✗ Articulate goals and messages clearly and simply
- ✗ Focus on the human cost
- ✗ Use as many forums as possible to promote the message
- ✗ Be inclusive, be diverse, yet speak with one voice
- ✗ Recognise that international context and timing do matter

## WHY DO NGOS WORK IN GLOBAL COALITIONS?

Civil society coalitions emerge for a variety of reasons. Some motivating factors include:

- ✗ The desire to maximise NGO influence on advocacy targets in different countries, including helping activists overcome obstacles at a national level by drawing on international support.
- ✗ The need to make the most of scarce human and financial resources and to avoid duplication of effort among NGOs working on similar issues.
- ✗ The desire to ensure effective communications among key NGO actors working on a particular issue and to pool the expertise available to NGOs.
- ✗ The desire to avoid NGO disunity on an issue. Opponents will be all too willing to exploit differences in opinion among NGOs in order to undermine the overall goal being pursued.

Working in coalitions also provides a coordinated way for NGOs to forge and maintain strategic partnerships with external actors. It is easier for a government to relate to a coalition as a single partner that represents the range of civil society actors on an issue than to work out whom to interact with from among a host of organisations.

However, coalitions also impose costs and constraints on member organisations. A key trade-off when working in coalition is between the gains in effectiveness (stronger voice and wider reach) on the one hand and the amount of time and resources spent in making a coalition work on the other. Coalitions have been described as a 'necessary bureaucracy' and every coalition an NGO joins brings with it another set of communications, another email list and another set of conference calls and meetings.

## NETWORKS, COALITIONS OR MOVEMENTS?

### NETWORKS

Loosely linked, hold common values, share information **Example: IANSA**

### COALITIONS / CAMPAIGNS

More tightly coordinated, share values, exchange information, work on the basis of common tactics and strategies **Example: ICBL, CMC**

### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Share the characteristics of networks and coalitions, but also engage in sustained public mobilisation and protest **Example: The Occupy movement**

“You need to make a decision early on as to whether you want to be able to speak together as one voice or just be a network where people do their own thing. If you don't decide that early on this can be a problem down the line.”

Ray Acheson, *Reaching Critical Will*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Keeping the communications flowing and keeping up with the flow of communications is a crucial aspect of coalition work. Civil society coalitions have a long track record, but there has been considerable proliferation in the past few decades. One of the drivers of this proliferation has been the increasing number of NGOs that exist today and that work on issues that resonate across borders. A key factor in the emergence of more – and more effective – global coalitions since the 1990s is the dramatic evolution of communications technology.

The mass collaboration made possible by the ability to email the same message to hundreds and thousands of people in every corner of the globe has changed the dynamics of global coalitions. It has made it easier for individual voices on a particular issue to provide a unified voice, to stay up-to-date with developments globally, to plan together, to adapt and to exert maximum influence over decisions being taken at national, regional and international levels. It is this flow of communication that is central to effective coalition work.

Governments and international organisations such as the UN sometimes see significant benefits in having NGOs organising themselves into coalitions. For example, the ECOSOC Statute for Non-Governmental Organisations states that: “Where there exist a number of organisations with similar objectives, interests and basic views in a given field, they may, for the purposes of consultation with the council, form a joint committee or other body authorised to carry on such consultation for the group as a whole.”

ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, 25 July 1996.

## SUMMARY

Global civil society coalitions have become important actors in the development of new international law and other policy change over the last two decades. These coalitions share characteristics that distinguish them from more loosely organised networks or the broader social movements within which the coalitions themselves may operate. While coalitions can offer NGOs significant benefits towards achieving goals, there are also costs associated with the additional workloads that they generate. Coalitions require structures and organisation but it is communication that is central to their effective work.

The next chapter looks at the particular challenges of initiating a coalition.

“When you think about what members get out of being in coalitions, it’s not just about achieving common goals. For example, the former communist states in Europe had a limited civil society sector generally and one of the things CONCORD has helped to do it to provide a sector for them, it has created a culture that they can be part of.”

**Andreas Vogt**, CONCORD European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

2

## THE CHALLENGES OF STARTING SOMETHING

Starting a new coalition is an exciting and motivating process. Despite having it all to do, making that first step should feel like a big leap towards achieving important goals. But this is also a time when decisions are made and ways of working adopted that can affect how the group will operate for years to come. This chapter considers some of the important issues involved in getting a coalition off the ground.

**Starting a successful coalition requires a group of people who share a common agenda for united action. While part of this will likely be codified into a coalition ‘call’ – a statement of what needs to be done – this basis for united action goes beyond policy, to include shared values and norms of behaviour. It needs a group of people who want to work together.**

**It also needs a sense of urgency if momentum is going to be built and sustained. Urgency may come from current events that illustrate the problem at hand or provide a pressing opportunity for reform in an area of established concern. Crucially, the coalition will need to fill a gap in the field of NGO work if it is to be seen as a necessary mechanism for achieving reform.**

**As seen in the last section, collective work can take many forms, from loose information sharing networks to more tightly organised campaigns. In the early phases it is important, therefore, to have some clarity about the approach the coalition will take – so that members and partners share the same basic expectations.**

## IS A COALITION RIGHT FOR YOUR ISSUE?

Setting up an international coalition might be a logical step in pushing forward an international advocacy process, but it might not be the best option. Answering the following questions might help in the process of determining whether or not a coalition is the right approach.

### What sort of issue is it?

Does the issue affect a range of different countries or is it limited to a small number of states, or one particular region? Is it an issue that is easy to understand and one where a clear change in policy or law will make a significant difference in the short term? Or is it a multi-faceted issue that will require a range of policy changes across government agencies and different countries and over a long period of time? These factors will affect how easy it is to attract partners among civil society organisations and to forge relationships with governments and media. This is not to say that complex issues cannot be worked on through coalitions, but they will require different approaches in order to cut through that complexity.

### Is there a demand for work on this issue?

It is important to consider the motivation towards collective work. Would the coalition fill a perceived gap in NGO advocacy and effectiveness? That is to say, do the key players on the NGO side feel pressure to be more effective? Is this pressure coming from within the NGO sector or from one or more governments or international organisations?

### Will a coalition be stronger than the sum of its parts?

Generally the purpose of establishing a coalition is to make it possible for NGOs to exert maximum influence in achieving their targets. So it’s important to consider whether pressure is going to be stronger with NGOs acting with a collective identity or as individual organisations. Will it be possible to agree on a collective position and clear message? Will some NGOs be concerned that their own identity and visibility could be diluted by the emergence of a collective identity?

### Who are the potential partners?

Sometimes a coalition emerges almost organically when a group of individuals from different organisations decide they want to normalise their existing close collaboration and working relationships. Sometimes the process to build a coalition is driven by the recognition that a new structure is needed in order to overcome the status quo. So it’s important to look at who is doing what. Who is already committed and working on the issue? What are the relationships like and how do the different personalities interact? If there are already tensions among NGOs that have been working on an issue for some time, could an effort to work in coalition get bogged down in internal problems – or would it provide a mechanism to overcome them?

## CAN YOU BUILD A COMPELLING CASE?

The basis for any calls to change international policy and practice will be formed around the evidence and argument that a coalition can marshal to justify its cause. A fundamental task of any coalition, especially in its early stages, is to provide this material. This book is not the place to consider the issue in depth but the matter must not be overlooked. Whether the case for change can be made sufficiently compelling will be an ongoing challenge throughout the coalition’s life.

## CHALLENGES TO BUILDING EARLY MOMENTUM

Given constraints of resources and people’s established commitments to other work, it is likely that only a small group will be available to get the ball rolling. The early work of developing an issue can be relatively lonely and uncertain for those undertaking it. Looking back on successful processes, it is easy to lose sight of the uncertainty and insecurity that often accompany the first stages of coalition work. Building a small enthusiastic community, with trust in each other, is the key task.

Some challenges to this, and to building a sense of urgency, might be:

- ✘ Too many demands on people’s time where natural partners on an issue are locked into too many established streams of work.
- ✘ Feelings of disempowerment if people working on these early issues have not been achieving their goals.
- ✘ Stagnation, in the event the sector has become professionalised to the point of not challenging how these issues are being addressed or how work is done.

In the CMC much of the early work of the initial member organisations was to document the problems that cluster munitions caused. Human Rights Watch, the Mennonite Central Committee and Landmine Action all produced evidence and analysis of the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions some years before work towards a treaty began.

“The fundamental dilemma of coalitions is relative firepower vs. nimbleness. Coalitions take a lot of time! Every coalition means another email list. It is lots and lots of work.”

Anthea Lawson, Global Witness

“We were small enough to be a self-elected informal group, we knew each other really well, we were the ones working on the issue and we had excellent relationships with governments and intergovernmental organisations like the UN.”

Martin Macpherson, Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)



## DECISIONS MADE EARLY ON CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE FUTURE

Early choices can have repercussions for the coalition's future. A lack of flexibility in the coalition's name or public position can limit room for manoeuvre or space for dialogue, and might seem impossible to change later. A rush to define things can likewise reduce options. Coalitions tend not to like publically changing their minds, so the fixed points that are established early on might dictate the terms around which the coalition has to campaign on its issue for the rest of its life.

A general recommendation would be not to lock the coalition into narrowly framing the issues, but keep the door open to various consistent framings in the future. Multiple framings can be used not only to bring in wider and more varied constituencies but also to get around blockages within individual lines of discussion. The suggestion then is to find a broad – overarching – articulation under which more specific lines of engagement can be developed.

For example, in the development of the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a deliberate effort has been made to create a broad framing that could engage different constituencies; one that framed the nuclear weapon problem in terms of moral, economic and environmental issues.

For the CMC, the frame of reference provided by the general rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) became very constraining in the way that it was used by some states. Finding ways to challenge that frame of reference, particularly through a focus on the “unacceptable harm” that cluster munitions cause, was critical to making progress on the issue.

“We were working for the general goal – an independent, fair, effective international criminal court. Definition of these terms would be developed slowly and in partnership with others throughout the process.”

**Bill Pace**, Coalition for the International Criminal Court

## WHERE CAN FUNDING FOR EARLY WORK COME FROM?

Funding is likely to be an early challenge for any coalition. Most coalitions rely on grants from charitable trusts and foundations, or from governments. Sometimes individual member organisations might have sufficient funds in a flexible form to allow them to kick-start some collective work.

Some questions for consideration regarding early funding:

- ✘ Can coalition work be developed on the margins of work for which people already have funding? For example, on the margins of meetings that various partners are already funded to attend?
- ✘ Can coalition work be subsidised as a component of research work on the issues in question – especially staff time so that people can also work on coalition needs?
- ✘ Can some initial funding be found for coalition activities before the coalition has been formally constituted?

Early funding for the CMC came from a broad grant that was provided by The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund to UK NGO Landmine Action. With the Fund's permission, Landmine Action was able to allocate a portion of this grant to cover the costs of a full-time coordinator working out of the Landmine Action office. From this, the staff of the CMC began to be built.

## WHO SHOULD BE THE COALITION'S FIRST MEMBERS?

The first members of a coalition, both as individuals and organisations, are likely to have a major impact on the policy, tone and working style of the collective effort. Key characteristics for such partners would be good experience of working with each other in the past, credibility on the issues in question, and people, time and resources that can be contributed. Those seeking to establish a coalition may have more or less choice over who the early members will be. Some partners may be so central to the issue at hand that working without them would seem impossible, or raise questions about the coalition's credibility. In other contexts the field may be quite open.

Some suggested parameters for composing an initial group:

- ✘ Open to all who are prepared to commit to it and who share a common agenda for action.
- ✘ Formed at a manageable size, which can in turn agree the parameters by which a wider community can become engaged.
- ✘ Mindful of diversity and regional representation issues, which may not be well balanced at first but will need to be considered as the group develops.
- ✘ Include sufficient ‘worker bees’. Such people can be evidence-gatherers, policy drivers, campaigners and activists – but they need to be people who will take on work.
- ✘ Big organisations bring credibility and capacity, but they can also bring challenges in terms of policy constraint and flexibility.
- ✘ On many issues it will be important to have members that address the range of aspects that it presents – such as human rights, development, medical, legal etc.

Without worker bees any effort risks fizzling out into sterile policy discussions (or arguments) with a lack of focus on campaigning and outcomes. In a number of cases, too much of an academic orientation, with an emphasis on policy thinking but not on advocacy or activism, has resulted in initiatives failing to gain momentum. Successful coalitions contain the right mix of academic and activist ingredients.

For some coalitions the early membership has been strongly shaped by established working communities. The CMC was established by organisations that had worked together as part of the ICBL. Similarly, the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) was formed in 2011, primarily by organisations and individuals who had been working together in the CMC.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COALITION'S STATED PURPOSE BE?

A group of organisations will only come together to work as a coalition if they have some agreement on a problem that needs to be addressed and on what needs to be done about it. Thus a coalition needs to have some formulation of its purpose that can be used to focus collective work and explain to external partners (and other would-be coalition members) what the venture is about.

This initial formulation of purpose is very important and will serve to frame the future work of the coalition. It might need to provide an approach to the issues that is broad enough to give the coalition room to manoeuvre as external circumstances develop – but for a campaigning coalition the more direct and simple it is, the more likely it will function effectively as a motivating communication tool.

The CMC did not always have a narrow focus towards a ban on cluster munitions. When it was first established, the CMC was concerned also with the wider problem of ‘explosive remnants of war’ from all types of explosive ordnance. While it could be argued that this wider framing reduced coalition effectiveness in the early stages, it may also have provided the space for people to work towards common agreement regarding the coalition’s direction.

“All of our advocacy meetings were set up on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. This was very important and effective in the eyes of governments. To be able to assemble a crew of NGOs that governments could engage with in one fell swoop was crucial. We had a good balance of academic, peaceniks, human rights, humanitarian relief and refugees – the whole spectrum of representation.”

**Felicity Hill**, former director, UN Office of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

A number of campaigns have been established on very broad themes but often these provide an overarching umbrella for more specific policy goals. People engaged across a range of coalitions have tended to emphasise that a narrower focus is preferable for generating momentum and ultimately achieving policy change.

“You need to think through the implications of engaging big organisations who are powerful on the issue anyway. Having them inside can pose challenges because they can be inflexible, have complicated decision-making processes and can exert too much influence within the coalition. But they are useful because they are powerful and knowledgeable. Also, if they are outside the coalition then they can undermine its collective work.”

**Richard Bennett**, *Effective Collectives*

Building on the distinction made between networks and coalitions in Chapter 1, the table below suggests how these differences might be reflected in focus and policy.

### NETWORKS

- Operate primarily as supportive partnerships or networks
- Can have multiple items of policy change that they would like to see adopted, with the issue as a whole being too broad to focus on one particular track
- Will tend to allow members considerable leeway in terms of policy orientations.
- Can provide a fertile basis for the development of more specific focused work among some of the members, but can also be a source of inertia if they become too possessive of work within their broad remit
- Movement from an open coalition to a more focused approach is possible

### CAMPAIGN COALITIONS

- Operate primarily on a focused campaign
- Have ambitions for policy change that are sufficiently narrow to allow a clear articulation of intent and also suggest a plausible potential for success
- Will tend to encourage members towards common policy positions on specific issues
- Lends itself to a higher degree of coordination and control over policy positions and approaches among the membership. This aids campaigning but can cause internal tensions
- Movement from a focused coalition to a wider network more difficult

## WHAT SHOULD BE THE MISSION STATEMENT OR 'CALL'?

A mission statement or 'call' is a brief text that frames the work of the coalition. It will probably be with the coalition throughout its life and so is a vital early milestone in coalition development. The call will likely contain both a statement of the problem and the key points of a proposed solution to the problem. The call may also indicate the types of actors who should be responsible for enacting a solution, and the types of framework within which a solution should be established (e.g. behavioural change, policy change at a national level, change to international law). All of these elements can be important for framing the coalition's future work. At its most basic level, the call can be used to constrain or discourage approaches that fall outside of this formulation – setting boundaries to the coalition's remit.

It may be preferable to adopt a call among a small core group of NGOs initiating a coalition rather than waiting to attempt this within a wide community. The initial group needs to be big enough and diverse enough in its thinking to shape the call effectively and to give some legitimacy to the text. It can then be used as a basis for inviting a wider group of NGOs to participate in the coalition effort.

“When setting goals you need to make sure that your goal references the actual change you want to see, not the instrument that will achieve that change. So the goal should be to end the destructive practice, not to get a treaty. The treaty is a means to an end, and is therefore a secondary objective. I say this, because when we campaigned for a moratorium on deep sea-bottom trawling we got something that wasn't quite a moratorium, but if fully implemented would have spelled an end to such trawling on vulnerable ecosystems. Since we'd set ourselves up to campaign for a moratorium it appeared to be a failure, when in fact it was a landmark, paradigm-changing agreement in relation to high seas ocean governance.”

**Kelly Rigg**, Climate Action Network and formerly the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition

Before reaching out to build a membership it is worth considering structural issues and developing guidance for potential members on what their role will be and what is expected of them. These issues are discussed more in the next section on coalition structure.

## WHAT ARE WE ALL WORKING FOR?

A coalition's call should be sufficiently detailed to limit the potential for disagreement on fundamental points. While a coalition will necessarily house divergent opinions on strategy and policy, there needs to be sufficient direction derived from the agreed call to keep differences of opinion within a manageable framework.

Lack of clarity in a call can result in a coalition providing an umbrella for interests that are too divergent to work together effectively. However, the call should still function fundamentally as a framing tool – not as a detailed statement of policy. There will likely be much that needs to be worked through and discussed in detail within the framework established by the call.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COALITION BE CALLED?

The name chosen for the coalition will create expectations as to how it will operate and what it will be working to achieve. A name like the 'International Campaign to Ban Landmines' suggests a clarity of intent that is greater than that suggested by the 'Cluster Munition Coalition' for example. However, some have noted that an overly specific name can become limiting in the future if it goes against changes in the external environment and the coalition's policy ambitions. Given the international nature of the effort, it is also important to consider how a proposed name will translate into other languages.

## HOW WILL YOU BUILD A WIDER NETWORK?

Beyond an initial group of organisations, most (but not all) coalitions will seek to engage the participation of a wider network of members. Often it is this wider network that will truly form the coalition and be vital to its ongoing work. The key tools in this effort are likely to be existing networks and the energy of individuals.

Although networks over email are very accessible, mass emails are not the same as identifying and directly engaging and motivating individuals who will be active coalition partners. Those people committed to growing the coalition need to invest time and energy in building their personal relationships with the individuals in other NGOs who can make a coalition membership not just a list on a website, but a dynamic force. Word of mouth, personal recommendations of people to talk to and face-to-face conversations provide the basis for building partnerships that will have strength.

## HOW FORMAL SHOULD WE BE?

The level of formality adopted in early work is important in setting the tone. People coming from different working backgrounds might have very different expectations regarding formality. When considering formality here, it is taken for granted that when organisations come together for a meeting there should be an agenda, a chair, a speaker's list to organise input, decisions and action points noted in the form of documented minutes, and these minutes later circulated as a record of the meeting. This sort of formality is more or less essential in ensuring that meetings are focused on meaningful outcomes and don't end up simply wasting people's time. However, with coalitions drawing on activists and experts in specific subject areas, it should not be taken for granted that everybody has the same understanding of how a meeting should be run.

For many, an informal approach to structure during the early stages is to be encouraged. This might mean a flat structure – operating with a minimal hierarchy – and a willingness not to formalise structures initially, but rather to allow people to work together based on their competencies and on trust. Lack of trust can result in focusing on formality rather than on outcomes.

Some have suggested a dynamic that moves from being informal during early stages to more formal as the coalition grows and work intensifies, before reverting to a more informal approach again once trust and unity are strong and widespread.

In all of this, balancing the need for leadership and the need to be inclusive is a constant challenge.

“Trust relationships are very important and need to be worked on in the beginnings. Conflict is natural – so how it is addressed is important, and this is expressive of the vital issue of trust.”

**Liz Bernstein**, Nobel Women's Initiative and formerly ICBL

## WHAT SHOULD BE THE PACE OF THE COALITION'S EARLY WORK?

Most coalitions will need to be prepared for a long process of work and so need people willing to commit to working with the coalition for a significant period of time.

While a sense of urgency is needed from the onset, the workload of the coalition should increase over time, perhaps in steps that are linked to the changing political dynamics of the issue in question. The point at which the pace of coalition work can appropriately be increased will be dependent on:

### Internal coalition factors:

- ✘ Evidence marshalled
- ✘ Organisations and individuals on board
- ✘ Clarity of purpose

### External circumstances:

- ✘ Support among key governments
- ✘ Space for political process
- ✘ Pertinent external events highlighting the issues in question

During the early stages of coalition work there probably needs to be a degree of acceptance that it may be some years before the issue becomes ripe for a more dynamic push. Accepting this is not an admission of weakness, but necessary if people involved are not to become frustrated or have unrealistic expectations. The main challenge is to keep the coalition going and to ensure that when an opportunity does become available, the coalition is in the strongest possible state to take it on.

“Personalities are important. There was a spark and real friendship between people working on the NGO working group on women peace and security. And there was a lot of trust in WILPF.”

**Felicity Hill**, former director, UN Office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

## SUMMARY

This section has covered some of the most immediate issues when considering putting together a coalition. Assessing whether such a coalition might provide a response that is more than the sum of its parts is perhaps the most important step. Beyond this, ensuring the policy issues are kept in a broad frame of reference can provide freedom of movement in the future and allow a diverse range of partners to get involved in the initiative. Balanced against this, the purpose of the coalition will need to be articulated in a way that is sufficiently focused to motivate the membership.

The next chapter considers how coalitions can be structured.

“It's important to keep coalitions light touch otherwise individual organisational mandates can become a problem – whether an organisation feels the direction of the coalition is consistent with its own mandate. And the bigger the organisation, the bigger the problems will be. Getting some big NGOs to move can be like trying to turn an oil tanker.”

**Anthea Lawson**, Global Witness

3

## COALITION STRUCTURE

As a coalition develops, the way that collective decisions are made and a collective voice is adopted will be fundamental to its campaigning effectiveness. Much will depend on how the coalition is structured, what different groups are responsible for making decisions, who is allowed to speak for the coalition and what rules or practices govern decision making. This chapter examines some of the different structural options available – recognising that all may have different strengths and weaknesses.

These are issues around which major tensions can develop – tensions that might slow down or stop a coalition in its tracks. If such tensions are to be overcome, relationships built around trust will be vitally important, whatever structures have been adopted.

Coalitions need to make decisions collectively and stick to them collectively. The structure of the coalition is fundamental to getting decisions made and, in turn, effective decision making is critical to successful coalition work. Decisions will relate, at different levels, to such things as the common call (what is the coalition working for?), strategy, specific policies and documents, statements, logos and structural questions about decision making itself.

In order to make decisions a coalition will need some internal structures beyond simply membership. Likely additional components of structure include a steering group and perhaps some part- or full-time coalition staff. There are also important issues to consider of legal and financial identity (although these tend to be more significant considerations later in the life of a coalition).

Some general issues to consider:

- ✘ Over time structures may need to change in response to external context and the dynamics of resources and need
- ✘ North/south balance and pressure for regional representation, as well as different policy approaches, may be issues within structures and representative roles – and a leadership group will need to find ways to resolve these tensions
- ✘ Consultation and communication is important to ensure good decisions are made but also as a process, to ensure people feel part of the coalition
- ✘ Whatever structures are adopted, it is important that the members continue to feel a sense of ownership of the coalition. A leadership group therefore needs to bring the membership with them and promote a sense of inclusiveness
- ✘ It is important also to understand what coalition members want from the coalition’s central structures. Too little in the centre can leave people feeling that the coalition isn’t meeting their needs
- ✘ The coalition should be wary that the movement towards greater structure might drain energy away from a focus on activities. This doesn’t have to be the case, but there is always a danger that too much concentration at the centre leads to people losing touch with the wider community
- ✘ Whatever structures are put in place, they must not compromise the ability of the coalition to respond with agility to changing external circumstances or opportunities. Relationships built on trust will be the key to making this possible

Coalitions are first and foremost networks of communication. This section looks at how coalitions can be structured – the formal roles of membership, steering groups and coalition staff – but binding any of these structures together are the processes of communication that really form the coalition ‘in action’. It is important to emphasise this now because when looking at structures in detail we tend to focus on formal arrangements and while these are important they are not nearly so important as the flow of communication.

### WILL THERE BE A STEERING GROUP?

Most coalitions have some sort of steering group to direct collective work. Such groups vary in size (usually 5-20 organisations), responsibilities and mechanisms of selection or rotation. In addition to a steering group some coalitions have ‘chairs’ or ‘co-chairs’, various sub-committee mechanisms for more specific streams of work, and wider ‘advisory groups’. It is often the steering group that is set up as the ‘engine room’ of collective strategy, planning and direction. In many cases it is the steering group that coalition staff will look to for assistance and there is an expectation on it to resolve the tensions that coalitions generate.

#### Why have a steering group?

Like any leadership body, a steering group becomes necessary when the membership is too big to make decisions at the frequency the coalition requires. This threshold is reached very quickly. This book looks at the formation of a steering group before the composition of a wider membership precisely because most coalitions develop from discussions between a small number of organisations that go on to serve, at least in the early stages, as a steering group.

A good steering group should also ensure that a link is maintained between any coalition staff and the wider membership avoiding – at least during the main campaigning phase – a drift towards the coalition becoming simply another NGO in its own right. It is important therefore to recognise that such a group is not necessarily the same as a company board of directors. There are many different models of board for different types of institutions, but a coalition’s steering group needs to be active in decision-making and very much part of the coalition membership.

#### Where will the steering group’s authority come from?

In many cases the authority of an initial steering group will come from the working commitment of the organisations that make up that group. Steering groups often come together organically as small groups prepared to commit to collective work on a certain theme or towards a certain goal.

Beyond such early formations, various mechanisms have been adopted for selecting a steering group within more mature coalitions. Some coalitions hold elections from the full membership, with service on the steering group being limited to a fixed term. Others have been effectively self-selecting, with no hard-and-fast limitations on how long an organisation can serve.

“A good coalition has a steering committee that is accountable and can be influenced or changed by the members. The whole set up needs to be something that the membership feels is good for them. The process of developing the structure can be as important as the structure itself.”

Richard Bennett, Effective Collectives

ELECTED STEERING GROUP	SELECTED STEERING GROUP
<p>ADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Transparent</li> <li>✘ Provides a clear basis for authority</li> </ul>	<p>ADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Can be tailored to produce a balanced team</li> <li>✘ Can ensure key actors are represented and have a long-term stake</li> <li>✘ Requires trust and cross-cutting personal relationships if it is going to work</li> </ul>
<p>DISADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ May exclude organisations able to make vital contributions</li> <li>✘ May throw together teams that don’t function effectively</li> <li>✘ Probably requires limited terms, which may serve to reduce commitment of individual organisations</li> </ul>	<p>DISADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Risks complaints about process</li> <li>✘ Risks questions regarding its authority</li> <li>✘ Presents a possibility of becoming alienated from its wider membership</li> </ul>

Some useful questions in considering steering group composition:

- ✘ Is the coalition focused on specific time-bound outcomes or is it a long-term representative institution? If the latter, the formalities of governance may have greater significance from the onset.
- ✘ What expectations have already been established regarding internal coalition processes? Are coalition members working on assumptions drawn from particular past experience?
- ✘ Is there a group that has already been meeting in a role similar to a steering group? Does a variation of this group have the skills, time and representational balance to be supported by the members? Can a larger group meeting be used to provide a mandate to this group?
- ✘ Do some choices reduce options in the future? It may be more acceptable for a self-selecting group to open up in future than for an elected group to break the links of accountability.
- ✘ Will representational balance be formalised – i.e. set numbers of places for certain types of organisations (groups with a special stake in the issues of the coalition, such as victim's associations) or regional representatives and so on.
- ✘ Does steering group membership imply any legal or financial responsibilities with respect to the coalition? In some cases where the coalition is formally constituted as a legal entity, it is the members of the steering group that are the officers of that body.

The goal should be a steering group capable of doing the work required, of putting in the hours and the quality of contributions that will drive the coalition forward. In the absence of direct democratic accountability, factors such as commitment, expertise, gender, regional and thematic representation may all help to compose a group that will be supported by the coalition without it having been elected. In any case, clear, transparent and frequent communication will be vital to making the chosen course work.

Later in this chapter we think about how the components of a coalition might fit together. Under that section we consider further additional governance bodies, such as chairs, sub-committees, working groups and advisory boards.

It is very important for all partners in a coalition to keep in mind that the steering group organisations are also members, and very often some of the most active members. Likewise, people in the steering group must be wary of thinking of the wider membership as means to an end. A mind-set that separates these two groups too much can both indicate and contribute to serious tensions.

## WHO WILL FORM THE MEMBERSHIP?

A coalition is made up of members that are broadly united in their commitment to a common cause. There are really two fundamental formal questions that need to be addressed regarding a membership: who can be a member and what must members agree to? We also consider the importance of growing the network of members over time and expectations regarding the work of those members.

### Who can be a member?

Different coalitions have different parameters of membership, some more formally defined than others. Most coalitions discussed in this paper have non-government organisations (NGOs) as the basic unit of membership, but others allow individuals, trade unions, local authorities and even UN agencies. Some coalitions, such as IANSA, have different defined categories of membership for different types of organisation or individual.

Some considerations:

- ✘ For campaigning, having parameters as to who or what can be a member should make it more likely that the coalition can agree to a strong call and stick together for the duration required.
- ✘ Basing membership around organisations rather than individuals is likely to change how the coalition represents itself – its motivation and justification is likely to come from the professional experience of the organisations that comprise it.
- ✘ If based on institutions, is it necessary or beneficial to require proof of institutional status? In some countries, or sectors of work, there are numerous organisations that are essentially individuals operating under an institutional name, with little or no formal structure.

- ✘ If individuals are excluded from membership, what do you lose? Many coalitions have benefited from the energy and expertise of individuals without institutional affiliations. Can mechanisms be found to keep such individuals engaged?
- ✘ Working through national or regional coordinating bodies can be a powerful way of increasing the size of the membership while maintaining a sense of engagement and purpose among key members. Done sensitively it can help to avoid or manage possible tensions between members in one country. On the other hand it can create tensions between organisations competing for coordinating status.
- ✘ It is important to remember coalition members will often have many other items on their agendas. While a certain level of engagement should be expected in order to be part of the coalition, this needs to be realistic in relation to the different demands that member organisations face.

Effective national partners are vital to the work of the coalition – so the development of the membership needs to include the partnerships that can facilitate the coalition's goal through national advocacy.

### ICBL-CMC MEMBERSHIP PARAMETERS

Membership of the ICBL and CMC is open to non-governmental organisations. There is no membership fee. To become a member there is a three step process:

1. Endorse the 'calls to action' by the CMC and ICBL
2. Agree to abide by the 'ICBL-CMC Membership Pledge'
3. Submit a completed 'Application Form'

The 'calls to action' set out the basic purpose and objectives of the two campaigns. The membership pledge sets out what could be considered the rights and responsibilities of members. The application form covers contact details, information about the applicant organisation and asks for some details about what work the applicant organisation is going to do to further the aims of the two campaigns.

## What must the members agree to?

As discussed previously, a coalition is likely to be formed around a common call; a shared language that serves both to direct the coalition and define its boundaries. Most coalitions require members in some way to endorse the express mission of the coalition as a whole. Beyond this basic step, other coalitions require members to accept and respect constitutional documents – articles that lay out the rights and responsibilities of members and the formalised administrative processes of the coalition. Some coalitions require members to pay annual subscriptions, but many don't.

EXPECTATIONS OF COALITION MEMBERS:

Sometimes big organisations can struggle to understand that you cant always get what you want. Smaller organisations are often more used to accepting certain things on a pragmatic basis. But that can be difficult for some organisationsto swallow - the idea of going with the majority.

Daniel Mack, Instituto Sou da Paz

- ✘ A coalition should expect members to do some work for the cause and place them under some obligation to do so (on paper at least). Coalition membership can be made conditional on making efforts to respond to 'action alerts' and other appeals for assistance from the coalition. Of course, it might not be possible for people to respond to everything the coalition asks of them, but a mechanism can be put in place to encourage action and to ask questions of those that systematically fail to engage.
- ✘ Beyond the call, or mission, it is quite difficult for a coalition to force centrally agreed policy on its membership, so good communication is needed to promote adoption of central policy. Alternative

policy positions need to be engaged thoughtfully. Policy points around which there is ongoing concern or disagreement need to be sufficiently worked through with stakeholders before decisions are finalised.

- ✘ While being wary of becoming overly bureaucratic, it is worth considering some rules regarding use of the coalition's brand identity. Inappropriate use of the coalition's name and logo by a member can reduce credibility with key partners and without rules to refer to, the coalition might have no ability to stop it from happening again.
- ✘ In some coalitions, members must sign up to further commitments regarding conduct and behaviour if they are registering for meetings under the coalition umbrella or receiving funding through a sponsorship programme.
- ✘ Although many coalitions don't require members to pay subscriptions there may be advantages to such a requirement in addition to generating income. Pointing to the membership as a source of funding strengthens the coalition's claim to legitimacy. Payment of subscriptions also requires authorisation from within member organisations and can help ensure that coalition membership has deeper buy-in. For many NGO coalitions subscriptions are likely to be complicated to administer and if sufficient to provide a base of income, probably off-putting for many would-be members.

## Structure of the membership

Another important consideration is whether the coalition will promote its own representative bodies at national or regional levels. For example, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines benefited from the establishment of national campaigns, where one person or organisation coordinated a further coalition at national level. This provided a mechanism for clearly identifying campaign leaders in different countries, which creates efficiencies when much of the lobbying requires policy change at a national level. Such an approach helps international coordination and can greatly strengthen national level advocacy if those national level coordinators are in turn effective coalition builders at home.

## How can we grow the membership over time?

A strong coalition should have sufficient breadth of expertise to represent the issue it is tackling in its different aspects. So for coalitions on weapons issues, organisations have provided expertise on development impacts, international humanitarian and human rights law, medical impact on individuals, survivor rights, post-conflict clear-up as well as the technical characteristics of the weapons in question.

For example, the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC) is a national network of 24 local non-governmental organisations established on 22 March 2007 in support of the international call to stop cluster munitions from harming civilians. Coordinated by Mary Wareham, the ANZCMC worked to ensure that the New Zealand government took strong leadership in the 'Oslo Process' to create an international instrument banning cluster munitions.

Functioning as an expert group, a coalition does not need to have a very large membership in order to be effective.

Breadth of geographical engagement as well as thematic expertise not only projects wide support for the aims of the coalition but is also likely to be strategically important for lobbying towards international policy change. For many governments, policy change will start at the national level and so it is here that the campaign's membership has a critical role.

People involved in growing campaign memberships have highlighted word-of-mouth recommendations of organisations and in particular individuals as fundamental to this work. Identify people with a track record of action at a national or regional level as targets for recruitment.

National and regional meetings are important tools for bringing people together, advocating the coalition's mission to potential members interested in the themes being discussed, and building members' sense of direct participation and engagement with the wider network.

## Are the members sufficiently active?

Not all members of a coalition will be consistently active. The steering group and any coalition staff need to be sufficiently engaged with the wider membership to make sure members are taking the issue forward at a national level.

While small grants can change relationships between the coalition and the membership, they do provide an important mechanism for motivating member organisations. As we have noted already, many such organisations will have various demands on their time, yet for organisations in the global 'South' – operating on significantly more limited budgets than their colleagues in the wealthier 'North' – a modest amount of money can facilitate a substantial amount of work.

## DEVELOPING MEMBERSHIP CAPACITY

It is important for coalition staff and steering group organisations to be mindful of what member organisations get from being part of the coalition. Part of this may be the solidarity and partnership of working under a collective identity, but it is possible for the coalition to also offer more concrete benefits – such as skills-sharing through sessions bolted onto other meetings. With a wide-array of members, many coalitions will be able to run workshops on a range of issues, from proposal writing to media work or photography. Such activities can also break up traditional groupings and promote mixing and interaction among coalition members.

The organisation of lobbying meetings can also be done in a way where more experienced people are partnered with new people in order to allow the latter to build their confidence and skills. It is very valuable for a coalition to have regional members with the confidence and knowledge to undertake lobbying work on coalition issues independently – not only will this make them active participants, but their regionally relevant voices will likely have far greater strength than the voices of people parachuted in from outside. Developing capacity of the membership will enhance the experience of the coalition and promote more, and stronger, action.

“In the end the economy of the world is dominated by the west. Most of the capacity is with northern, white organisations. People living in affected countries are experiencing most acutely the issues we are campaigning about, but often have no budget and zillions of competing priorities. So there is a limit to what can be done to rebalance coalitions. Sensitively handling this issue is key. All coalitions claim to speak on behalf of members but some have a greater claim than others.”

Anthea Lawson, Global Witness

Proposals and suggestions for action, either from the central structure or the membership, should provide a basis for dialogue between members and coalition staff – although the latter needs to be constantly questioning whether they are promoting engagement by members or doing their work for them. Partnerships between wealthier steering group organisations and members in different regions can also provide a mechanism for strengthening capacity and engagement.

## WILL THERE BE A DEDICATED COALITION STAFF TEAM?

If resources allow, a coordinator, staff team or secretariat working on behalf of the coalition, rather than serving the interests of one of its members, can be a major asset. This is probably vital once a coalition is engaged in a political process towards international policy change. Such staff can exert a great influence on the way a coalition works. This can be a big strength but it can also be a challenge, creating a new centre of gravity in the coalition that can replace active engagement by member organisations and begin the creep from coalition to institution in its own right.

## The importance of staff in developing a coalition

- ✘ In the early stages of a coalition's development, having one person with responsibility for furthering the coalition's interests can make a major difference. Such a person might be employed by one of the members and might only have this role as a small part-time component of their work. The key requirement is that they are someone who can separate the coalition's needs from the institutional interests of particular members and push forward the administrative requirements of that coalition. Likely key tasks would include calling

coalition meetings, maintaining and updating email lists, circulating minutes of meetings and agendas for development. Such a role does not need to be considered a leadership position within the coalition, but it should be recognised as a position on behalf of the coalition.

- ✘ Over time, and depending on resources, a full time coordinator and additional support staff are often put in place. Support staff roles can include logistics, finances, communications, support to campaigners and media functions.
- ✘ As well as pushing forward the coalition agenda, staff can facilitate the work of the steering group and the membership. Staff can mediate between different organisations in a steering group and provide an impartial speaker for the coalition who is not affiliated with any one of the members.
- ✘ A coalition coordinator might also have influence at a decision-making level, prompting the coalition to take necessary risks. As in any venture, an effective coalition will require difficult decisions to be made in uncertain circumstances. A coordinator can help to spur bold decisions from a steering group that might otherwise be more conservative.

The choice to employ staff will depend on financial resources available, but consideration should also be given to whether there is sufficient buy-in to the project from partner organisations. There is always a danger that staff will do all the work, with coalition members taking a back-seat role. For example, in coalitions where funding is very limited, having staff available to represent on behalf of the coalition may serve to limit the extent the steering group or wider members are able to take on such roles.

“If there is too much staff and power concentrated centrally then the members can get disengaged. The danger is that if members start waiting for central staff to think for them they will stop having their own ideas.”

**Bob Mtonga**, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

“We realised we had a specific window of opportunity and therefore a strict timeline so we needed a clear strategy. We appointed a coordinator who employed other staff as required. The team worked extremely hard especially in preparing and organizing the regional conferences. We did not spend time setting up a formal legal entity but we did have a Coalition member organisation take responsibility for managing our funds and accounts.”

**Martin Macpherson**, Child Soldiers International (formerly the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)

**BALANCING STAFF AND ACTIVISM**

There needs to be clarity about what the staff are there to do and what they need to be encouraging member organisations to do. Many coalitions have emphasised the facilitation and communication role of staff as being of primary importance – providing a ‘hub’ around which the work of members revolves. However, the ability of staff to work on the basis of the collective interests of the coalition first and foremost – and to perceive when decisions really need to be made – makes it important that, over time, they are empowered to spur action from the leadership group and so to the coalition as a whole.

With the primary role of such coalition work being to engage people in a broad process of change, a useful consideration for staff, leadership group and membership alike is the number of other people each individual is engaging in the work. The more people that an individual is reaching through their work, the greater the impact of that work is likely to be.

**How are staff employed?**

It is quite common for coalitions to house coalition staff within one or more member organisations, rather than establishing the coalition as an institution in its own right. This draws on established structures of employment, contracting etc. without requiring the coalition to undertake legal registration and establish its own formal institutional practices. On the other hand, such a move can cause tensions. It may mean one of the coalition’s members receives financial benefit from the coalition, or appears to have additional influence because of the close working relations. If a coalition is established as a legal entity it must be owned by some form of governing body (such as a ‘board’), taking full responsibility for its operation. This can indicate a high level of buy-in to the coalition project.

With trust between coalition partners, the host organisation and staff themselves, many of the issues raised in the box below can be easily resolved – but that should not be taken for granted. It is worth considering what would happen if a staff member filed an official complaint about some aspects of their employment and following through where the formal and practical responsibilities would lie.

It is also worth noting that with an active steering group, coalition staff can sometimes feel as though they have numerous managers. This needs to be recognised as a particular challenge for staff in this line of work.

“When you have coalition staff it’s easier if you have one NGO responsible for overseeing them, rather than having a seconded approach with staff coming from different coalition members. All of the problems with resources and fundraising and so on are amplified if you do that. The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (as well as the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect) are legally projects of the World Federalist Movement. The fact that 99 per cent of people don’t know that is a sign that we have been able to operate without this being an issue. This is part of why it works – big NGOs who are members can know that we are not going to steal the credit for the World Federalist Movement.”

**Bill Pace**, Coalition for the International Criminal Court

HOSTING COALITION STAFF	making body of that coalition (not simply with the organisation employing them).	may come under pressure to cover cash-flow shortfalls within the coalition.
Housing coalition staff within a member organisation raises formal management challenges that need to be considered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ The employer organisation will have legal responsibilities towards these staff (e.g. regarding leave allowances, sickness pay, notice periods etc.) that will need to be respected by the coalition.</li> <li>✘ While hosting a coalition team might be a source of income to an organisation (in administrative support costs at least), the host organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ While these risks may not seem significant if hosting is being provided for a single part-time post in a large organisation, in other situations a coalition staff team can grow to become a substantial part of the organisation it is embedded within.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ The staff are likely to be under contract to the host organisation (which may not be a legal corporate entity)..At the same time staff will need to have a line management relationship with the decision</li> </ul>		



## Volunteers

A coalition may also take on volunteer staff or interns. If managed effectively, they can be a valuable boost to the coalition's staff resources and a useful experience for people receiving training to develop their working skills. This is probably best done through structured intern arrangements where it is known that an individual will be able to commit to a certain amount of work over a fixed period of time. However, it is important to understand the legal obligations relating to such staff wherever they are being employed.

## HOW WILL THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER?

How these components of staff team, membership and steering group work together will change over time, but there are some key themes that need to be taken into account. Central themes are likely to be around 'decision making' and representation on behalf of the coalition. Binding all of this together is the fundamental issue of communication.

## Who needs to be involved in decision making

The 'steering group' should take the lead in defining the broad parameters of who will be involved in decisions of different types. Too much decision making in the hands of a staff team can leave member organisations feeling out of the loop, but too much member participation in decision making can lead to bottle necks and indecision.

Some examples of different levels of coalition decision might be as follows, in descending order of importance:

- ✘ Revising the coalition's call, fundamental policy decisions, changing the coalition's major governance structures.
- ✘ Approving annual plans and budgets, making decisions on coalition staffing.
- ✘ Setting internal and external policy.
- ✘ Approving press releases on behalf of the coalition.
- ✘ Signing off coalition statements for conferences.

Issues that require the engagement of the full membership might still not be amenable for decision making by that group. In such circumstances, consultation processes with the membership can provide a mechanism for participation on decisions without taking items to a formal vote.

## Other structures of work

Coalitions can generate workload challenges for people participating at the steering group level, especially given that those people usually have other jobs that they are being paid to do. This can pose a problem for staff teams if they start to find they are not getting responses and timely sign-off from that group for urgent work. Steering groups can also hoard work to themselves, preventing other members from being as engaged as they might be. Sub-committees, working groups and co-chairs can all be used to address these problems and provide more flexible and dynamic structures through which work can get done.

### Sub-committees

- ✘ Sub-committees of the steering group can be used to drive work forward on particular streams such as human resources or finances.
- ✘ By working through a smaller configuration there is more pressure on members to participate and pull their weight rather than sitting back and expecting others to engage.
- ✘ Smaller groups can work on sensitive issues in a more discreet way.
- ✘ Different sub-committees, of different compositions, can be used as a mechanism for trying to maintain active engagement by the steering group.
- ✘ However, there is always the risk that sub-committees serve to pull more decision-making power into themselves, reducing the effective drive of the steering group as a whole.

### Co-chairs

- ✘ A group of two or three individual co-chairs can be used to provide a rapid response to urgent needs from the staff team in situations where the wider steering group does not have time to respond effectively.
- ✘ Co-chair roles can also link into representational roles, giving certain individuals or organisations an additional status within the group.
- ✘ As with certain sub-committees, the danger is that these configurations take on more authority to the detriment of the steering group as a whole.

### Advisory boards

- ✘ Advisory board generally provides additional input on strategy and direction from outside the steering group. Such boards can be drawn from the wider membership or formed of high profile individuals (who might then have access to key decision makers etc.).

- ✘ Such groups need active engagement if they are to be successful. Because they are not part of the formal management structure there is a danger that they are not referred to systematically.

### Working groups

- ✘ Working groups might be used to bring people and organisations that are not part of the steering group into a more active role on particular themes.
- ✘ Such groups are most likely to be focused on particular areas of policy or campaigning strategy and action and can provide individual people as focal points on particular issues for key meetings.
- ✘ The main requirement for working groups is that there are sufficient energetic individuals to drive them forward and maintain participation. Such groups don't necessarily need to be bound to a particular membership but can be open to any who are keen to participate.
- ✘ There is a risk with working groups that, through their formation, responsibility for an important area of work is partitioned off, so if the group doesn't drive it forwards this area of work can become neglected.

## Representational roles

Determining who speaks on behalf of the coalition on specific matters is an ongoing challenge. Some of the issues at stake in this include:

- ✘ Some individuals are better prepared or more confident than others.
- ✘ Some individuals might be over-exposed by being seen repeatedly on behalf of the coalition.
- ✘ Speaking on behalf of the coalition can be a sign of status, offering both individuals and organisations a chance to gain profile for themselves – is this being sufficiently shared around?
- ✘ Some organisations have stronger identities and their credibility can strengthen the voice of the coalition.
- ✘ Diversity of voices illustrates the breadth of the coalition and the depth of its expertise.
- ✘ The gender and regional background of speakers is indicative of the coalition's orientation to equality issues, and will be noticed both by government partners and by the coalition's wider membership.
- ✘ Certain speakers, as a result of their background, will lend greater gravitas to certain topics of discussion.

Given these issues, deciding who will speak or who is given individual or organisational prominence in press releases and the like can be a tense affair. Added to this is the question of who decides what such people can say on behalf of the coalition. Again, mutual trust

will have an important role to play in ensuring such issues can be worked through effectively.

## Communication mechanisms

There are numerous channels through which a coalition can communicate internally. These need to be used in combination if the coalition is going to harness the full power of its members.

### List-serves

Many coalitions use email list-serves (automatic electronic mailing lists), sometimes multiple list-serves, as the basis for group communication. Such lists are free and easy to set up through a variety of online providers and allow a specific group to be mailed collectively. Subscription to the list can be easily controlled and the history of group communications is stored online as well as in the email inboxes of the individual members. Distinct lists might be used for the steering group, staff, different working groups and the membership as a whole.

- ✘ It is important to ensure sufficient communication is going through the wider membership lists and that all of the conversations are not happening only at the level of the steering group.
- ✘ It is important to keep communication on the lists, especially broad membership lists, reasonably focused on the work at hand. Such lists can be a very valuable way of building a sense of community, but they can also become rather congested if not operated within some boundaries
- ✘ People should be encouraged to provide updates on their activities though the membership list as this builds the collective sense of working together and understanding the breadth of activities being undertaken.

### Newsletters

Newsletters, often in electronic form, are a good way of compiling activities, providing a forum for people to feed into and provide people with a platform through which to feel part of the whole movement. By recording activities on an ongoing basis such newsletters can also be a useful resource when the time comes to report back to donors on the coalition's activities.

### Conference calls

It is becoming increasingly inexpensive to hold conference calls. Such discussions can still be awkward to chair but they do allow for a more direct and interactive form of communication than is possible through email alone. They are more useful for smaller groups.

### Face-to-face meetings

Face-to-face meetings are very important for building trust and mutual understanding. For a steering group, regular face-to-face meetings are essential for building up an effective working community, especially if the coalition is engaged in a political process. The cost of getting people together, finding appropriate space, and the challenge of congested calendars all need to be overcome.

### Planning briefings

During the course of government conferences, morning and/or evening briefings can provide a mechanism for preparing people for the work of the day ahead and accessing information campaigners have acquired. Providing space for all people to take the floor (if they have been active in their advocacy) means such briefings are good for encouraging participation. Chairing such meetings can be rotated through members, helping to build the culture of leadership from within the group.

### Campaign forum

When large numbers of campaigners are coming together in the same place, a campaign forum can be a vital mechanism for building the feeling of collective work, as well as addressing specific working needs. Such a forum may need significant logistical preparation, including a large room and microphones, but it offers an excellent way for people to speak out and engage each other as a group. Different people can be given the opportunity to facilitate different sessions and it can provide space for presentations, information sharing by steering group members and staff, and feedback and input from the wider membership. Within a political process, these meetings can be used both to prepare for, and wind-down from, campaign participation in government meetings.

## SUMMARY

This section covered key issues on how the coalition is structured, including the configuration of a steering group, the wider membership and – in time – a staff team. How these components fit together will be critical to the success of the coalition and the most important element of their interaction will be the mechanisms of internal communication that the coalition employs. Part of the coalition's work will also be to keep these structures and their inter-relation under review, to ensure that as circumstances change over time the coalition continues to be organised appropriately.

An effective coalition needs to be driven forward by individuals working hard, communicating openly and being sensitive to their responsibilities for the wider group. Structures can be changed if they are not meeting the coalition's needs, but the culture of work and communication that a coalition adopts is harder to change. This culture can transcend the formal structures and probably has to if a coalition is going to function as effectively as possible.

“Once you lay down detailed organizational rules you risk becoming bureaucratized. Because we were so focused and had a strict time frame we couldn't afford to get distracted on organisational issues. The focus had to be on adopting declarations at each regional conference in support of a strong and effective Optional Protocol and advocacy at the UN for that Protocol.”

**Martin Macpherson**, Child Soldiers International  
(formerly the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)

4

## A FIRST FUNDING PROPOSAL

This short section considers some of challenges of preparing a first funding proposal on behalf of a coalition. It focuses on issues specific to coalition work – so there are many aspects of general fundraising that are not considered here.

Funding is vital, but it can also be a major source of disturbance and tension in the dynamics of a coalition. The need to have funds held centrally by an individual organisation can be at odds with the collective spirit that coalitions foster. As we have noted regarding structure, it is common at first for one organisation to ‘host’ the coalition (rather than having it set up as a formal institutional entity in its own right) so funding will likely mean money going into that organisation. Seeking funds for the coalition can also reduce the funding prospects of individual members. Such issues will bring to the fore the relationships of trust among the coalition’s early partners.

## CAN THE COALITION DESCRIBE ITSELF CLEARLY?

A first proposal is likely to be an important first external articulation of the arrangements and understandings being put in place within the coalition. How will the coalition describe its work, how will the roles of different members be described and what objectives will be set out over what timeframe? In this respect a first funding proposal is also a chance to develop how the coalition represents itself.

“Funding can be the biggest disturbance and damager to the dynamics of a coalition. If a coalition is based on collective ownership, there is a fundamental contradiction with the centralised accountability of receiving and managing funds. Donors are not very flexible with this. So you need to work through this stuff very carefully.”

Richard Bennett, Effective Collectives

## WHAT SHOULD FORM THE CONTENT OF THE COALITION’S PROPOSAL?

Early work is likely to require such things as:

- ✗ Support for coalition staff
- ✗ Building or compiling evidence on the issues and packaging this in an accessible form
- ✗ Development of a website
- ✗ Developing mechanisms to build engagement and understanding among the membership, such as workshops and meetings

Thought should be given to what donors are likely to be able to fund and how this can be packaged for the coalition. Research and advocacy might appear two distinct tracks of funding – with some donors preferring to fund the former rather than the latter. In the early stages of work, research, hosting meetings or giving briefings on research findings can all provide a framework around which advocacy can be undertaken and organised even if it is not being described as the primary output of the project. On the other hand, research can sometimes be a tricky focus for coalition work because members may have differing research standards and interpretations of data. Furthermore, research is a good activity for individual coalition members to undertake. Bringing together and sharing different research findings and institutional perspectives can be a basis for coalition funding that still allows members to take on such a role.

“Collective vision is the strength of the coalition. The voice of the coalition can get garbled and mixed up but that can be fixed – but if the collective vision is garbled then it can’t. Everything flows from the strength of the vision.

When there are tensions and problems, the collective vision gives you the base from which to get things back on track.”

Daniel Mack, Instituto Sou da Paz

## WHAT LEVEL OF FUNDING CAN BE EXPECTED?

Funding for NGO coalition work has generally come from the following three sources:

- ✗ Trusts and foundations
- ✗ Individual NGOs
- ✗ Governments

Where funding comes from governments this can have an impact on how the coalition will be perceived. Is the coalition going to criticise donor states as strongly as it might criticise others? Alternatively, is the authority of the coalition limited because it is seen as a mouthpiece for certain states? However, having multiple donors supporting the work not only increases the level of funding available but is also a positive indication of buy-in to the coalition’s agenda.

Not all coalition efforts will get funding. Many may get only very limited funding, severely restricting the activities that can be undertaken and so shaping the priorities of work. Underfunding in a coalition can also increase tensions. There is a constant balance required between planning what you need to do to achieve goals and being realistic about the amount of money that is likely to be brought in.

The focus of the coalition will have a major impact on whether funding can be found or not. In part this will reflect how easy the issue is to communicate and sell and how realistic the chance of success is considered to be. However, funding can also be limited if the issue under scrutiny is one around which donors have political sensitivities. This can include anxieties about how their own policies might be put under pressure, or how support to the theme might be perceived by others.

There are many factors that can affect funding decisions and often such decisions are made on the basis of instinct rather than hard and fast analysis of evidence. The coalition needs to project a sophisticated understanding of the issue in question, both on paper and through convincing representatives, and a sense that they have relations with people in a position to make a difference on the issue. The coalition also needs to project a realistic sense of what can be achieved, including the levels of funding that might be raised, and a competence to take money and manage the grant process effectively in accordance with donor requirements. As it is between members of the coalition, trust is a very important component of funding relationships.

## ARE THE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS IN ORDER?

As we have noted in the introduction to this section, it is vital that adequate administrative arrangements are in place for the coalition to receive funds. Failure to have such mechanisms in place can be embarrassing and undermine donor confidence in the coalition effort.

- ✗ Who will receive the money? Are the bank account details included with the proposal or are you planning to resolve this later when a donor offers the money?
- ✗ If the coalition does not have a legal identity, who is legally responsible for any contracts agreed? What are implications for that organisation?
- ✗ What systems does the contracting organisation have to ensure adequate grant oversight?
- ✗ How will the wider coalition have oversight of expenditure?

## SHOULD THE PROPOSAL FUND MULTIPLE COALITION MEMBERS?

Another question for coalition funding is the extent to which the coalition should raise funds for distribution to member organisations for the conduct of their work. In the early stages this could be the work of the small group of organisations forming the core of the coalition but in later stages it might imply distribution of small grants to a large number of network members for national level activities.

Supporting network members in their national activities is a very valuable way of building up the coalition's work and supporting members who may often be giving considerable time and effort to the coalition activities without financial compensation. Especially for small NGO partners in the south, small grants can be a really helpful tool.

However, any such mechanism brings with it the potential for serious tension. Problems may arise if some partners get funding but others do not. There can be tension if those that do receive funding from the coalition then perform poorly either in the implementation of the work or in the grant management and reporting that is required. There is sometimes a tendency for a coalition, as a donor, not to be afforded the same respect from grantees as might be given to a traditional institutional donor, which can then result in tensions and difficulties for coalition staff.

In undertaking a small grants programme a number of points should be considered.

- ✘ Grants could be given on the basis of applications, guided by and judged against criteria that support the coalition's goals.
- ✘ A mechanism should be established whereby decision-making is separate from the governance structures of the coalition – it can increase tension if the same group steering the coalition is also seen to be deciding which members get money and which don't.
- ✘ Grantees should have a clear understanding of the reporting requirements regarding the money received. Failure to document activities or provide required reports should stand as a barrier to the receipt of further funds (including possibly sponsorship to attend meetings that might be organised separately).

Such mechanisms, if they are to be done transparently and fairly require a significant administrative effort and this should not be underestimated in planning such a scheme.

Working towards a ban on cluster munitions, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund established the Local Voices Global Ban project as a small grants scheme. The project awarded a total of 68 grants to 50 organisations in some 44 countries, supporting individual CMC member organisations around the world and helping to strengthen their work on cluster munitions at a national level. The project was administered by Landmine Action, with grants awarded on the basis of proposals received within set grant-giving cycles and decisions to award grants being made by a panel. This panel provided wider input into decision-making for the grant making organisations and also provided some political separation for decisions that could cause institutional tensions.

“Often people have good ideas but can't get them pushed through funding structures because they don't have the capacity. Without funds, it can be difficult to do more work to get more funds.”

**Bob Mtonga**, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

## WHO WILL DO THE FUNDRAISING?

We noted earlier that the people doing the fundraising – talking face-to-face or on the telephone with potential donors – need to be credible in their articulation of the issue being addressed and the coalition's work to address it. It is also worth considering whether these people will also have to take on fundraising work for their own organisation (if they are not coalition staff) and considering the clarity of the division between coalition and member fundraising.

## COORDINATION WITH COALITION MEMBERS

It is important to be clear to coalition members about which donors are being approached to fund the collective effort. There is a potential for tension between the coalition and individual members if the former appears to threaten funding upon which the latter rely. On the other hand, coalition work would be very difficult if it was never possible to engage with donors with whom members already have relationships.

It is also worth considering whether coalition members in certain countries can broker introductions or present the proposal on behalf of the coalition to possible funders in a particular context.

In addition to providing strategic funding to the CMC and small grants to its member organisations, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund also convened two meetings that brought together small groups of diplomats and staff from international organisations and NGOs. Although held at very different strategic points in the process of work towards a ban on cluster munitions, both meetings provided a neutral space in which this small group could talk openly and frankly about the work ahead.

## ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS

As a final thought in this section, it is worth noting that donors may also be long-term partners in the work of the coalition. Where the donor is a government and change is being sought in international policy or law, this is perhaps to be expected. However, trusts and foundations can also become active agents for change in the area of the coalition's work.

Where a donor has a strong commitment to the objectives of the coalition and the confidence to think of itself not just as an external provider but also as an active participant, it can significantly add to the coalition's capacity. Beyond direct funding, many donors can build additional relationships and provide wider services towards the coalition's goals, such as providing physical and social space for meetings between NGOs and governments. Of course, this makes it all the more important not to lose donors through poor administration and lack of attention to their needs. As in all areas of NGO work, effective grant management is vital to a sustainable and effective operation.

On the other hand, there is a risk of funders imposing constraints on the effective work of the coalition. When money is tight (which it almost always is), the impetus to comply with a funder's wishes can be strong. In such cases it is important that people responsible for liaison directly with the donors are given clear instructions and strong support from the steering group.

## SUMMARY

This chapter provided a brief summary of issues that might need to be considered when a coalition begins fundraising. Many of these issues are present in any effort by NGOs to raise funds from donors, but they have slightly different implications when the proposal must be developed and presented on behalf of a group.

Specifying the work that the coalition will be funded to take on as opposed to individual members, assessing the level of funding that is plausible, and determining who is best-placed to approach donors all present challenges. Deciding the extent to which coalition funding supports costs of central administration rather than being disbursed to members is also very important.

As with so many aspects of coalition work, it is the trust between members that will stop anxieties about money from manifesting as problems.

“It makes sense that the biggest campaigns, particularly the biggest international campaigns, could only be waged effectively by coalitions. After all, there are few, if any, individual organisations that have the resources, range of approaches and reach that are required to operate solo at this level.”

**Brendan Cox**, Campaigning for International Justice,  
p.34. May 2011

5

## THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Previous chapters have focused mainly on issues of internal organisation. This chapter looks outwards, to consider some key issues regarding external context – that is the configuration of discussions between states or other actors within which the coalition is operating. Given the extent to which the specific subject matter of a coalition’s work will affect external issues, this section focuses on a few broad points that might have general relevance.

This short chapter is structured around two phases of coalition work explained below.

### BUILDING THE PROBLEM

**Framing the issue, undertaking research, raising awareness, building partnerships - but not yet working within a process that is likely to achieve the outcomes being sought.**

### CREATING THE SOLUTION

**With evidence and partnerships in place - working within a process geared towards achieving concrete outcomes.**

The challenges faced when implementing a solution are looked at in Chapter 7.

## BUILDING THE PROBLEM

An issue may be clear to those whose work brings them face-to-face with it, but it will not feature on the international agenda unless organisations provide the evidence and arguments that make people sit up and take notice. Building recognition that there is a problem that needs to be addressed is the initial phase of work for almost any NGO campaigning coalition. The questions below are for consideration while building up the problem, ahead of the coalition committing itself to a specific political process.

### Are key actors acknowledging the problem?

An early stage of coalition life is likely to be focused on framing, evidencing and communicating a problem and the feasibility that something can be done about it. This stage of work takes time and may require numerous briefings to different audiences and the production of many documents. The aim is to see governments, NGOs and other relevant partners acknowledging the problem that the coalition wants to address. Acknowledgement of the problem is the first building block of any such effort, as it shifts debate to a more detailed delineation of the problem and then onto what should be done.

## Does the coalition have strong external partners?

Relationships need to be built with external partners if a coalition is to achieve its goals. Support from states will be vital to achieving international policy or legal change - it is states, after all, that have the authority to come together and agree such changes. International organisations (such as UN departments or the International Committee of the Red Cross) can exert substantial influence on states, as well as being able to develop evidence and policy ambitions for themselves. In addition to these partners, the coalition may also benefit from partnerships with other NGOs or individuals who are unable to join the coalition but are in possession of helpful evidence and contacts.

It is important for NGOs to understand that external bodies such as international organisations and states are fundamentally different actors, working under different constraints, with different internal dynamics and pressures. This means that even for likeminded people, these institutions may need to take different paths to the same goal. We have emphasised the importance of trust for holding coalitions together internally. The same emphasis should be given to trust as a vital ingredient for the coalition working with partners externally.

“There was a strong partnership for each regional meeting between the Coalition, UNICEF and the host government. This partnership deflected criticism that the Protocol was merely an NGO concern and it increased our credibility with other governments and the weight governments attached to the five regional declarations.”

**Martin Macpherson**, Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)

### Working with governments

Changes to the policies and practices of governments are likely to be a key goal for the coalition, and at the same time certain governments are likely to be central partners for achieving such change more broadly. Therefore a primary function of NGO campaigning coalitions is to interact with governments, although such interactions can be adversarial or collaborative (and sometimes both). It is sometimes important to remind NGO activists that it is governments that sign new legal treaties and then bear the primary burden of their implementation. A coalition will therefore need to work in partnership with governments if its work is to be successful.

### Strong partnerships

Evidence of strong partnerships developing might be found in the statements and positions adopted by governments and other partners. However, strength of partnerships is also evidenced in the tone of direct discussions – an ability to talk openly about the challenges faced, to share intelligence and think strategically about how the issue might be developed. Such partnerships require an ability to be open about points of disagreement, awareness of risks and an appreciation that different organisations might have to adopt slightly different positions in light of their own internal pressures.

Building this direct and transparent dialogue behind the scenes can help support the development of a core-group – usually comprising states committed to working closely together to achieve a humanitarian goal.

#### FURTHER RESOURCES ON CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY:

This introduction to civil society coalition work is not a ‘how to guide’ on advocacy and campaigning. There are many useful resources available on this topic and some are listed below as further reading.

- *Advocacy and campaigning: how to guide*, by Ian Chandler, published by BOND and The Pressure Group, June 2011, available online at: [http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Advocacy\\_and\\_campaigning\\_How\\_To\\_guide\\_June\\_2011.pdf](http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Advocacy_and_campaigning_How_To_guide_June_2011.pdf)
- *Good guide to influencing and campaigning*, by Brian Lamb, published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in the UK in January 2011
- *The good campaigns guide for the voluntary sector*, by Tess Kingham, Jim Coe and E. Moore, published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in the UK in 2005
- *Do It Yourself: A Handbook for Changing Our World*, by the Trapeze Collective, published by Pluto Press in 2007
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations website also includes a number of useful resources on campaigning and advocacy: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigning-resources>

Some of these resources may be UK-focused, but they should provide useful guidelines and thinking that can help underpin the advocacy process in other countries and internationally.

Governments are not monolithic. There may be a number of different components within the government with different positions on an issue. It is important to try to understand these different orientations so as to help allies internally.

It is vital to recognise that not all work can be done publically and that much must be done quietly, behind the scenes. The public face of the coalition, its campaigning and its formal statements can only be part of the work. A significant amount of work for some coalition members involves strategic discussions within small groups that builds trust between the coalition and its external partners.

“The very first step needs to be to identify who actually has the power to affect change. This requires a detailed power analysis - who makes the decisions, and who influences the people who make those decisions? In some cases, those people need to be your primary campaign target.”

Kelly Rigg, Climate Action Network

## What sort of process is likely to get underway?

Achieving new international policy or law almost certainly requires states to debate the issues in question within a structured framework of meetings, often called a ‘process’. Such processes can be broadly split between established mechanisms (meetings that are already ongoing) and new mechanisms to achieve a particular purpose. Getting the coalition’s issue into the mandate of some form of diplomatic mechanism marks a key point of transition from building the problem - to building the solution.

Almost all processes will be framed by a document or set of documents that serves as a mandate. The nature of processes can vary widely, including in the following areas:

- ✘ What level of prominence is given to the issue within the mandate? Is it the main focus or just one of many issues for consideration?
- ✘ Does the mandate indicate the sort of work to be done and the outcome to be achieved? This could range from simply asking states to discuss the issue through to stipulating an intent to negotiate a binding legal instrument. Between the two a mandate to identify best practice might produce an outcome, but will it be sufficient to address the need?
- ✘ Who will be participating in the process? Is it open to all UN Member States, or only to states that have endorsed a particular position regarding the issue?
- ✘ What role will NGOs and international organisations have in the process? Will NGOs have access to the substantive meetings and will they be able to provide input into the debate and respond to arguments made by others?

In the early stages of an issue’s development, it may be preferable to have a process in place for discussing the issue even if it does not offer the prospect of success, but this also has significant risks.

### UNDERSTANDING PROCESS AND PROTOCOL

In many coalitions the expertise of individuals regarding the subject matter being worked on will be a key strength. However, it is also important to have some individuals with experience of the sort of political processes through which the coalition will be working. Without understanding of process, coalitions can easily find themselves with limited traction, exerting little influence over the direction being taken. It is important to remember that many diplomats are more expert in process than they are in the substance of a particular issue and, unless a strong focus is kept on the external benefit being sought, process can quickly become an end in itself.

“Treaty negotiations tend to favour large international NGOs. The drafting process requires specific skills and experience of how governments and intergovernmental organizations function. Understanding of multilateral diplomacy, specialist legal knowledge, language skills and of course the substantial financial resources required to undertake such advocacy hinders many smaller NGOs, particularly those in the south, from participating in the process.”

Martin Macpherson, Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)

Belgium enacted national legislation banning anti-personnel mines and later cluster munitions ahead of international processes to prohibit these weapons. In the case of cluster munitions, Belgium’s ban had an important role in reframing the debate over the acceptability of these weapons. Even though Belgium was not subsequently a prominent leader in the international effort to achieve a ban, this domestic step was a very important boost to campaigners and sent a signal that new rules on cluster munitions were possible.

## Do established mechanisms offer a reasonable chance of success?

If there is an established international mechanism directly relevant to the issue the coalition is working on, then this will need to be addressed. Such a mechanism might be a standing committee of states or ongoing state meetings under a particular legal framework.

Existing mechanisms need to be assessed carefully to determine if they offer a plausible chance for success. An established framework can actually be very stifling to the prospects of reform if it comes bound with consensus-based decisions, limited NGO engagement and the participation of actors who are wholly opposed to the outcomes being sought. On the other hand, the political commitment required to establish a new mechanism on a specific issue is hard to generate and may be impossible.

Even if an established mechanism does not offer the prospect of a substantive solution to the problem being addressed, such frameworks can sometimes provide an environment within which issues can be fostered and partnership developed, if a way out can be found. It is notable that on both anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions the processes that led to new international treaties were initiated after the declared failure of the UN Convention on Conventional Weapons. In the first case it was the inadequacy of amendments made to Protocol II as a response to the humanitarian problem of landmines. In the second it was the failure of the CCW to adopt a mandate to negotiate towards a legal instrument.

However, if existing mechanisms do not offer a reasonable chance of success then coalitions should be wary of putting their issues on the table of those bodies unless they can see a way out.

### What transitional steps might be available?

It is important to recognise the utility of transitional steps, such as changes to national laws or national practice, that can indicate progress, identify national champions, and even serve to reframe how the issue is seen internationally. National steps may not go as far as the coalition would like, but they still help to generate a sense of movement, and can be used in international discussions as evidence that the issue is gaining traction. National steps are also vitally important for motivating coalition members to focus at the national level as well as towards international policy change.

“Part of the difficulty in pushing forward NGO coalition work on nuclear weapons is the lack of an external diplomatic process and a partnership with governments within this process. The conventional weapons sector has had more of a chance to develop partnerships with governments because of the processes on mines, cluster bombs, small arms, arms trade and so on. The NGO sector on nuclear weapons issues is diverse, which might make it seem nebulous to diplomats. A coalition type approach would be useful in the sense that it could effectively communicate to diplomats and other government officials the different initiatives and efforts going on around the world, and help integrate and support these efforts, rather than forcing those different strands to conform to one strategy or one voice.”

Ray Acheson, *Reaching Critical Will*

## CREATING THE SOLUTION

Getting the coalition’s issue adopted into the mandate of a diplomatic process is a key point of transition. Of course, even within such a process the coalition will likely need to continue building understanding of the problem being addressed and present new research to emphasise the need for reform. The questions below focus on some of the structural issues a coalition may face in this context.

### Is there a core group?

A ‘core group’ refers primarily to a group of states working together with a common commitment to shepherding a process to a satisfactory conclusion. In a free-standing process the core group might be responsible for hosting diplomatic meetings as well as drafting and editing collective documents. When working within an established mechanism, a core group might not have the same administrative power but should work together strategically to try to secure a strong outcome.

Creating a genuine core group is vital to the coalition’s work. However, such a group will need to come together on its own terms – with the coalition working to encourage and facilitate this where possible. Ideally a core group will contain some geographic diversity. Most important is that it brings together individual state representatives who are capable and dynamic, and committed to achieving a meaningful result.

While the core group will be made up of states, significant diplomatic power can be generated where this group works in close partnership with the NGO coalition and international organisations. In many recent processes it has been the energy and skills of this expanded core group that many have identified as central to success.

It is very important to recognise that not all groups of states working collectively for a process should necessarily be considered a core group. In a genuine core group the states involved will have explicitly endorsed a substantive outcome for the process that is broadly in line with the NGO coalition’s aspirations. A group without a shared substantive aspiration risks becoming focused primarily on achieving an outcome – where ‘an outcome’ can mean something far short of what the coalition might consider adequate.

### IS THE COALITION GIVING FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS ENOUGH ROOM TO MANOEUVRE?

There is often a desire for states to appear more conservative than NGOs on a given issue. It is an issue that NGO coalitions need to be mindful of if not wholly accepting of.

States may be averse to putting forward positions that go beyond what the NGOs are calling for, and they may not want to endorse the NGO position directly for fear of looking like their policy is being driven from that group. Similar dynamics can cause problems where NGOs publically circulate suggestions for legal text – only to find that states are unwilling to endorse such text directly.

Coalition positions based on principles and evidence may be preferable in public documents and statements than pre-empting compromises based on the politics of the process.

“We once wrote resolution text and circulated it to a number of friendly governments as well as the chair of the negotiation who was very much on-side. The chair didn’t realise we had circulated it to governments as well, and ended up using our text in his draft. The governments who had received it were suddenly aware of the fact that he had adopted an NGO text as such, and it was a huge embarrassment for him.”

One interviewee on the dangers of NGOs circulating text.

“Quite a lot of the ingredients of success for bringing organisations together in coalitions come from luck and circumstance.”

Felicity Hill, former director, UN Office of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

### Who is controlling the negotiating text?

Control of the text that forms the basis for negotiations is strategically very powerful. It is worth noting that the message ‘don’t change the text’ can provide a very simple basis for communicating with coalition partners across numerous potentially complicated articles, so long as the coalition can endorse that position. Having a strong starting text in line with the coalition’s ambitions is by far the best strategic position. Having as many articles as possible where ‘don’t change the text’ provides the basic message allows attention to be focused on the areas where it is really needed.

### What will be the status of NGOs in the process?

The status of NGOs in relation to states is an important theme in political processes. In many cases it is states that will accept some binding commitments as the outcome of a process, and few would argue that a distinction in status is unreasonable. However, it is also quite common for spurious arguments to be put forward for keeping NGOs out of certain discussions and even whole meetings, usually so certain states can avoid transparency or limit organised lobbying of others in the room.

The status of an NGO coalition as a full participant in a process needs to be worked for as a key strategic objective from the outset. As discussions become more fraught, pressure from some states is likely to mount for reductions rather than increases in NGO participation. The level of NGO participation needs to be embedded through practice, rhetoric and through formal documents. Practice can see NGO presentations of evidence and arguments but, perhaps most importantly, it can involve coalition representatives talking from the floor as active participants in debate. Rhetorical reinforcement for this can be developed through the statements of states supportive of this input, recognising its value to the process. The position of NGOs (or a specific coalition group) can be effectively secured through formal documents that delineate this role within key meetings.

In different processes NGOs have been allowed varying levels of participation. Whether a process is taking place within an established or a new purpose-built framework can have important implications for NGO participation. The latter may be more open, whereas the former perhaps drawing on established precedents may tend to be more closed. Yet even in such circumstances the chair and states holding key formal roles will likely have considerable latitude to organise NGO input as they see fit. Again, relationships of trust



between NGO coalition organisers and these office holders are likely to be important – as would be advocacy towards those office holders by full-participant states supportive of NGO engagement.

### Is the coalition there to constrain NGO behaviour?

With the coalition identity operating as a unifying force for NGOs, its perceived leadership can often face expectations of keeping potentially problematic NGO elements under control. This pressure may come from both NGOs and states. With coalition representatives likely to be negotiating and organising such issues as access and speaking roles in meetings for the NGO group as a whole, these rights (or privileges in the eyes of some) are likely to become bound up with a sense that the NGO participation will not breach expectations of behaviour. In this way it is important to notice that the coalition can take on the role, albeit implicit, of policing NGO behaviour. This in turn can lead to internal tensions where different individuals or groups have divergent ideas about how the coalition should be communicating its messages.

### Can it be right to disengage?

Large-scale NGO participation is likely to serve in some ways as a validation of the process underway. There are risks that ongoing participation allows NGO thinking to become structured too strongly by the rules of the particular process, and of limited expectations within that process, creating a slow drift towards validating work that has little or no chance of achieving the reforms that were initially sought. Such a situation presents a real challenge because as it continues pressure is likely to grow within organisations and individuals who have committed years to such work, to identify in any outcome at least a semblance of success. It is important that the coalition is not on a slippery slope towards endorsing an outcome that falls far short of its aspirations. Again, difference coalition members are likely to have difference readings of such a situation which can intern cause tensions.

## SUMMARY

This section highlighted a few issues of external context that may need to be considered by coalitions working for international policy or legal change. The coalition needs to spend sufficient time building engagement with the problem and supportive partnerships, before negotiating a solution. A key point of transition comes when the issue of concern is adopted into the mandate of a mechanism for structuring international discussions. This focus on international mechanisms should not distract attention from the transitional steps that might be possible at national and regional levels and that can be important foundations for international reform.

In the next chapter this book looks at how the coalition can work together to make the most of its collective voice.

6

## A COLLECTIVE VOICE

This chapter focuses on maximising the key feature of an effective coalition – its ability to engage diverse partners in coordinated collective action. It will probably be the coalition's members who provide a direct link to the issues being worked on and who are pushing the urgent need for reform. Through these members, political engagement can be built up in different countries. In key meetings it will be these members who have the contacts and relationships to make sure the coalition gets its messages across to all participants. A diverse membership brings new ways of thinking and different styles of engagement and this can be a powerful force when working towards a single goal. Finding a single coalition voice representing this diversity presents an ongoing challenge.

**Coalitions can undertake a wide range of specific advocacy and campaigning activities to achieve their goals, such as direct lobbying of decision makers, media work, public demonstrations and other actions, exhibitions and concerts. A key role for the coalition is to build a platform for these activities, to give advice and in some cases determine which actions will have the greatest impact at a given point in time on a given target.**

Some general objectives to consider:

#### MAXIMISE THE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP

Coalitions can exercise influence by acting as vehicles that focus the voices and actions of their many constituents and amplifying them. Coalitions often maximise this amplifying effect to appear bigger than they are. Targeted use of media, public stunts, advertising and diverse delegations at key moments (such as international conferences) can help to make the most of a coalition's reach and strength.

#### MAXIMISE THE REACH OF THE COALITION

Coalitions that are able to draw on and activate their individual members in many different capital cities have an advantage when it comes to lobbying a range of countries on a specific issue. This national level work is just as important as the work of a coalition's delegation on the international conference circuit, even though the latter may feel more intense.

#### BUILD A UNIFIED COALITION

Coalition unity, not just a unified message but also a common sense of belonging, is very important. Bringing people together makes them feel they are part of a collective effort. It may be expensive to bring people together and it can pose challenges, for example deciding who should be funded to come, but it can be a vital component in forging a vibrant and active coalition.

“The more diverse a coalition, the stronger it becomes. It is good for people to work across disciplines, but respect each other's approaches and ideas. Doctors and lawyers bring different perspectives to the table and they can learn from each other and the coalition will benefit from this.”

**Bob Mtonga**, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

#### PROMOTE THE DIVERSITY OF THE COALITION

Unity is important, but not mutually exclusive of diversity. John Borrie, a researcher at the United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) interested in what makes international norm-building processes effective, has written about the importance of 'cognitive diversity' in multilateral negotiations. This is important in coalitions as well. There can be many different perspectives among organisations in a coalition, representing views from the North and the South; the big and the small; from those working in democratic and authoritarian societies. This diversity of cultures and experience among individuals and organisations can make things feel a bit chaotic at times, but it can also lead to new ideas and new approaches that might not otherwise emerge. It is important for those working on the coordination of coalitions to be aware of the diversity among the membership and to recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work.

#### DEVELOP A GLOBAL VOICE IN EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The ability for NGOs with different backgrounds and interests to speak with one voice to governments, business and the media on a particular issue is a great asset for a coalition. At the same time, working out common messages is also a source of tension and can take a lot of work to mediate, given the often conflicting priorities. Opponents to change can exploit mixed messages and seek to undermine NGO efforts.

#### HARNESS THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS

Within a coalition there will be many individuals with impressive personal credentials, experience and advocacy skills. You might have field workers, experts, people with a high profile and people who have been directly affected by the problem you are trying to solve – for example landmine and cluster munition survivors were powerful advocates during the processes to ban those weapons. Coalitions often work to make sure that these different individuals are used to best effect by setting up meetings that match their skills and profiles with the different individuals and organisations that the coalition is trying to influence.

“You need to be working at the various levels – national, regional, international. This is where diversity comes in – you need to have broad membership working at a national level, some leaders from each region able to take the lead regionally, then you have others more adept at dealing with diplomats on the international scene. Everybody needs to be on-message and tell the same story, but different people should be able to carry some aspects of the work further. This is where thematic expertise is also key.

So you need to have people saying the same thing, but you can divide up roles. ‘Smoke and mirrors’ was a big part of ICBL's success and we benefited in the CMC from being seen as the same as the ICBL, the sense that ‘we have this huge monster behind us’. You also need to be able to show success and that things are going your way.”

**Steve Goose**, Director of Human Rights Watch's Arms Division and Chair of the ICBL CMC

## DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN COALITION AND MEMBER VOICES?

One of the most powerful aspects of a coalition is the capacity to project a strong unified voice across a wide number of countries. The membership gives a coalition its reach and the coordination gives a coalition its unified voice. Most often it will be the members that actually do most of the coalition's work at the national level.

Some coalitions undertake collectively organised events such as global days of action where members around the world take similar, concerted, action on or around the same day or week (IANSA, CMC, ICAN). At the same time, members will often develop their national strategies and adapt them to their own context.

There is great power in having NGOs giving the same message to different governments all around the world, though sometimes the messages and approaches will need to be tailored for particular countries. Sometimes the coalition voice will have much more influence on the target audience than an individual member's voice, sometimes it will be the other way around.

While coalitions may be able to rally all of their members around one common call, individual members will have their own way of expressing this call and may have particular issues that they wish to raise in relation to it. It is important to have the flexibility that enables members to do this and for them to be able to define their own approach and freedom to express their views in a manner that is appropriate for their individual context.

“There is a logical and empirical case that cognitive diversity leads to enhanced problem solving. The Cluster Munition Coalition saw this – learning from each other, adapting and building a problem solving team. Diversity of perspectives, equity and power should be an important function of coalitions.”

**John Borrie**, UN Institute for Disarmament Research

“Having a single message from a large coalition of NGOs can be very powerful if expressed by all of the members all of the time and towards lots of different targets. But this is probably only going to be the very top line advocacy message. Among coalition members there will be different specialisms on different specific issues. It’s important to give people the freedom to do the talking on these specific issues while being part of the coalition.”

Richard Bennett, Effective Collectives

## IS THE COALITION’S EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH A SOURCE OF CREDIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

Another key role of a coalition is to marshal evidence gathered by members so that it can be used throughout the coalition as a whole. In some political processes, NGOs can present a ‘field reality’ that has an impact on decision makers. When used well, this field evidence can give the coalition – and consequently its members – a powerful voice in debate.

Some NGOs have the capacity to gather more data than others due to their network of researchers and operational programmes in different countries. Some of this information can be sensitive due to the sources and the circumstances under which it is gathered. Some NGOs might be reluctant or unable to share data, bound by non-disclosure agreements or other such conditions on its use.

NGOs might adopt different methodologies for reporting facts and figures: some might be relatively conservative while others might seek to play up statistics to bolster the case for change. The way in which data is used can affect the legitimacy of these NGOs and of the coalition as a whole. If a coalition of NGOs is deriving its authority and legitimacy by representing civil society in a range of countries then it bears a responsibility to use data carefully and

consistently. Otherwise the coalition opens itself up to attacks from opponents and risks losing credibility.

Some questions that might help in thinking through this:

- ✘ Does the coalition as a whole undertake research or is this left to members?
- ✘ What is the process for the coalition deciding what facts and figures it will use in materials and statements?
- ✘ What is the process for mediating between the different uses of data by different members of the coalition?

### COLLECTIVE ACTION

Initiatives frequently undertaken by coalitions include:

- ✘ Global Days of Action – CMC, IANSA, ICAN and others have all organised global days or weeks of action where campaigners around the world are encouraged to take a range of actions to mark an occasion or present a call for action to governments. Actions can include public demonstrations, meetings with officials, concerts, exhibitions and accompanying media work.
- ✘ The “adopt a negotiator project” – pioneered by the Global Campaign for Climate Action and also used by the Control Arms campaign. It provides a system for specific activists to follow the statements of specific delegations at a negotiation and report on that delegation’s actions via a central website.
- ✘ People’s consultation – in different countries, Control Arms worked with various media, street theatre, text, Facebook etc. to gather people’s views on an arms trade treaty. The results of this consultation were then presented to governments during the negotiations.

Presenting these individual national level activities as part of a whole serves to amplify their power as perceived by decision makers. To mark the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, campaigners took actions in over 80 countries. No matter how big or small these events were, they were recorded on a dedicated website and contributed to a global collective action: [www.august1.org](http://www.august1.org).

## IS THE COALITION MAKING THE MOST OF THE MEMBERSHIP ‘IN THE FIELD’?

Through its members a coalition will often have a wide array of resources that it might not automatically think to use, or that might take some work to mobilise. Presenting a political or diplomatic audience with direct testimony from someone who works on an issue every day can have a big impact. In the campaigns against mines and cluster bombs, military and former military voices were important, as were the voices of those engaged in clearing up the deadly remnants and helping the wounded.

While it may not be relevant for every coalition, including individuals in the debate who have been personally affected by the issue at hand ensures that approaches are grounded in reality and can inject an undeniable sense of immediacy, helping to change the minds of decision makers. However, the coalition should work to ensure that the experience is empowering for the individuals concerned.

Some of the individual NGO’s within the CMC took a leading role with specific groups of partners. Handicap International coordinated engagement by ‘Ban Advocates’ – a group of individuals directly affected by cluster munitions.<sup>3</sup> Mines Action Canada continues to take a lead in engaging and building capacity among young people concerned with social justice issues. As well as promoting campaigning, their Young Professionals programme has provided benefits to individuals and to organisations internationally. Also within the CMC, Religions for Peace brought together faith leaders of different denominations and CMC staff worked through the Inter-Parliamentary Union to bring together parliamentarians from different countries. All of these different groups had important roles in promoting the overarching messages of the CMC.

3. The Ban Advocates website is: [www.banadvocates.org](http://www.banadvocates.org)

## IS THE COALITION MAKING THE MOST OF THE MEMBERSHIP AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL?

For some coalitions, much of the work is done at the national level where members work directly to influence their own government or private sector. There are different ways for coalitions to make the most of the national membership. Some coalitions have structured mechanisms for engaging members in different countries. Some work more loosely.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court both have national affiliates in a number of countries that act as focal points for civil society on an issue in a particular country. Whichever way you choose to structure engagement with national members, the coalition can benefit from a capacity to promote coherence among different national members in the same country.

The coalition may sometimes need to mediate between members at a national level if they come into conflict with each other. However, the main role for the coalition is likely to be supporting or encouraging these organisations in their work – providing ideas, sharing experience from other locations and linking national level actions into the international effort.

Beyond national level advocacy, coalitions can also build links between specific sections of society in different countries or regions. Key partners such as youth, parliamentarians, and faith groups, have a wide reach through their networks of members, constituents and supporters. Coalitions can help connect members of these groups in different countries and encourage them to work together on the issue being promoted by the coalition.

“Lobbying at international negotiating sessions is of limited effectiveness. By the time delegates get to the meeting, they have limited room to maneuver, the negotiating position has already been determined. You have to get them onside through campaigning back home well in advance.”

Kelly Rigg, Climate Action Network

## IS THE MEMBERSHIP GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE COALITION?

Members of a coalition naturally have expectations from the coalition to which they are contributing. These expectations can include technical advice, help with planning, capacity development, materials, and financial support.

Some coalitions systematically undertake national advocacy planning with campaigners, with coalition staff and experienced members available to support national members in their efforts to develop plans at the national level, helping campaigners to produce strategic advocacy plans with clear goals, outputs and indicators.

Coalitions can organise small grant schemes, disbursing funds to coalition member organisations whose proposals fit with the broader strategic objectives of the coalition. This is useful for donors, such as governments, that are not in a position to disburse small amounts of funding to large numbers of organisations. It is useful for members who may struggle to get funding for their advocacy work and it is useful for the coalition as a whole as it promotes advocacy work towards a common strategy. It also helps build relationships between central staff and leaders of the coalition and national members.

Such funds can also facilitate development of materials to support national advocacy. Briefing papers, brochures, template press releases and letters, t-shirts, badges, films and photography are all typical materials that a coalition may produce. A coalition may produce these in different languages, or in a way that allows them to be adapted easily to a national context.

Technical advice and expertise is a key area where coalitions can support their members. For example, during the ratification phase of its campaign work, the CMC set up a group of legal experts who were available to comment on national legislation and compare it to other legislation passed or under consideration in other countries. The Control Arms Campaign made a group of lawyers available in different time zones around the world during the negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty. These lawyers were able rapidly to give input and respond to questions posed by campaigners.

## CONFERENCE MATERIALS AND OUTPUTS

Coalitions can produce a wide array of materials. From brochures and posters to t-shirts and badges, to statements and press releases, promotional materials are a key element of a coalition's communications work at the national, regional and international level.

A single conference can produce outputs across the following areas:

### RESEARCH

There can be significant benefits to having members undertake substantive research, rather than the coalition itself. Sign-off for research findings can be difficult across a coalition and getting individual members to undertake this work helps to embed the issue within their own institution. A greater breadth of engagement is displayed when a range of members bring their own reports for distribution at meetings

### STATEMENTS

At a conference, the coalition will likely draft a number of statements for delivery or distribution. Those who are asked to speak on behalf of the coalition should be able to write their own statements, even if they seek input from the steering group. It is also important to have diversity in who is giving statements, always ensuring that speakers have credibility or expertise.

### BRIEFING DOCUMENTS

Briefing documents should be accessible materials that summarise the problem under consideration and make recommendations for how to address it. These include one- or two-page briefing papers, more detailed policy or position papers, factsheets with tables of data that can be aimed at campaigners and government officials. It is important to communicate clearly to campaigners when a particular document is internal and not to be shared with government officials. Including the words 'not for reproduction without author's consent' at the top of the document should limit problems if it goes beyond the coalition's membership.

### AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

The use of film and photography can be a highly effective way of communicating the diversity of a problem and the diversity of a campaign to a range of different audiences. Images can be powerful without translation and often resonate with people from widely divergent social and cultural backgrounds.

### MEDIA PRODUCTS

A range of coalition materials tend to be produced for media engagements: this can include a written press release, a video news release, fact sheets and 'frequently asked questions'-type documents, high resolution photographic images, and B-roll (unedited video footage available for use by broadcast journalists). Coalitions will also provide speakers at press conferences, either jointly with governments and international organisations or simply as the coalition. Production of media documents can be a tense affair in coalitions. It is important to balance the brands of the big member organisations and the egos of the key players to highlight the diversity of the coalition and to have the strongest and most credible, quotable, voices possible.

### EVENTS

The coalition will often contribute to and take responsibility for coordinating NGO 'side events' during a meeting. There may be one or more coalition-organised side events where the coalition sets out its key messages. Members of the coalition might be invited to participate as panelists on other side events and if so it's important to be clear about whether they are speaking on behalf of the coalition or their own NGO or both. Coalitions often schedule evening events in addition to events during the day. These can be more relaxed and a good chance for coalition participants to build a sense of collective identity. Very importantly for a coalition, evening events can offer outlets for people with different cultural and social backgrounds to express themselves and try to unwind when meetings are getting tense.

### MATERIALS: WHAT SHOULD WE MAKE?

At different times during the lifecycle of a coalition there may be widely differing expectations, funding and capacity to produce materials. During the early stages, a single leaflet or policy brief may be sufficient. For the Dublin Diplomatic Conference in May 2008, the CMC produced the following materials:

- ✘ 24-page CMC participants handbook with map of Dublin
- ✘ 27-page CMC policy papers with analysis on 13 negotiating topics
- ✘ 32-page CMC lobbying guide explaining how people should undertake their lobbying
- ✘ Boards with movable flags that were placed according to countries' negotiating stance on three key issues
- ✘ Various exhibitions provided by CMC members and exhibited at the conference venue
- ✘ A professional multimedia exhibition exhibited at the Dublin Gallery of Photography
- ✘ Badges
- ✘ T-shirts
- ✘ Waterproof jackets
- ✘ Umbrellas

Guides to campaigning and advocacy will stress the importance of developing a strategy before printing your t-shirts and it is important to have a well-thought out reason for each item you are producing. Branded materials can help to build a sense of collective identity during a major negotiation. Of course it is also possible to get by with basic materials that communicate the key messages simply and clearly. It's important to tailor your materials to the circumstances you are facing, the audience you are trying to influence and the stage you are at in the campaign.

“The work involved in being part of a coalition should not be underestimated, it can be very difficult indeed. But the potential rewards in terms of the collective impact are worth the investment. Coalitions can have a greater credibility, greater visibility and greater impact than any one organisation working by itself.”

Anna Macdonald, Oxfam

## IS THE COALITION MAKING THE MOST OF THE MEMBERSHIP AT MEETINGS?

For some coalitions, managing a large and diverse delegation at a formal meeting with delegates from governments, international organisations, businesses and so on will be a key task. Having a coalition in place is a good first step for organising NGO participation in such meetings and those hosting such meetings, very often governments or international organisations, are likely to be quite grateful if NGOs organise themselves.

One of the main things that NGOs tend to do at meetings is lobbying, and when a crowd of opinionated and passionate activists descends on government delegates coordination is important. Coordinated lobbying is a two-way process. It involves gathering the information via meetings, and disseminating it through specific messages.

One way to organise lobbying has been through regional and thematic leads, where the advocacy goals are broken down into specific themes under one individual's responsibility and different regions are similarly assigned lead individuals to coordinate them. The structure and key messages can be conveyed to all participants from the coalition through a book that they receive at the start of the meeting – or electronically beforehand.

“During the negotiating process lots of NGOs wanted meetings with US, UK, Russia etc. The Coalition would set up the meetings and then liaise with NGOs about what the key issues were, what order to raise them, who asks, who responds. We could also use the diversity of membership to avoid problematic perceptions of governments. This strategy of meeting coordination helped to get the Coalition formally recognised as the mechanism for NGO representation.”

Bill Pace, Coalition for the International Criminal Court

“We held a dozen or so campaign forums during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference to mobilise people and convey our message. NGOs also had an hour every morning from 8-9am to share plans and talk strategy, including on some joint statements and a few joint actions. We had a different chair every day. Then from 9-10am every morning we had an Ambassador come to see us, so we could prepare our approach to that government. ICAN and Abolition 2000 coordinated the NGO meetings in the mornings and Reaching Critical Will coordinated the briefings with Ambassadors. We had good feedback from Ambassadors who were impressed with the unity of the message about prohibiting nuclear weapons.”

Tim Wright, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

### CMC COORDINATION STRUCTURE, DUBLIN DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE, MAY 2008

The Cluster Munition Coalition put in place a detailed structure for lobbying during the two-week final negotiating conference in May 2008, held at Croke Park in Dublin, Ireland. The key elements of this structure are set out below.

#### Thematic facilitators

There were eight ‘thematic facilitators’, each responsible for one key area under negotiation: general obligations, definitions, clearance of unexploded ordnance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction, cooperation and assistance, transparency and compliance, and national implementation.

#### Regional facilitators

There were nine regional facilitators, each responsible for communications between campaigners from different regions (Africa, Francophone Africa, CIS, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, Pacific, South Asia, South-East Asia). They were responsible for ensuring lobbying was undertaken with all of the government delegations at the conference and reported back to thematic facilitators and other campaigners.

#### Meetings

This lobbying coordination structure was explained over email and then in person during a weekend orientation meeting prior to the conference. The facilitators were active during the daily morning briefings, and debriefed with the steering committee and staff at daily evening briefings. They also helped organise ad hoc meetings of their regional and thematic groups.

#### Communications

In addition to feedback during daily morning and evening meetings, each facilitator was issued with a pre-paid local mobile phone and the numbers were listed in the lobbying handbook.

#### Materials

In addition to publicity materials, CMC produced a series of documents specifically aimed at supporting lobbying.

Another key task for the coalition at a meeting is to keep people informed and working as a group. An effective way to do this is to have an orientation meeting at the beginning, morning briefings every day and a debrief meeting at the end of the meeting. Sometimes during a big conference it might be necessary to convene other meetings to deal with particular issues that arise.

### A DAY OF MEETINGS – A POSSIBLE COALITION SCHEDULE DURING A CONFERENCE

- 08:00 Coalition team meeting to discuss plans for the day, logistics, events and so on
- 08:30 Sign off of coalition daily updates by relevant steering group members and printing for distribution
- 09:00 Daily morning briefing for all coalition campaigners to discuss plans for the day
- 10:00 Plenary discussions commence for the day, campaigners disperse to lobby delegates, participate in discussions in the conference rooms and so on
- 13:00 Lunchtime side events commence; possibly three or four in parallel
- 15:00 Plenary discussions recommence for the day, campaigners disperse to lobby delegates, follow discussions in the conference rooms, and so on
- 18:00 Steering group, regional and thematic facilitators and staff meet for daily debrief to highlight concerns, take decisions on strategy, discuss media lines and plan for the following day
- 18:30 Evening side events hosted by coalition or others, including government hosted receptions where campaigners can undertake lobbying of delegates
- 20:00 Dinners, used for planning, preparations for the following day or official dinners hosted by government delegations

Here are some ideas for making the most of the membership during a major conference.

- ✘ Have a clear set of roles and responsibilities that cover all the aspects of the coalition's work at the conference. Make full use of key people from the membership and ensure the burden of work is shared.
- ✘ Have a clear system for organising the lobbying during the meeting. While planning for day-to-day needs, be prepared to deal with internal problems and disagreements.
- ✘ Keep people busy through side events, field trips, advocacy planning, skills sharing workshops in addition to the key work of lobbying. Give responsibilities to key people to ensure their buy-in.
- ✘ Plan how to deal with any NGOs who attend the meeting but are not part of the coalition – will the organisers expect the coalition to coordinate these organisations also?
- ✘ Ensure a clear communication channel with the meeting hosts and organisers. At any big conference there will inevitably be points where the hosts are putting pressure on the coalition and vice versa. Strong relationships here can help to reduce possible tensions.

## IS THE COLLECTIVE VOICE OF THE COALITION BEING HEARD IN THE MEDIA?

If a coalition is seeking to build up its visibility and credibility, then appearing in the media as the coalition will be important. By speaking through the media a coalition can promote its objectives by applying pressure to key targets and by raising awareness of the issue at stake. But these opportunities can also be a source of tension between members, leadership and staff.

Here are some questions that might help in thinking this through.

- ✘ Do you have a clear media strategy that sets out what the coalition wants to achieve in its media work with the international audience and with specific national audiences?
- ✘ Do you have criteria – or basic parameters – for deciding who speaks to the media on behalf of the coalition? Do you have designated spokespeople for specific issues or for specific regions?
- ✘ Do you have a division of labour between what members' spokespeople do and what coalition spokespeople do? For example members might take responsibility for speaking to national media in their own country (such as regional or national newspapers and television) and the coalition might speak to more international media outlets (such as Reuters, AFP, BBC World).
- ✘ Do the communications officers in major member NGOs participate in developing media strategy for the coalition, or come to coalition meetings?

Some NGOs (particularly large NGOs with communication departments) will often, quite naturally, seek to promote the work and identity of their own NGO, either at a national or international level, ahead of the work or identity of the coalition. Sometimes this might be because the individuals responsible for dealing with communications are not aware that their NGO is working as part of a collective. It might also be a conscious decision to ensure their NGO 'brand' is strengthened through media exposure. Sometimes the individuals that represent an NGO within a coalition might have to struggle against their own communications people to be allowed to speak on behalf of the coalition rather than just their own organisation.

**“At this stage for ICAN it is ok to be loose and open, but once we get into negotiations with more media work we would want to make sure that the message is clear and disciplined from ICAN.”**

**Tim Wright**, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

## IS EFFECTIVE USE BEING MADE OF KEY INDIVIDUALS?

Coalitions can draw on a wide range of individuals in their advocacy work. It's important to identify the individuals with particular skills and personal stories and to encourage them to be active where they can make the most impact.

- ✘ Do you have a list of individuals within the coalition that are experts on certain issues and available to speak to the media or undertake lobbying meetings?
- ✘ Is it always the same people representing the coalition in high-level meetings and in the media or are there diverse faces of the coalition?
- ✘ Are the key individuals able to fund themselves to travel and undertake activities? If not does the coalition have the capacity to support them financially?

People who have been directly affected by the problem that the coalition is trying to solve can be particularly powerful, such as landmine or cluster munition survivors, but there is a lot to think about when involving such individuals.

Engagement of survivors should be based on principles of dignity and respect. A sense of exploitation can emerge if a campaign brings in survivors to speak at a conference and then simply sends them home again – as a one-off walk-on part. Campaigns should develop the capacity of individuals so that they are primarily campaigners rather than primarily survivors. Options to consider include:

- ✘ Support networks, including peer-to-peer support
- ✘ Logistical requirements – accessibility of accommodation, transport and venues
- ✘ Lobbying, media and public speaking training

This can mean substantial commitments of funding and staff time and should not be entered into lightly.

## THE WORK OF SURVIVORS WITHIN THE CMC

Facilitated by Handicap International, the 'Ban Advocates' project ensured that individual survivors regularly participated in conferences and spoke out on behalf of the CMC. These campaigners – some who had lost limbs, lost eyesight, lost children and other family members – not only influenced decision makers in governments, they helped motivate people inside the campaign and reminded all campaigners why they were working on this issue. Ensuring that campaigning and advocacy processes include these actors is vital in order to ensure legitimacy and relevance and can be critical to the success of an initiative, but it also presents challenges.

---

## SUMMARY

---

Getting the coalition membership to speak with a unified voice is a core goal of coalition work. This should not mean a subordination of the individual members to a centrally imposed coalition identity, but rather a unified voice based on common cause and common strategy. The diversity of the coalition is also one of its strengths, both for communicating messages to different audiences and for gathering information from different partners.

Communicating on behalf of the coalition can also be a politically prized activity, so care needs to be given to ensure balance in media and public profile. Where survivors are engaged as coalition advocates, sufficient time and money needs to be invested to ensure they are not being exploited in this role and are able to organise activities on their own terms.

7

---

## ORGANISATION AND LOGISTICS

---

An effective coalition campaign requires effective logistics. When the logistics operation functions well few people notice, yet poor logistics can undermine the credibility of the coalition with its own members, with its funders and with those it is trying to influence. Carefully executed logistics and organisation plays an active role in assisting coalition building as well as campaign implementation. A strong logistics operation is the backbone of any coalition effort - and being in a coalition brings specific logistical challenges.

Logistics work is very often a core function of a coalition's staff or secretariat (if it has one). This work is sometimes a key reason a coalition staff or coordinator are appointed – to facilitate NGO organisation at meetings. It comes into focus most prominently during international meetings, but it is an important function for a coalition on a day-to-day basis as it manages finances and liaises with members in different countries with different needs and expectations.

Key logistics tasks include:

- ✘ Organising flights, transport and accommodation
- ✘ Ensuring accessibility of transport, accommodation and venues
- ✘ Printing and managing documents
- ✘ Organising side-events
- ✘ Administration of sponsorship to participants
- ✘ Managing finances

## MANAGING THE ADMINISTRATION EFFECTIVELY IS CRUCIAL TO CREDIBILITY BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

Whether organising people getting to and working at meetings, organising campaigning events around the world or organising financial matters with members, the way the coalition runs its logistics will be noticed by others. A well-run coalition logistics operation inspires confidence in campaigners and respect in target governments or institutions. A badly run logistics operation erodes coalition unity and undermines influence on the target audience.

## LARGE MEETINGS ARE A MAJOR CHALLENGE

Coalitions often take responsibility for hundreds of people at major international meetings. If the political stakes are high, this can also make for a time of tension among coalition members. Getting the organisation right can make a big difference in relieving tensions and dealing with problems. Dedicated and sophisticated organisation requires a substantial investment in time and resources, but it is well worth it.

## WHEN LOGISTICS IS HANDLED BADLY, MEMBERS CAN END UP RESENTING THE COALITION LEADERSHIP

A lack of planning or execution can lead to problems, for example people not receiving reimbursements, not getting visas, not having hotel bookings or confused by inaccurate communication. These sorts of problems can make members feel they have been marginalised or ignored and this can fuel tensions between members and the leadership or even generate resentment of the coalition's leadership and staff.

## SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMMES: HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO COMES TO A MEETING?

Participating as a coalition member at an international meeting is a privilege and where it involves international travel it can be understandably attractive. The coalition will often have the task of allocating sponsorship funding for these meetings. It is important to do this transparently and on the basis of clear and consistent criteria.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: SHARING THE BURDEN AMONG MEMBERS

Coalitions sometimes try to allocate logistical tasks to different elements of the membership, with some organisations volunteering the services of their employees for the duration of a conference or campaign activity. This is not only helpful for sharing the load, it also helps to ensure buy-in and support for the coalition's plans and activities among a wider group than just the coalition staff or leadership.

## FINANCES, ACCOUNTING AND GRANT MANAGEMENT

Good organisation of a coalition also means managing the funding that comes from donors. This involves budgeting, day-to-day accounting, reporting and so on. Sometimes a coalition is not a legal entity in its own right, but is legally a project of a member organisation (as in the case of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court and the Cluster Munition Coalition from 2003-2010). In this case there might be a distinction between the legal oversight of funds, which ultimately rests with the legal entity not the coalition, and the strategic oversight of the funds – how they are prioritised and spent (which might reasonably be an area of responsibility for the coalition's leadership).

### ADVANCE MISSIONS

Trips taken by coalition organisers to the host country of an international conference are usually well worth the time and money spent. Seeing things first-hand allows you to identify many obstacles and potential pitfalls that may not have been apparent at a distance. Accessibility of accommodation, transport and venues can be very difficult to ensure unless the situation has been seen first-hand.

Such missions can also allow staff to identify opportunities that may not have been considered previously. It provides an opportunity to build relationships with key people in the host country, from the government, from international organisations, local civil society, embassies, media and others.

During periods when everyone is under pressure and tension starts to mount, the strength of your relationships with host governments and local partner organisations may determine your capacity to deal with problems facing the coalition. So the more time available to establish strong relations with these partners in country, the better. Advance visits from the international coalition can also help to build up local coalition partners; sometimes the very fact that international visitors have taken the time to come and visit will help establish the credentials of local partners. Good dialogue with local partners is very important to ensuring such missions are effective and supportive of people on the ground.

The questions below focus on the key logistical and organisational challenges that global coalitions may face and offer some insight and experience on how to tackle them.

## DO YOU HAVE A GOOD PLAN AND DOES IT COVER ALL THE WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IN ADVANCE?

One of the first tasks is to develop a plan for handling logistics and organisation. A useful exercise to do in this regard is to draw up a logistics chain, working back from a meeting so that you know when you need to do what. Some of the key tasks are set out below, based on practice in the CMC.

### 6-9 MONTHS BEFORE

- ✘ Undertake 1st or 2nd advance mission
- ✘ Identify and select hotel and main venues

### 4-6 MONTHS BEFORE

- ✘ Finalise and sign contract with hotels/venues

### 3 MONTHS BEFORE

Send initial memorandum to participants including:

- ✘ Hotel booking procedure and provisional agenda
- ✘ Details of sponsorship programme with a deadline of at least two weeks for sponsorship applications; internal approval requires usually two weeks so all applicants are notified two weeks after the application deadline

### 2 MONTHS BEFORE

- ✘ Each participant requiring a visa needs to start the visa process at embassies and begin booking flights

### 2 MONTHS BEFORE AND ONGOING TO THE DATE OF THE MEETING

- ✘ Follow up with participants on their official registration. This will depend on the host and usually remains open until the meeting begins
- ✘ From two months before the meeting until it starts, there will be a constant stream of demands on those individuals doing the organising for the coalition, covering the whole range of areas described in this section

Based on planning documents developed by Isabelle Wiperman, Operations Officer, CMC



Such a table can be made much more detailed by including all of the items that need to be considered for logistics and organisation.

A useful way to think about logistics for a coalition is to think about what you would need to know if you were a participant, for example what to expect when you arrive at the meeting, where do you need to be when and how will you get there? In this regard, it is always preferable to be able to test systems in advance and have strong partners in the place where the meeting is being organised.

## WHAT MECHANISMS DO YOU HAVE FOR GETTING PEOPLE TO AND FROM INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND BEING ORGANISED WHILE THEY ARE THERE?

Focusing on the welfare of coalition participants at international meetings is a key job for a coalition. It is worthwhile investing significantly in order to get this right. Having dedicated staff able to spend substantial time organising travel, visas, accommodation and other arrangements for coalition members is vital.

Where possible, it can be helpful to have individuals from the coalition staff or coalition members focused each on one specific area of work, such as conference registration, transport, sponsorship and so on. There can be a tendency to pile all of the logistical requirements onto one or two 'logistics people,' but this can result in burn out. Having enough people to do this work and being clear about the division of labour should be a key area for the coalition leadership to focus on.

Some of the key areas that can make or break an organisational effort at an international conference are set out below – areas that invariably use more staff time than expected.

### KEY AREAS FOR COALITION LOGISTICS

**Visas:** Visas required to enter a country can be a big problem for coalitions. This includes transit visas for countries through which coalition members may be travelling on their way to the destination. It is very useful if the host government can issue letters for each participant indicating that they are accredited to the meeting and will get a visa on arrival.

**Registration:** Coalitions sometimes find themselves responsible for managing the official conference registration of their own participants during a meeting.

This has advantages and disadvantages: it affords a certain level of control over and inclusion in the process, but it does mean a lot of work. Coalitions can also be responsible for determining and controlling the physical presence of NGOs in meeting rooms when there is limited space.

For example during the Oslo Conference on Cluster Munitions in February 2007, the CMC was asked to specify 12 delegates (from a delegation of over 100) who would have access to the conference room and appointed one person to manage coalition members' access to an overflow room where proceedings could be viewed. Similarly, during the opening ceremony of the final negotiations in Dublin in May 2008, the CMC was asked to identify a set number of campaigners who would be in the room during the ceremony.

**Side events and evening events:** As noted in Chapter 6, it's important to provide space for coalition members to showcase their activities and organising this is a key role for the coalition. Coalition organisers need to make sure the requests for events are compiled and that each event organiser knows what they are expected to provide and what they can expect at their event, including catering, audio-visual equipment, translation services, and any other requirements. This can get complicated and if there are a lot of side events it can be worth having one person dedicated to the job.

**Coalition meetings:** Making sure coalition meetings run smoothly during a conference is another crucial area, also discussed in chapter 6. The orientation meetings, daily morning briefings, evening briefings, wrap up meeting – and the closing party – all help to nurture the coalition.

With a risk of meeting fatigue, it is important to keep meetings as brief as possible, make them outcome-oriented, know what you want to achieve and prepare well with participants in advance:

- ✗ Always have an agenda
- ✗ Always identify the decision-making items
- ✗ Always take clear minutes of these decision-making items.
- ✗ Put in place a chair that is respected and can keep time and handle the personalities and complicated debates
- ✗ If you don't need a meeting, don't have one just for the sake of it.

## WHAT TOOLS EXIST TO ENSURE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MAJOR MEETING ARE MET?

The use of a 'roles and responsibilities' document is discussed earlier in Chapter 6 on the coalition's 'collective voice'. Sharing the burden and being clear about who is doing what, are equally important principles when it comes to managing logistics. One way to organise the coalition team in around the key areas to cover is set out in the table opposite. There is sometimes a tendency for those responsible for managing a coalition team to underestimate the amount of time it takes to tackle organisational aspects such as visas, conference registration, sponsorship of campaigners and accommodation. If at all possible, it is advisable to assign one person to each of these tasks.

The first stage is to work out what needs to be done. The second stage is to make sure it happens – which means keeping track of who is doing what. Very often coalitions are seen in terms of their policy positions, public statements and media profiles – but it is good logistics that will make the coalition work effectively around the key meetings.

### STRATEGY AND COORDINATION

- ✗ Overall coordination
- ✗ Liaison with key external partners
- ✗ Strategy, content and documents
- ✗ Representation and coordination in host country

### FINANCE AND SPONSORSHIP

- ✗ Overall budget, management and reporting
- ✗ Reimbursements and payments
- ✗ Sponsorship programme

### LOGISTICS

- ✗ Coalition participants
- ✗ Accommodation
- ✗ Transportation
- ✗ Support to participants with disabilities
- ✗ Office, printing and supplies
- ✗ Managing volunteers

### CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY

- ✗ Advocacy and campaigning in advance of meeting
- ✗ Lobbying during meeting
- ✗ Post-meeting action planning
- ✗ Campaign meetings

### MATERIALS AND DISPLAYS

- ✗ Materials
- ✗ Exhibitions and display
- ✗ Professional photo exhibitions

## CMC Run Sheet: Dublin Diplomatic Conference

Monday 19 May 2008

## SCHEDULES

As we have noted in other chapters, the key to coordination within a coalition is communication. Making sure people know exactly where they need to be when and who is responsible for what is critical. Mary Wareham, a campaigner with the ICBL and then the CMC, developed the idea of a 'run sheet' or schedule that lists all the activities during the meeting and sets out who is responsible, based on practices used in the film industry. The box opposite gives an example of one day for the CMC team during the final negotiations in Dublin in May 2008.

### WHO DECIDES WHO GETS SPONSORSHIP TO COME TO A MEETING AND HOW?

Some coalitions have quite formal procedures for making these decisions. Decisions could be made by the coalition staff (although this leaves them with a lot of responsibility); by the leadership body if there is one; or there could be other mechanisms.

Some coalitions have used application forms with basic criteria for sponsorship. Examples of sponsorship forms are included on the [www.globalcoalitions.org](http://www.globalcoalitions.org) site. These explain the process for applying, include criteria for sponsorship, the status of the issue and work being done in the country the applicant is coming from, and the factual information needed to organise travel and visas if the applicant is successful.

One of the most important considerations when determining sponsorship is the work people are doing at home between conferences. People should be accountable for their work at the national level and it can be counter-productive to sponsor people who are not actually doing work at home. Some of the issues here relate to the discussion on small grants covered in Chapter 6.

LOCATION	CONTACT / ATTENDING	NOTES
Jury's Inn Croke Park	Taxi	JH pick up
Clonliffe, Jury's Inn	SGC, SH, TN, LC, SO, JM, AB, KM, CM, NC, SB, PS	
Croke Park	Vantastic	4 × wheel chair + 4 assistants
Croke Park	Kavangh 1	
Croke Park	Kavangh 2	
Croke Park	Kavangh 3	
	SB, RG	
Ash Suite	KD, Chair – NN Chair - MS	Welcome - 1 min, Objectives – TN 5 min Presentation of today's sessions – SDG 5 min Campaigning activities and events - LC/SH 5 min Media - NC, SB 3 min, Logistics - SGC 3 min Other announcements (1 min)
Croke Park entrance	LC (hands)	Delegates in horseshoe in front of Croke Park Inflatable hand, Petition hands, Petition book
	SB, RG + SN	
Hogan Suite		Foreign Minister, BK, JK (ICRC)
CMC office	AB/SO	
	TN, SGC, GO, SG	Room tbc (DFA)
Third floor balcony	GO, PN	PS
Ash Suite	UNDP, TH, MA, RM, SH	Projector, Screen, mics + laptop
Hogan Suite + Hogan Mezzanine		
Croke Park entrance	CM	
Dublin Castle	DFA Transport	
Claddagh Apartments	Kavanagh 1	
Premier Apartments Santry		
Comfort Inn Smithfield	Kavannagh 2	
Stephen's Green Pick up Point, Jury's Inn Parnell	Kavannagh 3	
Stephen's Green Pick up Point	Kavannagh 4	Under review
Jury's Inn Parnell	Vantastic	tbc wheel chair + assistants
Dublin Castle	Vantastic	tbc wheel chair + assistants
Clonliffe, Jury's Inn	TN, SG, GO + regional/ thematic heads	
Dublin Castle	Minibus 1 + CM	CMC Strategy Group
Dublin Castle	Minibus 2 + Sean	CMC Strategy Group
Dublin castle	OB, DC	
Jury's Inn, Parnell	Vantastic	
Various	DFA	

## DO YOU HAVE A CODE OF CONDUCT TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR?

A coalition takes on an organising role for a range of NGOs whose staff may harbour very different viewpoints. Some coalitions ask the coalition delegation (those members of the coalition attending a specific meeting) to agree to a code of conduct that sets the boundaries for acceptable behaviour. These typically emphasise the need to be considerate, respectful and obey the laws of the country you are in. Either each campaigner can physically sign and return the form or they can agree to it through their acceptance to be a part of the coalition's delegation. As well as reducing the risk of inappropriate behaviour, such a document also provides a basis for managing responses to problematic incidents where coalitions do not have direct managerial oversight of their delegation.

## ARE THE ACCOMMODATION, TRANSPORT AND VENUES ACCESSIBLE?

It is vital to understand accessibility requirements within the coalition delegation. Such requirements are not only for wheelchair users (ramps, accessible toilets, sufficiently wide doorways and so on), but also for people who have difficulty walking long distances, people with visual impairment and other limitations. In some cities it can be difficult to find solutions for accessibility issues so it's important to think carefully about your venues before booking them. Getting dedicated transport for people with disabilities can be a vital investment. In some cases it may be necessary to require hotels or other venues to undertake modifications to ensure accessibility. If the coalition is large it may be able to exert considerable financial leverage to promote this. The work of the coalition to ensure accessibility for its delegation can have a lasting legacy in the host country.

## DO YOU HAVE SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE PER DIEMS AND TRACK COALITION EXPENDITURE DURING MAJOR EVENTS?

When coalitions take on the responsibility of sponsoring participants at an international meeting they will generally have to administer the provision of per diems and reimbursements of travel costs for sponsored participants. Depending on the number of sponsored participants, this can require the dedication of someone senior enough to handle a large amount of cash and be firm with participants about justifying expenditure. Likewise during a conference there will be substantial expenditure. It's important to have one person who has an overview of all of the expenditure against the agreed budget and be clear about the number of people who can authorise expenditure within the coalition.

## SUMMARY

Effective logistics planning is vital to the work of the coalition. The key requirements are to:

- ✘ Undertake planning sufficiently in advance
- ✘ Be clear about roles and responsibilities
- ✘ Develop detailed plans for operations during meetings
- ✘ Ensure finances and spending are tightly controlled

8

## THE FUTURE OF THE COALITION

Many coalitions are established to achieve certain defined goals, and as the coalition's work progresses these can come to be embodied in the struggle for certain legal or policy changes. Yet policy and legal changes are often one step removed from the changes to practice that need to occur if an issue is to be effectively addressed. Campaigning to get more countries on board an agreement, or to get countries to implement that agreement's obligations, might seem less exciting than campaigning for a treaty to come into existence. However, many activists and government officials have commented that it is precisely this follow-up work that makes the difference between success and failure for a global policy initiative. This chapter considers the importance of going beyond policy and legal commitments to ensure the coalition's efforts make a real difference on the ground.

Much of this chapter relates to the future of coalitions that have achieved a certain legal or policy outcome that they have been seeking. Of course, not all coalitions are seeking a specific legal outcome such as a treaty, but many will need to think about how civil society will work to consolidate any gains they have made as a coalition. A key resource for this chapter is the 2008 book *Banning Landmines: Disarmament, Citizen Diplomacy and Human Security*, edited by Jody Williams, Stephen D. Goose and Mary Wareham.

Managing the external perception of the outcome that has been achieved is a key role of any coalition. Beyond a specific legal or policy instrument, coalitions can work to build a 'norm' of international behaviour, a standard by which every state or non-state actor will be judged, whether they have formally adhered to the relevant instruments or not. This is about influencing the practice of states and how the issue gets treated in public statements and discussions. Building a norm requires ongoing work to monitor and publicise practice as judged against the standards being set.

## ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

Coalitions usually have mission statements or calls setting out the change they are seeking. However these goals are set out, at any one time a coalition should be able to explain whether it has achieved all, some of them or none of them. Different coalition members might have different perceptions of whether a goal has been achieved or not and those managing the coalition have an important job to avoid conflict around such differences (both in the short and long term). The achievement of a key goal, such as the adoption of a particular policy, a change in legislation, achievement of an international treaty, should be a time to celebrate the strength of a coalition, but it is also a time to ensure plans are in place for the future.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A coalition that is focussed on achieving specific policy or legal change within a foreseeable timeframe will naturally ask questions about its future once that change has been brought about. This is all the more true when, after a major achievement, it can become more difficult to retain the attention and commitment of member organisations where those organisations face other institutional priorities and the individuals seek to pursue new interests. The structure of the coalition can change as well as the focus of activities.

“After the Protocol was adopted we decided to work on ratification and implementation of the Protocol. But in this new phase the Coalition didn't have quite the same focus and drive it had during the Protocol negotiating process. There was also the added problem that key individuals left or moved jobs within their NGO, government or UN agency.”

**Martin Macpherson**, Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers)

## RESOURCE AND ENERGY CHALLENGES

Working hard on a dedicated advocacy effort can be exhausting for individuals involved - doing it in a coalition can be even more exhausting. So it's not unusual for some individuals to feel burnt out or in need of new challenges once an important milestone has been reached. Some member organisations of a coalition will begin to shift their focus of activity and resources away from efforts that are seen to have run their course (even if others recognise that much is still to be done). Some donors may also start to shift funding away from a coalition once it has met its initial objectives.

## ADAPTING THE COALITION STRUCTURE

The need to adapt the structure of a coalition might be driven by internal discussions regarding priorities, or it might be prompted by external factors such as a lack of financial resources or a waning interest from NGO members. Some coalitions continue to function in more or less the same way, adapting to the next phase of work to see the changes they have achieved actually put into practice. Some coalitions disband and leave NGOs to work independently. Some adjust their structure to work more loosely as a network. Others might become organisations in their own right, continuing to work on the issue but no longer in a member-based structure.

## COALITIONS AS MONITORING PARTNERSHIPS

One of the key functions for those promoting social and political change is monitoring the implementation of agreements that have been made. For a coalition, this monitoring function can be a strong reason to continue working as a global network. Taking on the monitoring function allows a coalition to occupy a position of authority - of course this depends on the way the monitoring is done and the extent to which the actors being monitored accept the validity of the research. Monitoring functions may also be seen as valuable by donors at a time when the funding for advocacy and campaigning work might become more limited. This is true both for the coalition that facilitates the monitoring and the member NGOs that might become researchers on a national basis for the monitoring effort. When the monitoring is done by a partnership of NGOs or the coalition itself, rather than by one NGO, it may have more legitimacy in the eyes of external partners such as governments and businesses.

## COALITIONS AS PARTNERSHIPS OF CONFIDENCE – A BASIS FOR FURTHER WORK

When individuals from particular organisations work closely together within a coalition they will inevitably develop strong interpersonal relationships. Where these relationships are positive it can lay the ground for future partnerships among those organisations (and individuals) to work on other issues, in particular issues that may be related.

Many of the individuals and organisations involved in the establishment of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) had worked closely with each other in the process to ban cluster munitions. Founding INEW members such as Action on Armed Violence, Human Rights Watch, Handicap International, IKV Pax Christi, Norwegian Peoples Aid and Oxfam had all campaigned together within the Cluster Munition Coalition. The individuals involved in establishing INEW had a positive working dynamic as a group, but also shared the overarching concerns about the human suffering caused by other explosive weapons, beyond cluster munitions. Addressing these concerns was a logical extension of work to prevent harm from cluster munitions.

“It's a big challenge for coalitions to consider their futures. Coalitions come together to fill a gap, but once that gap is filled they can struggle to redefine their role.”

**Felicity Hill**, former director, UN Office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

## HOW CAN MOMENTUM BE SUSTAINED DURING THE PROCESS OF GETTING COUNTRIES ON BOARD AN AGREEMENT?

A number of coalitions have run dedicated campaigns to promote further signatures, ratifications or accessions to the international treaty they have helped bring about. The ICBL and CMC both pursued such campaigns in the wake of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Coalition for the International Criminal Court maintains a push for ratifications and accessions to the Rome Statute.

Where possible, obtaining institutional support for such a ‘universalisation’ drive can have a significant impact on success. Canada provided such leadership on landmines, devoting very significant resources in terms of staff time in Ottawa and at Canadian diplomatic posts abroad, as well as funding for advocacy work by civil society. In 2010 the United Nations, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, launched a two year campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The campaign ‘concept note’ suggests a range of activities for UN officials and member states, including events and media work focused on the campaign, direct advocacy with states outside the treaty, technical support to assist states with joining, and supporting civil society activities in aid of the campaign’s objectives.

### THE RATIFICATION CAMPAIGN AS A STARTING POINT

A campaign to gather signatures and ratifications can sometimes be a starting point for coalition work. For example, the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances was launched in September 2007, about a year after the adoption of the Convention For The Protection Of All Persons From Enforced Disappearances in 2006. The coalition ran an international campaign for ratification and on 23 December 2010 it achieved its initial goal of 20 ratifications necessary to trigger entry into force of the Convention.

## WHAT IS NEEDED TO TURN A POLICY OR LEGAL ACHIEVEMENT INTO PRACTICAL CHANGE?

In her 2008 chapter *Still Alive and Kicking: The International Campaign to Ban Landmines* in the book *Banning Landmines* previously cited, Elizabeth Bernstein gives a useful description of how the ICBL considered its future and adapted itself to a new phase of campaigning and advocacy work as a coalition. The chapter highlights a number of the items considered here, including whether the coalition should disband, the importance of consulting members of the coalition, the need for changes in coalition structure and possible changes in the focus of work, the turnover of staff and campaigners and the realisation that the hard work often starts once you have achieved your goal.

A number of people interviewed for this book noted the importance of long-term civil society commitment in order to convert legal obligations and policy commitments into concrete action. This is based on recognition that governments and businesses generally don’t do things unless they have to. In this way the continued presence and pressure from civil society can help to determine the success or failure of an initiative. It is important to build a process, for example some kind of forum that convenes the key actors on a regular basis.

It can be easier to get states to make a political or legal change on paper than it is to convince them to make a change to the way they distribute resources. Keeping track of government policy and practice at a national level in relation to the commitments they have made internationally can be a very effective way of promoting implementation. To do this it may be necessary to move towards a country-by-country approach, where national-level work becomes more important than international-level work. This may mean there is less you can do with big international conferences and more to be done through national advocacy.

### THE POWER OF MONITORING

This section is based on Mary Wareham’s 2008 chapter *Evidence-Based Advocacy: Civil Society Monitoring of the Mine Ban Treaty*, in *Banning Landmines* and Thomas Nash’s 2010 article *The role of NGO activism in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions*, in *Disarmament Forum*.\*

The ‘Landmine Monitor’, set up by the ICBL in 1998, published its first report in 1999 and has published an annual report every year since then. As an initiative run by civil society and funded largely by governments, it has embedded civil society in the implementation structure of the Mine Ban Treaty. The research by ICBL members that make up the research network around the world has forged lasting relationships with government officials responsible for implementing the treaty. The work of the Landmine Monitor system has contributed to a ‘culture of implementation’ and has made it the norm for states to share information with NGOs on issues, such as military stockpiles, that were previously quite sensitive.

The reports of the Landmine Monitor have become the reference for delegates to Mine Ban Treaty meetings and have undoubtedly influenced the level

of reporting by states and the way this is done. It has been the cornerstone of the “evidence-based advocacy” that Wareham has described as a key pillar of the ICBL’s influence. The annual reports have demonstrated the achievements generated as a result of the Mine Ban Treaty and have not shied away from shining the spotlight on those states that are failing to live up to their commitments.

Very importantly, the establishment of the Landmine Monitor subsequent to the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty provided a mechanism for the coalition to evolve its work on the landmine issue, it gave the ICBL a focus during a period of change and provided a framework for sustained engagement by existing members of the coalition and fresh engagement from others. Over the longer term, the Landmine Monitor has been an important funding stream for the ICBL and its key member organisations, facilitating their continued activism within the coalition.

Wareham suggests that the “Landmine Monitor has demonstrated that civil society-based verification is no longer just a concept but can be a practice and a model for other campaigns to consider when exploring similar initiatives.”

\* *Disarmament Forum*, 2010, no. 1, *Implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions*, UNIDIR, Geneva.

“A flexible committee system, a unique support unit, and a set of informal structures to facilitate implementation – largely unforeseen in 1997, these mechanisms are now viewed as essential to the treaty’s functioning.”

**Kerry Brinkert**, Director of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit, on the architecture developed to support the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

## CAN YOU BUILD A POSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE OF IMPLEMENTATION?

Achieving real change will be easier if the political processes that emerge also pay attention to what can be called a 'culture of implementation'. In practical terms this requires states and other actors to work together to build an infrastructure around an agreement so that the parties that have taken on obligations can be assisted, encouraged, and perhaps sometimes coerced into fulfilling them.

Coalitions can work to identify and foster 'champions' – officials from governments, organisations or businesses who are willing to invest in the process above and beyond the level expected of them. Ideally, through its network of contacts, the coalition will be able to find individuals where there is a match between their personal commitment and belief in an issue, their institutional stance and available resources on the issue and their ambition for profile and influence among their peers.

The culture of implementation will also be influenced by the way states monitor each other's compliance with an agreement. Stephen Goose has written about 'cooperative compliance' being effective in the case of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, without a verification regime being built into the treaty. The willingness of states to be transparent with each other and with civil society will determine to a large extent how effective such compliance will be.

## IS YOUR COALITION STRUCTURE STILL RELEVANT FOR THE WORK NEEDED IN THE FUTURE?

Some organisations – and individuals – that may play pivotal roles in a coalition during its set up and initial phase of putting an issue on the map may not see a role for themselves in the longer term follow-up and monitoring work. The same is true for donors and this of course can be frustrating if funding starts to decline at the same time as interest from some coalition member NGOs is waning. All of this makes it all the more important to think carefully about the activities the coalition and its members are undertaking, the available resources and the most strategic direction for carrying this crucial follow-up work forward.

It might be worth asking whether the coalition is still needed in its original form. Following the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers evolved into an organisation in its own right. It now acts as a key focal point for civil society on the issue of child soldiers and undertakes detailed monitoring and other research on the issue, but it is not a coalition as such.

It may be that what becomes most important for a coalition in building an emerging norm is this dedicated watchdog capacity. It is an ability to draw on a network of people in different countries that may not spend much time on your particular issue on a day-to-day basis, but who have the connections to be able to look into it when needed so that the voice of civil society is heard. This looser network, focused on monitoring, perhaps with fewer centralised staff, might also provide sufficient capacity to facilitate advocacy at national, regional and international levels when required.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Coalitions working on similar issues may also decide to merge certain aspects of their work. This can be done at the levels of governance, staff, membership, operations and so on. There are benefits in terms of use of resources and avoiding duplication and competition, but it is important to consider the identities and cultures of the two coalitions and the value of these in terms of influencing targets and maintaining active members.

Building on their shared history, in 2009-2010 the ICBL and the CMC undertook consultation processes to plan for their future organisation together. This resulted in a merger of the governance, finance and staff structures of the two bodies, while retaining both campaign identities for work on their respective issues of landmines and cluster munitions. This restructuring was an effort to make the governance of the two campaigns more effective, to make full use of the opportunities provided by their already overlapping workloads and to put in place a mechanism better able to develop efficiencies where required.

### GOING FORWARD TOGETHER – CONSULTATIONS ON THE FUTURE

Regardless of what direction a coalition decides to take as it moves into a new phase of its life, it's important that the decision is made with input from all of the members. The CMC, ICBL and IANSA provide three examples of consultation processes with coalition or network memberships.

In 2003 and 2004 the ICBL undertook a consultation process with its members to determine future direction of the campaign. Coalition staff, together with support from coalition members interviewed members and sought their views on the campaign and its future. On the basis of these consultations the ICBL decided on a strategy and implemented some changes to its structure and activities.

In 2009, after the leaderships of the CMC and the ICBL had begun looking at a possible merger of their governance bodies, the CMC undertook a consultation process with its membership on the future of the campaign and the process of coming together with the ICBL. The process was managed by staff of coalition member organisation with support from CMC staff. Interviews were conducted with campaigners and the findings presented at a joint campaign meeting of the CMC and ICBL in December 2009. At this meeting ICBL also presented the findings of its parallel consultation on the same questions. On the basis of these consultations and the reactions of members of both campaigns, the CMC and ICBL moved forward with the plan to bring the campaigns together at the governance, staff and financial levels.

Following an external evaluation, in 2010 IANSA undertook a series of interviews with members about its future and recruited a consultant to help manage a transition process. On the basis of these consultations with members, including during an open meeting for all campaigners, a future strategy and a new structure for the network were proposed, considered and approved by the members. The structure was then put in place and the new strategy is being implemented.

---

## SUMMARY

---

Coalitions need to plan beyond the achievement of policy or legal milestones if they are to effect change on the ground. In many ways the hard work begins once an agreement has been reached. So a civil society presence is necessary over the long term if real change is going to happen. A watchdog role can be important for the future of a coalition. Monitoring the practice of individual states helps to keep the pressure on them to live up to their commitments.

Having a mechanism for engaging with states or other actors being targeted is important over the longer term and coalitions have a role to play in shaping the ways of working and the cultures of these mechanisms at the multilateral level.

Passing major milestones can present challenges for continued funding and for maintaining energy and engagement among coalition members and partners. This may require re-structuring and a focus on new activities. It is important to consider these issues in advance in order to minimise any loss of momentum and direct as much of the campaign's energy as possible at turning policy change into practice.



9

---

## CONCLUSION

---

“People often struggle to translate lessons across thematic boundaries. For example, some have felt that there are lessons to learn from the landmines and cluster munitions campaigns, but others have felt that these campaigns are irrelevant to them. It’s important to draw out the points of learning and process explicitly if you want to get engagement from other coalitions. Otherwise it’s just ‘different’.”

John Borrie, UNIDIR

**There are two key themes that run through this book and that can be highlighted again by way of a brief conclusion. In all the different areas of coalition work discussed here, and regardless of the subject matter being addressed, the issues of trust and communication stand out. As coalitions come together and develop it is the trust between individuals and organisations involved and the flow of communication that will turn a group of organisations into a powerful policy-changing force.**

**Trust itself can develop from effective communication, in particular from effective communication in the face of disagreement and tension. As has been noted already in this text, tensions and disagreements are inevitable between groups of people and institutions. The particular challenge for civil-society coalitions is that there are no fixed rules or practices regarding how these dynamics are to be addressed or resolved. Such tensions can be very valuable, demanding scrutiny of policy positions, strategies and ways of working, but they can also create major problems if not addressed effectively.**

**Many of the issues that civil-society coalitions have worked on are very gloomy in their subject matter, often being focused on issues of deprivation or suffering internationally. Despite this, working in coalitions can be, and arguably should be, very enjoyable and very rewarding. As a final thought, it is perhaps worth suggesting that communication, trust and many other elements of collective work are greatly enhanced where people are enjoying what they do.**

As a summary of some of the reflections on coalition work included in this text, we offer below ten insights on coalition campaign work drawn from our experience working to ban cluster munitions:

## 1. Believe change is possible

Even when critics and mainstream observers say the task is impossible, including your allies, it's crucial to have leadership that truly believes the goal is achievable and necessary. Without this it's hard to succeed. In early 2006 few people believed a ban on clusters was possible, or even a specific law restricting their use. Less than three years later there was a global ban treaty signed by 94 countries.

## 2. Be ready

When progress is difficult use the time wisely to build the strength and reach of the network and to strengthen the coalition's evidence and arguments. The CMC doubled its membership between 2003-2006 and doubled it again from 2007-2008. A number of key reports were produced by coalition members in the 2005-2006 period. Informal meetings also took place between key players on the NGO, state and international organisation side in early 2006. This helped to build a community of practice.

Take full advantage of opportunities when they arise. The Belgian national ban on cluster munitions in 2005-06 and the use of cluster munitions in Lebanon in 2006 saw significant mobilisation by campaigners, media, parliamentarians and researchers.

## 3. Move fast and make it inevitable

Once the opportunity arises, move fast and keep up the momentum. Having an external deadline can help keep up the pace. This helps maintain a sense of humanitarian urgency: the CMC did not want to spend years in negotiations while people were being killed and injured.

The period from the Lebanon conflict to the adoption of the treaty was less than two years. The Oslo Declaration contained a deadline of 2008 to "conclude" a treaty, this was controversial, but very important. With momentum on your side you can foster a sense of the inevitability of the outcome.

## 4. Dominate the data

NGOs provided a lot of information on the humanitarian harm from cluster munitions. In contrast states produced very little information. In particular states and others failed to provide a case for the military necessity of cluster munitions.

NGOs became seen as authoritative. Many countries came to the CMC for advice in the negotiations because the NGOs' interests were recognised as humanitarian. It was also important not to overstate the case, a conservative picture of the problem was bad enough.

## 5. Set the terms of the debate

It is not always necessary to win an argument you are presented with; it can be better to reframe the problem in a way that gives you the upper hand.

The CMC managed to push the burden of proof onto governments that sought to continue using cluster munitions or to exempt certain types from prohibition. So after many years of assertions that cluster munitions were vital weapons, the CMC started to call for evidence to back up these claims - very little if any was provided. Similarly the CMC called for evidence gathered by users that would allow them to understand the humanitarian problems being caused - again little if any was forthcoming.

Where discussions had previously been dominated by the framework of international humanitarian law, the CMC managed to reframe issues in terms of the 'unacceptable harm' that cluster munitions cause and the responsibility to adopt a position of precaution in the face of such harm.

## 6. Constant focus on the human impact

Part of reframing the debate was to move beyond the legal framing of balancing humanitarian and military considerations. Instead we wanted to portray the human suffering as unacceptable.

We maintained a human focus in our arguments, communications, representatives, and materials. This helped us to keep the standard high and challenge others to reach it, rather than lowering the bar to allow others to meet it.

## 7. Leadership from those directly affected

Individual survivors spoke out on behalf of the campaign and helped to motivate people inside the campaign. Handicap International, through the Ban Advocates, Survivor Corps and others did a lot of work to provide a support network, training and follow up to facilitate this important participation.

Survivors and affected states helped change minds and win arguments. A meeting in Belgrade for states affected by cluster munitions was an important moment in the diplomatic process.

## 8. A powerful coalition

Build a powerful coalition by being:

- ✘ Coordinated: have a common message that every member wants to promote based on their own values and interests. CMC ensured that messages to key partners and external audiences were carefully coordinated.
- ✘ Diverse: across regions, linguistic groups, cultures, interest groups, gender balance, etc. CMC has around 400 organisations in 100 countries
- ✘ Inclusive: listen to the voices of the members; have a link between the membership and the governance / leadership; be driven by the members. During the negotiations in 2008, the CMC Steering Committee had 13 organisations from membership, took a hands on approach and was the decision making body for the coalition.
- ✘ 'Affiliative': leadership should foster a sense of belonging by understanding the interests, approaches and contexts of members, promoting shared interests, rather than laying down the approach all members must follow. CMC had a centralised and neutral staff that did not represent one particular coalition member but promoted the interests of the coalition.
- ✘ Cooperative: coalitions should share the work and use the skills of the different member organisations and individuals. In the final negotiations in Dublin, the CMC had regional facilitators and thematic facilitators to coordinate the lobbying. CMC held workshops and campaign meetings facilitated by campaigners throughout the various meetings in the diplomatic process.



## 9. Foster strategic partnerships

CMC worked with a strong group of key individuals from states and international organisations early on, in particular with Norway and UNDP. These relationships were very close, sharing information on a regular basis, ensuring a coordinated approach to problems and opportunities. Relationships also existed with key political leaders and these relationships helped political leaders to take risks.

CMC also had strong partnerships with key regional players like Zambia, Mexico, Indonesia, New Zealand, as well as affected countries such as Lao PDR and Lebanon. CMC forged partnerships with parliamentarians, faith leaders, academics, journalists, and other interest groups. It was also recognised that individuals, personalities and relationships were sometimes more important than the policies and institutional mandates.

## 10. Do a lot with a little

During the negotiations CMC built up its credentials as a major international campaign. CMC was not a mass grass roots movement though. One good contact with a strong relationship in a key country can be more important than a big public campaign in that country – the value comes from all of these contacts working together.

Strategic media work that targets decision makers at key moments will amplify the campaign and make pressure felt. During the final negotiations in Dublin there was a media and advertising campaign fostering a sense amongst delegates that the cluster munition issue was the most important one in town.

“One additional thing mentioned by almost all of those who felt they participated in a successful campaign was the importance of high levels of trust. This often comes from individuals who have worked closely with each other for many years. The importance of having a close-knit group at the centre of a campaign cannot be overestimated.”

**Brendan Cox**, *Campaigning for International Justice*, p.41. May 2011



Princess of Wales Memorial Fund

## THE WORK CONTINUES

Researched and produced under a grant from  
The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund to  
Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)

Copy edited by Antony Reeve-Crook

Written by Richard Moyes and Thomas Nash,  
Article 36 ([www.article36.org](http://www.article36.org))

An online version of this report, and related  
resources, is maintained at: [www.globalcoalitions.org](http://www.globalcoalitions.org)

Published in December 2011 by Action on Armed  
Violence (AOAV)

With thanks to: Ray Acheson, Antonia Bance,  
Jo Becker, Richard Bennett, Liz Bernstein, Effie  
Blythe, John Borrie, Stuart Casey-Maslen, Laura  
Cheeseman, Andrew Cooper, Maria Pia Devoto, Steve  
Goose, Katie Harrison, Felicity Hill, Atle Karlsen,  
Alison Kelly, Anthea Lawson, Richard Lloyd, Anna  
Macdonald, Martin MacPherson, Daniel Mack,  
Lou Maresca, Sarah Masters, Bob Mtonga, Serena  
Olgiate, Bill Pace, Brian Rappert, Samantha Rennie,  
Kelly Rigg, Ghassan Shahrou, Oliver Sprague,  
Andreas Vogt, Mary Wareham, Doug Weir, Isabelle  
Wipperman, Tim Wright.

**Article36**

