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Work the Net

A management guide for existing and emerging formal networks

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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A management guide for existing and emerging formal networks

Contents

Directory of Checklists

Directory of Examples

Directory of Figures

Acronyms

AFI	Alliance for Financial Inclusion
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CoP	Community of practice
DAC	Development Co-operation Directorate of the OECD
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
ENDI	Equality, Non-discrimination and Inclusion
FOSS	Free and Open Source Software
GGA	Sector Network Good Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
GWP	Global Water Partnership
ICT	Information and communication technology
IT	Information technology
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KM4Dev	Community of international development practitioners interested in knowledgemanagement and knowledge sharing issues and approaches
MENIT	Middle East Network on Innovative Teaching and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NeRO	Networking and Information/Knowledge Management by Regional Organisations in the Field of Natural Resources Management
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NICD	Network International Cooperation in Conflicts and Disasters
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RWSN	Rural Water Supply Network
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SMS	Short Message Service
SuSanA	Sustainable Sanitation Alliance
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

TG	Theme Groups
TOR	Terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VOIP	Voice-over-Internet Protocol
WEDC	Water, Engineering and Development Center

Preface to the second edition

When we published the first edition of 'Work the Net' in 2006, networks were already powerful mechanisms for knowledge sharing, collaboration and learning. However, we are still surprised by the dynamics of networks that have unfolded in the last ten years in all areas of development cooperation and sustainable development. Today, there are countless networks on almost every topic. Regardless of their particular missions and set-ups, they are all based on a simple idea: bringing together like-minded people or institutions that share an idea and want to make a difference.

Key characteristics of such networks are openness (towards new members), intrinsic motivation and voluntarism of membership (participation is mostly unpaid but not unrewarded), and non-hierarchical (self-) organisation. Today, more and more networks apply new Internet media, such as social services (e.g. Twitter, Wikis, and Facebook, to name the most prominent), e-learning tools and smart phones. These changes the way networks organise themselves and allows for a greater variety of network initiatives.

One challenge of networks, however, remains the same: Who turns the network's initiative into a success story – and how? Network coordinators, network managers and all those who take the decision to set-up and run a network face these questions. The first edition of 'Work the Net' focused on critical factors of success. For our second edition, we have updated these chapters and added international experience from various networks.

Furthermore, the second edition takes into account new technologies and their effects on network variety. Still, we focus on 'formalizing networks' because it is one of the key management challenges networks face. But we have also extended the sections on selecting the appropriate type of network, acknowledging the continuum that exists among the 'three network typologies' (informal networks, communities, formal networks) that were introduced in the first edition. This edition also recognises the relevance and importance of setting up and managing less formal networks.

As all types of networks continuously have to prove their relevance, many seek ways to measure and demonstrate their success. Therefore, we have significantly extended and improved the section on monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

This second edition of Work the Net is part of a publication series of the Academy for International Cooperation on topics related to international human capacity building.

All improvements in the second edition are based on network analyses and feedback from all over the world. Many networks reported their experience and provided us with feedback on the first edition. It was our aim to underline the character of the guide, providing orientation concerning fundamental network decisions as well as handy suggestions and useful hints for concrete aspects of network activities. Thanks to the authors of the first edition and to Skat Foundation, we were able to carefully revise the entire text and adapt 'Work the Net' to the network world of 2015.

Dr. Jan Schwaab, Lucia Auge and Bertha Camacho Tuckermann

Acknowledgements

The second edition of this guide is the result of two years of intensive work involving different people and organisations. First of all, we would like to express our thanks to the authors and editors of the first edition of 'Work the Net', Michael Glueck, Urs Karl Egger, Georg Buchholz, Greta Rana and Sagita Arhidani. Without the appropriate foundations established by the first edition, the second edition would not have been launched.

Special thanks to practitioners and researchers of Skat Foundation and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH who have reworked and revised the guide by sharing their experience with international networks and by providing relevant examples and background material.

Finally, we sincerely thank all authors whose work has contributed to this guide and who are listed in section 11. Without their work, we could not have come this far.

Similarly to the first edition, for the sake of illustration and emphasis, we have sometimes cited text directly from them, but we have omitted footnotes and quotation marks in the text to avoid a complicated academic style.

Preface to the first edition

Networks – powerful mechanisms for sustainable development

Networks are powerful mechanisms for sharing information and knowledge. They also promote communication and coordination to help achieve sustainable development. Networks act as effective catalysts for building up relationships and commitment among public and private stakeholders at local, national, regional, and international levels. They help to build trustful relationships as a basis for sharing information and knowledge, and serve as mutual learning and capacity-building mechanisms.

Networks are dynamic and bear witness to the fact that the whole is worth more than the sum of all its parts. They serve not only to bring multiple stakeholders together but also to activate the interface between knowledge and action.

The NeRO project

The parties who conceived of the project 'Networking, Information and Knowledge Management by Regional Organizations in the Field of Natural Resources Management' (NeRO) did so out of an interest in the multifarious possibilities presented by networks. Funded by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), work commenced by exchanging information about how regional development organisations use knowledge management approaches and instruments to share information: this sharing focused on the management of natural resources in the Asian context.

The project proved to be a learning process for all parties involved. A network approach was used to explore how information and knowledge are shared successfully among regional development organisations. A careful attempt to share selected information on the 'what', i.e. natural resources management, was part of the process.

As work progressed, a strongly felt need emerged that led the project team to explore the 'how' of networking in greater depth. To explore the 'how', three studies were carried out, and the results of these provided the basis for this networking guide. The studies were on planning, development and management of clearing house mechanisms, involvement of decision makers in networks, and communication, leadership and culture in networks.

This networking guide is only one of several products of the NeRO project. It is the result of an intensive process of enquiry and was written by networking practitioners for networking practitioners.

Background

This guide is based on the firm belief that the challenges which the NeRO project participants and other practitioners face in the management of natural resources in Asia, can be best addressed by sharing experiences and best practices via networks.

Sustainable management of natural resources requires innovation: innovation in thought and strategy. Pluralistic and dynamic systems that catalyse appropriate actions are of vital importance for this innovation. In these new ways of collaboration we must consider not only the cross-border dimensions of natural resources but also the role of involving multiple stakeholders at all levels, as one actor alone cannot address such challenges.

The view that networks offer an opportunity to bring together governments, the private sector, civil society, NGOs and international and multilateral organisations is gaining ground. Networks can help coordinate the actions of various stakeholders and can promote informed decision-making by enabling different actors to contribute to solving problems based on their mandates, roles, and strengths.

But can networks really meet such high expectations? Obviously, this depends on the context in which they are working, as well as a number of other factors. However, we are convinced that generally, there is considerable scope for improving the management of existing networks.

This guide was not planned from the inception of the project. Many of us perceived that networks are thought to be the panacea for managing communication aspects of development projects. Our impression was that many a decision to set up a network was made randomly, and that little designing or planning was involved. Only few networks seemed to be successful in the long run, and both time and resources were lost.

This is what prompted us to write this guide. We would like to share our insights with practitioners who are establishing new networks. Perhaps they can learn from our experiences, both positive and negative, and avoid reinventing the same old wheel!

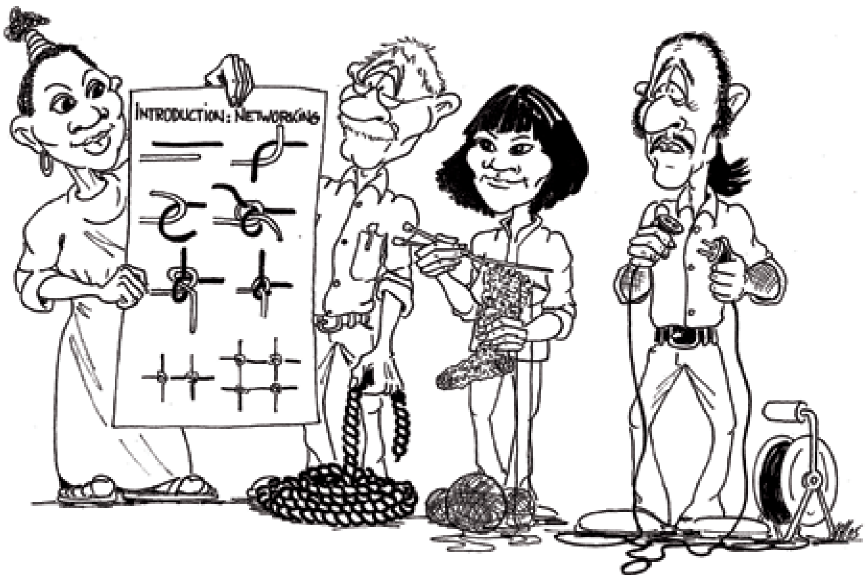
Michael Glueck, Urs Karl Egger, Georg Buchholz, Greta Rana, Sagita Arhidani

1 | Introduction

1.1 About this guide

This is a hands-on guide for setting up, structuring, managing, monitoring and evaluating networks efficiently and effectively. It focuses on the operational issues of networks and explains the most important aspects of making them work.

The guide addresses networking practitioners as well as other professionals wishing to establish a network. Hopefully, those of you involved in established networks will find some useful tips, too.



1.2 How to use it

Every network is unique, and this guide certainly is not meant to be a blueprint for networking. It covers aspects of networking that we think are important, suggests hands-on methods of proceeding, and gives ideas about how to network. We have tried to use an easy-to-understand and non-technical language in order to reach a wide audience.

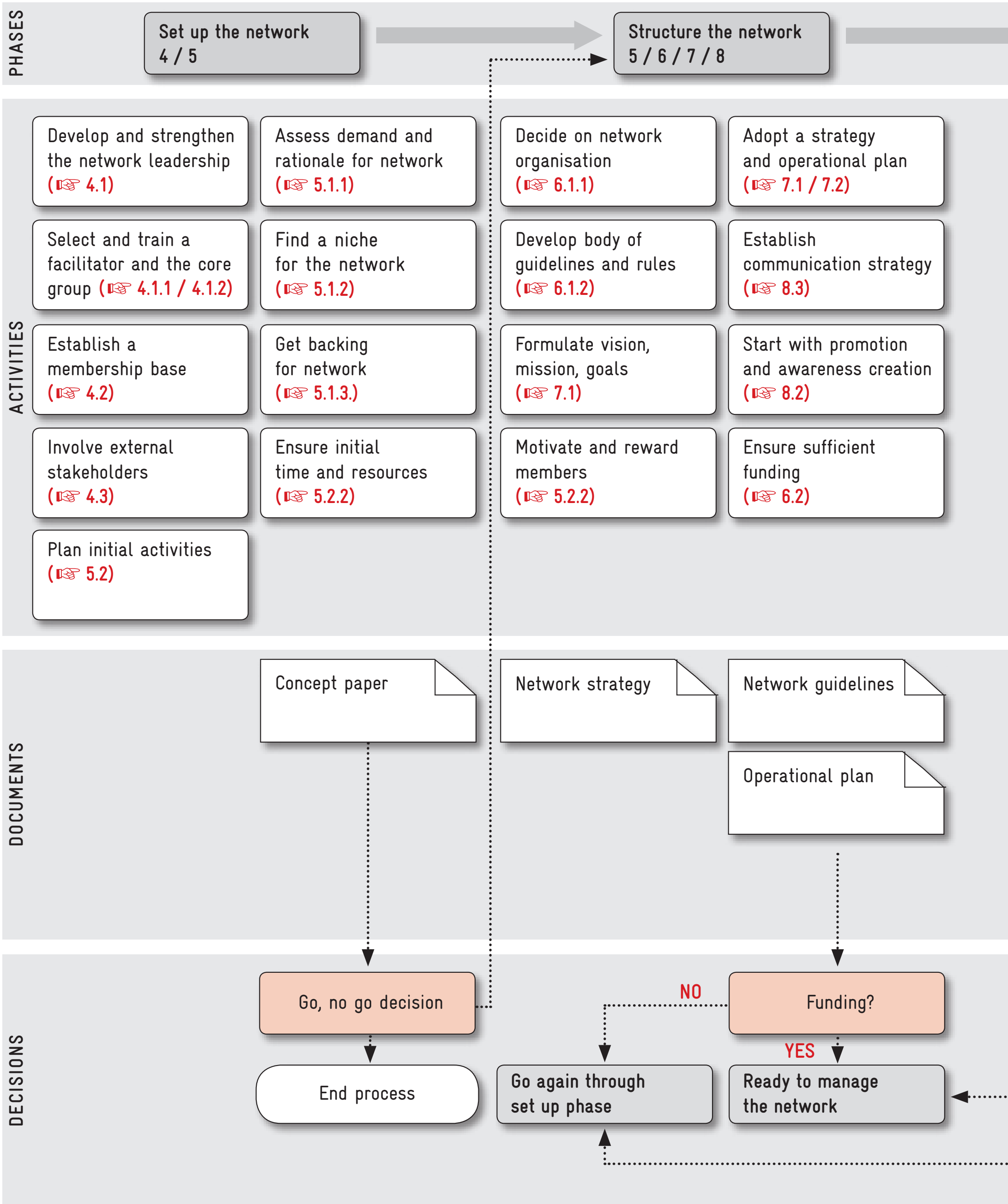
The guide has several aids to help you to access the information.

- **Flowchart**
  On pages 18 and 19 you will find a flowchart showing a typical process for establishing and managing a network. The figures link you to different sections providing specific information.
- **Checklists**
  The most important aspects of some sections are summarised in checklists.
- **Cross-references**
  Many aspects of networking relate to each other. The guide has cross-references leading to related information.
- **Examples**
  In order to illustrate better different aspects of network management, the guide presents real examples from existing networks.
- **Further resources**
  Bearing in mind that the guide is not exhaustive, we have included a section (11) on resources such as books, publications, and websites.

We hope you will find useful tips to help you meet the challenge of networking. Establishing and managing networks requires much more know-how and experience than this guide contains. The advice provided here will require your judgement and skills in project management and communication, and, above all, patience and persistence.

> "A fool can learn from his own experience, the wise learn from experience of others."
>
> Democritus

Flowchart
for establishing and managing networks



Manage the network
6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10

Evaluate the network
10

Define and launch core services and projects (☞ 7.5)

Promote network activites (☞ 8.2)

Promote knowledge sharing and learning (☞ 8.2)

Control quality of services and projects (☞ 7.8)

Facilitate actively communication (☞ 8.1)

Maintain information and communication tools (☞ 9)

Be innovative and evolve continuously (☞ 6.3)

Monitor network's performance regularly (☞ 10)

Evaluate network (☞ 10)

Promotion materials, flyers, website

Network budget(s)

Operational and financial reports

Monitoring report

Service portfolio

Evaluation positive?

YES

Make adjustments

Go again through structuring phase

NO

Re-invent the network

NO

Join another network or close down the network

2 | Why networks?

Networks are dynamic and bear witness to the fact that the whole is worth more than the sum of all its parts. They not only bring multiple stakeholders together but are also an interface between knowledge and action. The reasons for setting up a network vary depending on your needs and interests. The benefits of networks are plentiful and they have to be taken into consideration when deciding what type of network you will set up. The benefit associated with networks are explained below.

2.1 Benefits of networks

Networks create a number of benefits for their members and their stakeholders section 5.3.2:

- Individual gains
- Community building
- Sharing and learning
- Coordination
- Joint action

The table below illustrates key aspects to consider when deciding which of these three types of networks could be set up: Informal Networks, Communities or Formal networks. More detail about these three types of networks, including their definition, is presented in section 3.1.

Perceived benefits	Informal Networks	Communities	Formal networks
Individual gains	■ Recognition ■ Status	■ Recognition ■ Status ■ Professional development	■ Recognition ■ Status ■ Professional development ■ Profile
Community building	■ Sense of belonging ■ Social ties ■ Personal connections	■ Sense of belonging ■ Social ties ■ Personal connections	■ Sense of belonging ■ Social ties ■ Personal connections ■ Partnerships
Sharing and learning	■ Interests ■ Perspectives ■ Ideas ■ Information ■ Experience ■ Know-how	■ Interests ■ Perspectives ■ Purpose ■ Needs ■ Objectives and goals ■ Information ■ Experience ■ Know-how ■ Expertise ■ Innovative solutions	■ Interests ■ Perspectives ■ Purpose ■ Vision ■ Objectives and goals ■ Information ■ Experience ■ Know-how ■ Expertise ■ Innovative solutions
Coordination	■ Access to people	■ Better division of work and responsibilities ■ Alignment of efforts ■ Access to resources	■ Better division of work and responsibilities ■ Alignment of efforts ■ Synergies ■ Infrastructure for widespread engagement ■ Pooling of resources ■ Resource optimisation
Collaboration and joint action	■ Promote ideas	■ Agenda setting ■ Influence policy making	■ Advocacy ■ Influence policy making ■ Influence political agendas ■ Power of persuasion ■ Coherence

2.2 Contributions of networks to the vision of sustainable development

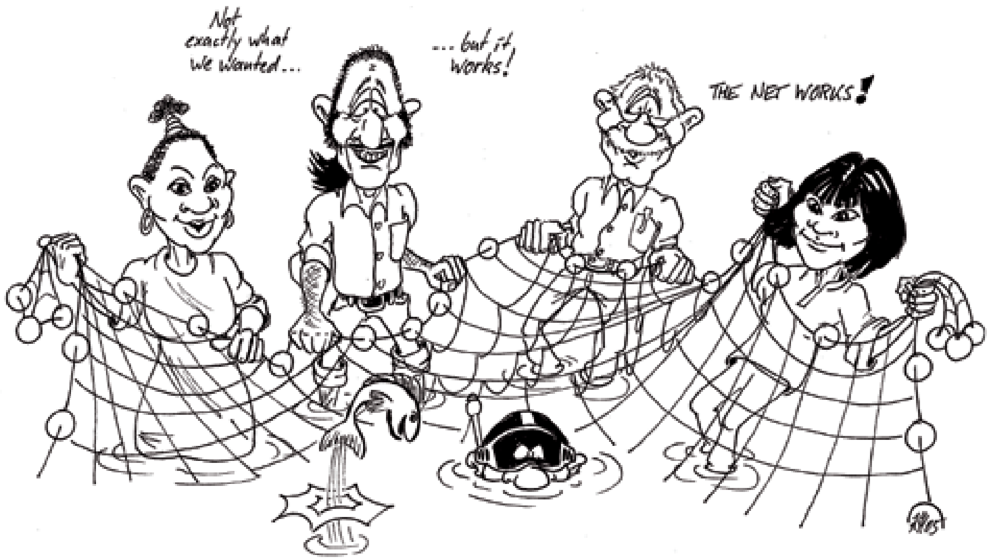
Networks contribute to the vision of sustainable development by:

- Providing access to information, knowledge and scientific evidence that can be utilized for research, education, and the promotion of relevant topics
- Supporting practitioners to learn from each other and avoid re-inventing the wheel
- Allowing exchange of knowledge among professionals and decision makers from various countries, regions and different levels in organisational hierarchies
- Providing researchers and practitioners with access to a wealth of information, stimulating them to develop nationwide surveys or further research
- Improving the skills of Human Resources and developing a culture of decision making based on empirical evidence
- Connecting actors and resources in order to create greater impact than an individual or organisation can achieve on its own
- Promoting certain topics for policy making
- Enabling more balanced policy decisions

Networks may create a number of benefits, but one ought to keep things in perspective – networks are certainly not the panacea for all information and knowledge sharing problems. The benefits will only be felt if the network is managed in an effective and efficient way.

3 | About networks

Networks can be defined in different ways. They are a set of formal or informal relations among and between people and organisations. These relations are open and enable the establishment of communities that create and share knowledge. Also, networks are dynamic and complex systems of interconnected people contributing to coordination and joint action. This extended group of people share similar interests or concerns and interact with each other, remaining in informal contact for mutual assistance or support. Every network is unique to some extent. The members influence its establishment and this, coupled with its history, affects its management.



3.1 Different types of networks

Countless definitions and categories of networks exist and there is no definition that fits all of them. In this guide, three basic categories are distinguished: informal networks, communities and formal networks. These categories do not represent all aspects of networking and some networks have characteristics that include all three categories. However, these categories are useful to work with and to apply in practice.

3.1.1 Informal networks

Informal networks consist of informal individual, personal and amicable relations between businesspeople, peers, friends, or among members of a larger family. Typically, informal networks have no deliberately defined purpose. They grow organically and, in most cases, are not actively planned and managed. They play an important part in daily private and working lives: they are recreational, can yield information, ideas and experiences and render assistance in times of need. They form the basis on which communities or formal networks are built and often, but not always, informal networks operate on a short-term agenda.

EXAMPLE 1: ALUMNIPORTAL DEUTSCHLAND

The Alumniportal Deutschland (www.alumniportal-deutschland.org) is an informal network designed to promote networking and sharing of information among individuals from around the world who have studied, worked or conducted research in Germany. Anyone who has received education or training at a German institution abroad is welcome to become a member of the portal. It also offers a platform for companies, universities and organisations operating at international level who wish to stay or get in touch with alumni that studied in Germany.

It offers its users the opportunity to discuss specialist issues, develop their skills and benefit from the expertise of others. The network is free of charge and the online platform is a tool for communication, innovation and collaboration, helping to promote long-term international cooperation in the areas of culture, education and science. For these alumni, the Alumniportal Deutschland is a worldwide informal network and partner for success, allowing them to benefit from valuable contacts, innovations, career opportunities and co-operation.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH together with the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Goethe-Institut operate the Alumniportal Deutschland with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and supported by the Federal Foreign Office.

3.1.2 Communities

Communities are groups of people or individuals who interact over time and are bound together by a shared need, interest or purpose. This provides the cornerstone for knowledge networks. Typically, communities are open to anyone who wants to participate. Members join communities to voluntarily share and develop their knowledge, solve common problems and support each other in finding answers. Communities offer the possibility of aligning efforts with like-minded individuals, enabling better division of work and responsibilities. Members have access to shared resources and have simple norms for determining access to those resources. There is also a shared context of social conventions, language, and values.

Communities are dynamic and evolving. However, even though they are in permanent change, many communities allow long-term interactions. Often communities exist within larger formal networks. Participants are often widely dispersed, so communities typically exist online but might also develop off-line components. Either members of an online community seek to meet face-to-face or they start as face-to-face communities and then a part or all of the community continues interacting online. Different types of media are used, depending on what is most convenient for the given community. There are different types of communities, the most common are:

- **Communities of purpose**

These are communities where members join to campaign over a particular issue. These issues can include, for example, human rights or environmental campaigns. These types of communities aim at bringing about change and are committed to achieving improvements in topics of concern to society.

EXAMPLE 2: USHAHIDI

Ushahidi (www.ushahidi.com), which means 'testimony' in Swahili, was a website that was initially developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election fallout at the beginning of 2008. Since then, 'Ushahidi' has become the 'Ushahidi Platform', a community that fosters collaboration of Kenyan journalists during a time of crisis. The original purpose was to map incidents of violence and peace efforts throughout the country based on reports submitted via the web and mobile phones. Their platform had 45.000 users in Kenya, and was the catalyst for the realisation that there was a need for a global community with a similar purpose, which could be used by others around the world.

Today Ushahidi's mission is to empower people to make an impact with open source technologies, cross-sector partnerships and ground-breaking ventures.

Ushahidi is responsible for founding the iHub, a technology hub in Nairobi which has helped build the technology community in East Africa, with over 14.000 members. It serves as an umbrella for 150 tech start-ups that have created over 1.000 jobs.

Communities of practice

A community of practice refers to a group of people with a common interest in a specific area of knowledge or competence and who are willing to learn together over a period of time, to develop and improve their practice and expertise.

Regardless of the mode of interaction, the traditional notion of a community of practice is that it emerges from a work-related field, and that members volunteer to join it because they have common activities and the motivation to share experiences, insights, knowledge, best practices and solutions to common problems. They are focused on enhancing their professional capabilities and, in the process, strengthening their organisations or institutions.

EXAMPLE 3: ict@innovation

The ict@innovation (www.ict-innovation.fossfa.net) community of practice builds capacities in African small and medium information and communication technology (ICT) enterprises and supports Free and Open Source Software (FOSS). ict@innovation aims to encourage the growth of African ICT industries through three main actions:

- spreading FOSS business models for enterprises in Africa
- fostering FOSS certification and
- supporting innovative local FOSS applications for social and economic development

The community of practice focuses on Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) as a key technology to drive innovation, add local value and create sustainable and affordable ICT-solutions. ict@innovation aims to enhance regional networking and to strengthen consulting capacities of regional and national ICT associations, training institutions, as well as of other relevant change agents.

Over the past years, 1.200 African experts have joined forces to create business and learning opportunities with Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) in Africa through ict@innovation. Two community-built training manuals (on African FOSS Business Models and Linux System Administration) have been integrated in a number of curricula of African information technology (IT) faculties, business schools and training institutes. The 600 pages of free, high-quality learning material in English and French are in high demand with learners all over the continent, with at least 13,600 copies in use as of today.

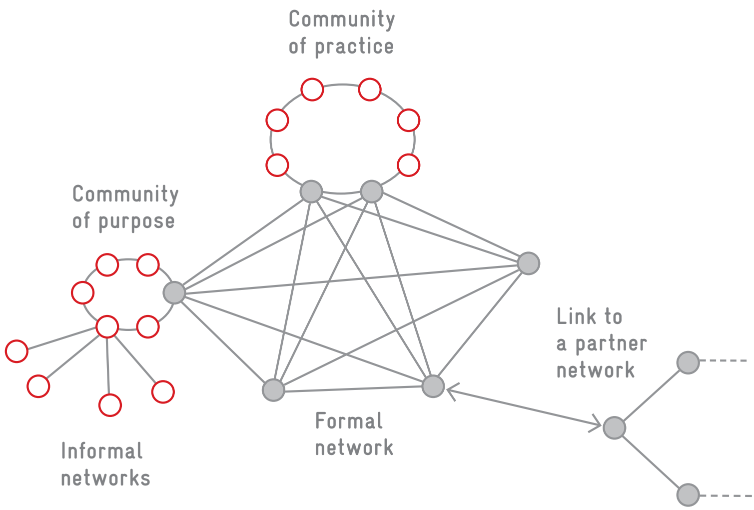
As part of a bold capacity-building move, more than 200 trainers have been qualified to teach the dynamics of open source as a business in Africa. Many of them are offering regular demand-oriented local IT-courses on key issues such as 'African Business Models in Open Source' or 'Low-cost Certification in Linux System Administration'. As of today, ict@innovation trainers have reached out to a recorded number of well over 600 IT-entrepreneurs, students and industry leaders.

3.1.3 Formal networks

In this guide, formal networks are defined as interrelated groups of people or organisations that are established according to a specific design or need. These networks can also be embedded within organisations (☞ section 3.3) and can reach out beyond them. The members of the network share a common vision, objectives and rules, and they carry out a set of common activities. A formal network may even have a legal form (☞ section 6.3.1) or be transformed into an association. In contrast to communities, formal networks do not only respond to the needs and interests of members. Rather, they also have the goal of achieving changes in their own contexts, e.g. shaping the political agenda of countries, doing research-based advocacy or influencing policymaking.

Formal networks require commitment from the member organisations beyond the participation of individuals and experts. Since participants in the network may also represent their organisations, they are held accountable for their work not only by their colleagues, but also by the organisations they represent. Thus, organisations are inclined to assume responsibility of the activities where they are involved. Additionally, if the organisations are committed to the network, they will be more likely to continue this work even if there are staff changes, and to make financial or in-kind contributions. Formal networks may also include communities for certain topics or issues that are of interest to members or others.

FIGURE 1: **INFORMAL NETWORKS, COMMUNITIES AND FORMAL NETWORKS**

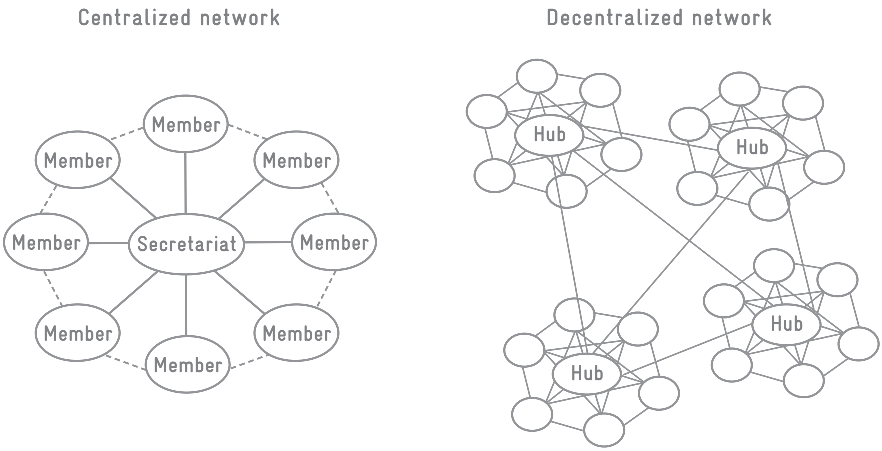


This guide focuses mainly on communities and formal networks; however, to draw the line between these different types of networks is not always simple. Networks exist within a continuum from informal to formal structures that are evolving and changing. Similarly, there are some networks that have a time-limited scope; they are created with one specific purpose and when this purpose is achieved, the network dissolves (☞ section 6.3). Besides, there are other types of structures, such as associations, clubs, and federations that work in ways related to networks and may or may not consider themselves as networks, depending on their scope, nature and objectives.

3.1.4 Centralised and decentralised networks

A network can be centrally organised, which means that it has a strong core or secretariat with close connections to its members. Other networks are characterised by marked decentralisation. The connections within and between the members are strong and the role of the core is less significant. Generally speaking, the bigger the network is, the more decentralised it is likely to be.

FIGURE 2: **CENTRALISED AND DECENTRALISED NETWORKS**



Between these basic forms, there are many hybrid forms of networks. For example, networks can have different levels of decentralization. In some cases, networks are highly decentralised, functioning very organically, and members connect with each other without the need of a facilitator or a secretariat. These type of networks are also called self-governing communities. In other cases, networks are spread throughout the world and have organised regional or topic-related sub-networks, chapters or hubs. They might have a secretariat that acts as moderator of the regional hubs. These hubs have the advantage of being closer to the members in their region or being more cohesive in terms of focus; they allow for more diversity, as they can provide services in local languages, and members are closer to potential public and private funding organisations in that region.

3.2. Examples of formal networks

The following three examples illustrate different type of formal networks:

EXAMPLE 4: MIDDLE EAST NETWORK ON INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Middle East Network on Innovative Teaching and Learning, MENIT (www.menit.me), was established in 2011 to respond to regional educational needs and to support educational experts in their efforts to improve graduates' capabilities in critical analysis and creative thinking. In addition, MENIT aims at encouraging experts to exchange information on innovative practices and the implementation of joint educational projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. With over 300 educational experts and 500 members, MENIT provides a variety of exchange realms that are based on voluntary and individual membership. Moreover, through the so-called Theme Groups, MENIT carries out research projects to address the gaps and the educational needs of the region. An annually elected Steering Committee guarantees the network's independence from any governmental or party affiliation.

The main outcome of MENIT is the collective work of the Theme Groups. Since MENIT is based on individual membership, the network relies heavily on its members to transfer the acquired knowledge and research results back to their institutions.

In addition to the work within the Theme Groups, MENIT members come together once a year at a Regional Workshop to exchange their experiences and knowledge, to work on key topics of mutual interest and to present their results. The Regional Workshops also aim at mainstreaming innovative practices from the region to present them to high-level officials in order to replicate them elsewhere in MENIT countries.

EXAMPLE 5: ALLIANCE FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The Alliance for Financial Inclusion – AFI (www.afi-global.org) is a global network of financial policymakers from developing and emerging countries, working together to increase access to appropriate financial services for the poor.
AFI's unique peer-to-peer learning model encourages and enables financial policymakers to interact and exchange knowledge. This collaborative learning results in the building of a more comprehensive knowledge base on financial inclusion and the subsequent formulation and implementation of effective policy by members in their home countries. AFI is led by its members and partners, central banks and other financial regulatory institutions from developing countries. AFI's members serve to give voice to the opportunities and challenges facing those people who do not have access to banking systems in developing nations.
The network includes members from more than 90 countries, working together to advance its mission of accelerating the adoption of innovative financial policy solutions. The ultimate aim is making financial services more accessible to the world's 2.5 billion unbanked people.
AFI achieves its mission by initiating several types of activities that promote financial inclusion, for example the provision of grants and a policy champion programme.

EXAMPLE 6: SUSTAINABLE SANITATION ALLIANCE

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance – SuSanA (www.susana.org) is an open international alliance with 247 partner organisations who share a common vision on sustainable sanitation and are dedicated to understanding viable and sustainable sanitation solutions. SuSanA was created in 2007, one year before the United Nations' International Year of Sanitation with the aim of promoting innovation and best practices in policy, programming and implementation. It brings together practitioners, policy makers, researchers and academics from different levels. The structure of SuSanA consists of individual members, partner organisations, working groups, a core group, and the secretariat. All partner organisations participate on a voluntary basis. SuSanA has two large meetings per year and also organises side events at major conferences.
The thematic working groups have been established in order to cover a variety of different sanitation aspects and to provide outputs that underline the problems and opportunities of these aspects. One of the thematic working groups, for example, aims to create a global network to accelerate and influence capacity development in the sanitation sector. Another working group aims at raising awareness about sustainable sanitation approaches and its prospective contribution to reduce dependence on imported or fossil fuel energy sources.

3.3 Networks within organisations

Networks are continuously changing and evolving in a creative and flexible manner. They differ from organisations, companies or public institutions in several ways:

- The relationships among members of formal networks are significantly less hierarchical; thus, members do not feel compelled to respond to any form of line management. Members need to establish a relationship of trust and reciprocity. The culture of giving and receiving is at the core of every network.
- The members of networks remain autonomous. They are providers of knowledge and services to other network members and stakeholders of the network. At the same time, they are users of services offered by the network and other network members.
- Networks are very similar to living organisms. So they are less controllable than an organisation or public institution. Often networks are developed in an ad hoc way by a group of people coming together for a particular purpose. This group then attracts others and the community evolves in an organic way rather than being planned in advance.

Many organisations set up internal networks to enable sharing and learning between different organisational functions and units, as well as hierarchical levels and departments. These networks support organisations to better identify people and resources for efficient problem solving, and they allow staff to connect with and learn from each other.

It is among the challenges faced by internal networks that their horizontal nature becomes a cause of tension with the line management or hierarchy that is characteristic of organisations. Also, as seen before, networks need special attention and if they are not introduced properly, staff can view participation as an imposition rather than acknowledging the comparative advantages of networking. In order to make the most out of networks within organisations, senior managers have to be convinced of their value added, have to be committed to them and have to establish the appropriate incentives presented in section 5.3.3 to ensure that the staff can prioritise their active participation.

EXAMPLE 7: GIZ SECTOR NETWORKS

Sector networks are platforms for the organised exchange of professional knowledge and experience and for cooperation between GIZ experts in all business areas in the partner countries and at head office in Germany. GIZ has 16 regional and 2 global sector networks, involving around 2,500 professionals worldwide, including head office, international and local experts, technical advisors and selected project partners and consultants. Some networks aim at sharing information and experiences. Every sector network has a steering committee that manages the network. More information about GIZ's sector networks can be found in section 11.1.24. Two examples for GIZ sector networks are presented below:

- The Network International Cooperation in Conflicts and Disasters (NICD) is a global network of projects working in the field of security, reconstruction and peace. Currently, there are 65 member projects and more than 450 GIZ professionals in the network. A steering committee and a network coordinator are responsible for the implementation of a wide range of services, like the implementation of communities of practice, a newsletter, a scholarship programme for national personnel, organisation of regular network conferences, summer schools and the steering of NICD ambassadors, colleagues who serve as an interface between NICD and other GIZ sector networks.

- The Sector Network Good Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa (GGA) is GIZ's platform for knowledge management, horizontal and vertical learning as well as joint conceptual work between governance programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 60 member programmes support governance reform processes at sub-national, national, regional (Regional Economic Communities) and continental level (African Union). One of the GGA's new instruments to foster cooperation across and within the thematic clusters is the Innovation Fund. The Innovation Fund has been developed to continue past exchanges in the network, to foster innovation around demand-driven ideas, to align discussions towards more solid outputs and in turn allowing for a more efficient, results-oriented use of public funds.

4 | Get started by involving the right people in the right way

Setting up and subsequently developing and managing a network are hard work. More often than not, the amount of work and time required to establish a network is completely underestimated. Committed network leadership with sufficient resources can help to make networks successful. Many networks start from existing informal networks and become more structured and organised over time. In other cases, networks start out of nothing. Some come together for a short period of time, whereas others might have a long term perspective.

A common challenge is to bring different people together and to stimulate their participation in such a way that they not only see the benefits of being a member but also of actively participating in it (☞ section 5.3). A skilled facilitator supported by a committed core group of members plays an important role in managing the network and motivating the members.

The setting up and management of networks should take into consideration their life cycle (☞ section 6.3). In that sense, it is important to remain flexible and ready to seize the right opportunities for letting your network grow and develop.

4.1 Ensure committed and shared leadership

Leadership in networks is often the result of the commitment of core volunteers who take responsibility of the activities, supported by a facilitator. In some other cases, core members manage the network on a rotational basis. Whatever the type of leadership a network might have, an important characteristic of successful network leadership is that **it includes both centralised and distributed forms of leadership**. That means that the facilitator should not be the only person in charge of network activities.

On the contrary, leadership roles should be distributed according to the activities or issues addressed by the network. However, the fact that leadership in networks is distributed does not mean that there is no need for a facilitator. The facilitator plays an important role in ensuring that the different 'leaders' share and work together in an effective way.

Distributed and shared leadership in networks implies that:

- There is a set of functions which must be carried out by a group of engaged members.
- The distribution of tasks, responsibilities and activities shapes the management of the network.
- Coordination, team work and extensive use of technology are intrinsic to the way leadership is shared in networks.

Distributed or shared leadership is an outcome of cooperation between individuals. It manifests itself in a shared direction and mutual commitment to a particular cause, practice or activity. Often if leadership is shared and distributed between several members of a network, the network's effectiveness increases. Thus, it is essential that the network looks for and identifies different types of leaders or 'network activists', who have different skills and aptitudes, which fit a broad set of network functions. The individual qualities and characteristics of these network activists may vary, but as a group these should encompass:

Qualities	Characteristics
■ Inspiring ■ Creative ■ Knowledgeable ■ Committed ■ Confident ■ Responsible	■ Visionaries ■ Catalysers ■ Coordinators ■ Connectors ■ Communicators ■ Doers ■ Entrepreneurs ■ Movers and shakers

Once you have identified network members with these leadership qualities and characteristics, you are ready to set up the network's core group. It is important to keep in mind that the network should continue building the leadership capacities of these and new members through time. It is also advisable that they receive leadership training on a regular basis.

4.1.1 Core group

A successful network depends on a core group committed to building it up and propelling the whole process forward. If networks have emerged from informal networks that already existed, there will be few people who would be interested in formalising and managing the network. Keep the core group small: three to five people is ideal. This group should share the idea and motivation for having a network.

During the start-up phase, you will have to tackle many unexpected and new challenges, but a well-functioning core group will find ways to cope with them. The composition of the core group is also crucial because support for the network will depend on how well recognised and relevant its experience is. You should consider the expertise and experience of the core group on topics relevant to the network and complement them if necessary. Ideally, the professional experience of the core group should be complementary and cover the following: project managers, administrators, communicators, promoters, fundraisers, and technical specialists. Also, it is important to recognise their availability and distribute tasks and responsibilities accordingly.

A very important step that should not be neglected is the *continuous strengthening* of the core group by providing enough time and opportunity to socialise and get to know each other. Plan a get-together and take the time to discuss how you can best work together and what expectations and limitations the core group might have. The time you take to establish a dynamic core group will be well invested! The network will have to rely on the core group not only on an everyday basis, but also in difficult situations the network is going to face.

4.1.2 Facilitator

As soon as a group of people work together or communicate with each other, good facilitation is necessary to ensure effective and efficient communication flows. In networks, the facilitator can ensure that communication and sharing among members is successful. Thus, the network facilitator is a process moderator and a catalyst of ideas.

Facilitation is a competency that requires knowledge, skills and specific qualities. Thus, facilitators should be *carefully selected and trained*. The network facilitator should have a thorough understanding of the network's thematic area, but should also be a good manager and communicator. The activities of the facilitator require time and dedication; it is important not to underestimate this role and to consider that time is necessary for fulfilling these functions as well as possible.

The network facilitator is in charge of communication both among members and with external stakeholders. A good network facilitator will make sure that: members are motivated and well informed about network activities, members interact with each other in a systematic way and that the core group works together effectively. Likewise, the network facilitator can delegate activities to network members, encouraging them to be active.

Depending on the size of the network, the facilitator might carry out a number of the following activities:

- Coordination of network projects
- Updating membership records and profiles
- Updating operational plans
- Monitoring of planned and on-going projects
- Coordination of network promotion
- Developing, providing and maintaining the website
- Facilitation of face-to-face and online meetings, workshops, conferences and discussions
- Preparation of meetings
- Synthesising key issues raised
- Motivation of members to contribute to the network and to take initiative
- Book-keeping of the network

Even in smaller networks, the role of the facilitator is still important. Although communities may have less structure than formal networks, the communication among its members should be fostered and documented, and community activities should be organised.

CHECKLIST 1: ESSENTIALS OF NETWORK FACILITATION

Knowledge
- Thematic area of the network
- Communication mechanisms, tools and technologies
- Virtual and face-to-face facilitation techniques

Skills
- Organisation and management
- Clear verbal and written communication
- Good listening and intervention
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Time management

Qualities
- Tolerance and flexibility
- Friendliness
- Innovation and creativity
- Enthusiasm and motivation
- Sensibility to deal with different types of people
- Self-confidence without arrogance

In more formalised networks, a secretariat can be established to assume the role of the facilitator. The secretariat will become the focal point that ties together the individual strands of the network. Usually, the secretariat is headed by a Coordinator, an Executive Director, or a Managing Director. Section 11.3.1 presents an example of terms of reference for a network coordinator.

The network secretariat should be kept small, with a minimum of staff. There are three reasons for this:
- Costs can be kept within certain limits.
- Funds for administration can be secured more reliably, as they are often covered by overheads.
- Governance issues are easier to manage.
- It can be flexible and quick to respond to new opportunities.

If the secretariat is too big, it will crowd out other network members and the notion of shared leadership might not apply. In a successful network, the members should bear the overall responsibility for its activities, not the secretariat. After all, this is the basic idea of a network!

Example 8:
KEY SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS OF THE RURAL WATER SUPPLY NETWORK (RWSN)

Networking and communications

- Quality assurance of RWSN services (e.g. e-discussions, webinars, synthesis documents)
- Management of RWSN publication process (including quality assurance)
- Management of RWSN's membership database
- Communication with the entire RWSN membership (individual and institutional)
- Maintaining and updating RWSN's online platforms and preparing the newsletter
- Management and quality assurance of translations
- Organising RWSN Forums (every five years)
- Liaison with key agencies involved in RWSN

Support for themes and topics

- Support on networking methods and application of the Theory of Change
- Facilitating exchange between theme and topic leaders
- Seeking opportunities where RWSN can valuably contribute to improving rural water supplies
- Coordinating network inputs to international conferences

Management

- Keeping up with innovations that could foster better networking and communication
- Encouraging others to take the lead in their areas of interest
- Proactively engaging with people and organisations beyond the network to find opportunities for collaboration
- Drafting RWSN policies and processes as agreed by the Executive Steering Committee
- Coordinating strategy development
- Collating and editing inputs and preparing RWSN's reports
- Handling enquiries and referring to specialists or other networks
- Organising the RWSN Executive Steering Committee meetings and follow-up

Once the leadership of the network is clearly defined, the facilitator and/or the secretariat should establish a membership base and nurture the relationship with external stakeholders.

4.2 Establish a membership base

Members are the heart of any network. Success and failure depend on their motivation and their commitment to the network. The membership should be carefully planned and managed in the initial stages.

A crucial question to be answered when you set up a network is that of who are to be its members: individuals, organisations, other networks – or a combination of all three?

- Networks and communities have **individuals** as members such as technical resource persons, consultants or important decision makers.
- Other networks have **organisations** or other **networks** as members. These organisational members can have one or two representatives in charge of participating in network activities.

4.2.1 Build relationships with potential members

During the period when the details of the network are being worked out, the core group should begin to establish relationships with potential members. These contacts are important as they help you to learn more about their needs and interests in joining a network. Potential members are a valuable source of ideas, support and contact with decision makers. They are the foundation of the future network membership. In order to encourage active participation in the network and the commitment to share information and knowledge, potential members should be interested in the topic of the network. Some ways of building your membership base are:

- Participating in face-to-face events
- Participating in third party forums or similar networks
- Word-of-mouth
- Building up the reputation of your network
- Engaging champions who can and want to promote network activities in their organisations or informal networks

4.2.2 Formal or informal membership

In many networks, membership status is quite loosely defined. As long as members do not have to pay a fee or fulfil other formal requirements, membership status is not too important.

However, if the network is to grow, membership should be managed. Every potential member has to make a clear decision about joining the network or not. Membership can take the shape of a signature on a membership form or signing up into an electronic list.

In the case of an organisation, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or a Statement of Common Interest or Intent between the organisation and the network could be signed.

Networks can have different *types of membership:*

- Regular members who subscribe to a discussion list, receive the newsletter and participate in network activities
- Voting members who have the right to participate in decision making processes and elect board or steering committee members
- Honorary members who have especially contributed to the success of the network
- Associate members who are not regular or voting members but receive information from the network

4.2.3 Number of members

A question many networks face concerns the number of members. How many members should a network have? There is no set answer to this question.

In the beginning the network should not overstretch itself and the number of members should be *kept small*. This will ease collaboration and enable a dynamic start.

Afterwards, every network has to consider the pros and cons of its size. A network with numerous members has a wide outreach. With too many members, however, the familiarity that creates trust and commitment could be lost. If a network is too small, its impact may be limited and people may be excluded from the knowledge and information that the network generates.

One possibility is to have different types of membership, as described above. In the end, however, every network has to find its own balance between openness and restriction, by taking into account its governance mechanisms and executive structure.

4.2.4 Criteria for membership

Networks should set up clear criteria for different types of membership. Some of these criteria are given below:

- Shared commitment to the goals of the network
- Track record in the thematic area of the network
- Contributions to the network, such as information and knowledge, expertise, informal networks
- Financial and administrative commitments to the network
- Reputation

4.2.5 Varying commitment of members

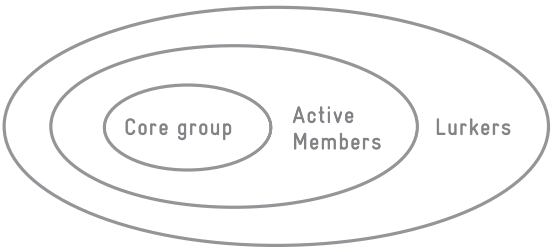
The general rule for every network should be that all members *not only receive information from the network but also contribute* to its activities. This is a difficult goal to attain and the reality in most networks is that some members are more active than others. Typically, there are three forms of membership engagement in network activities, from rarely involved to very involved. The following table presents the degrees of member engagement in networks (☞ section 11.1.26):

EXAMPLE 9: DEGREES OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN NETWORKS

Rarely involved	Occasionally involved	Very involved
■ Occasionally read contributions ■ Rarely contribute to discussions or activities	■ Read contributions on regular basis ■ Search for specific resources based on need ■ Contribute when there is something of particular interest	■ Read postings and materials circulated ■ Participate regularly in discussions, activities and conversations ■ Contribute ideas, resources and work

Based on these forms of engagement, a simple model has been developed that demonstrates the commitment of members and can be applied to many different networks. This model distinguishes three layers: in the centre, there is the *core group*, this often includes the group that has set up the network and feels responsible for its fate – they tend to be very involved. The next circle comprises *active members* who are involved in the network activities but are not members of the core group. In the outer circles are the members that 'lurk'.

FIGURE 3: CORE GROUP, MEMBERS AND LURKERS



Most of the time, *lurkers* are *not* directly involved in network activities but will rather tend to observe what the network is doing.

Experience also shows that *lurkers* can serve as important connectors to other networks, people or organisations.

Remember the 90:9:1 Rule of member involvement that applies to most networks: 90 per cent passive members lurking, 9 per cent active by reacting and commenting to content and only 1 per cent 'producing' content.

There are reasons for what appears to be 'lurking'. Some members may be more passive because of a lack of time or resources, a shy personality or difficulties in understanding the language, or lack of interest in current activities. Other members might be reluctant to contribute because they might be concerned about having their opinions attributed to their organisation. Others might have the interest in learning and listening only instead of participating actively. The moment they are ready, they will also become active members.

If the network is vibrant and the facilitator engaging, at a later stage, those same members may become more involved and make valuable contributions. There are different ways in which the facilitator and the core group can make sure that network members become more actively engaged in network activities. Some ideas are presented in section 5.3.

4.2.6 Know your members

Maintaining good relationships with members requires a good understanding of their professional background, expertise, interests, needs and priorities as well as their availability. Networks should provide services tailored to add real value for them.

A network can only care for its members if they know each other. So you need an updated membership list, database or a members' profile section on a website, where they can register and provide information about themselves. An example of a membership profile is presented below.

Example 10: MEMBER PROFILE FROM THE ALUMNIPORTAL DEUTSCHLAND

When setting up a member profile on an online platform, members should have the option to select the services they prefer, like an electronic newsletter or an electronic discussion forum, for example. In case a network does not provide the option of setting up a profile on an online platform, using a simple e-mail distribution list, a database or a membership form could work. In both cases, make sure that members accept the fact that their personal data is shared with others and that they are aware of the possibility of withdrawing from such distribution lists if they wish to. It is also important to consider that membership profiles and databases are not static. Members often change their professional status, their jobs, addresses or even countries; thus, the profile or data base has to be well managed. It is the role of the facilitator or secretariat to keep databases and profiles as up-to-date as possible and to encourage members to provide their most current information in case of changes. This task takes time and resources; thus, it should not be underestimated.

In section 11.3.2 you will find an example of a network registration form that you can use as a format for getting to know your members from the moment they register.

CHECKLIST 2: ESTABLISH A MEMBERSHIP BASE

- Build relationships with potential members
- Define the type of membership: formal or informal
- Determine the number of members
- Define criteria for membership
- Accept varying levels of commitment
- Know your members and set up a membership profile

4.3 Involve external stakeholders

Networks have to care actively for their external stakeholders. They can be potential members, funders and advocates of the network's mission. They can also have a positive influence on the network.

4.3.1 Know your stakeholders

First of all, you need to know who the most important external stakeholders for the network are. Conduct a stakeholder analysis or draw a map of the network's principal stakeholders working in the same or similar topical area. To do this, the following steps are recommended:

Identify and list relevant stakeholders

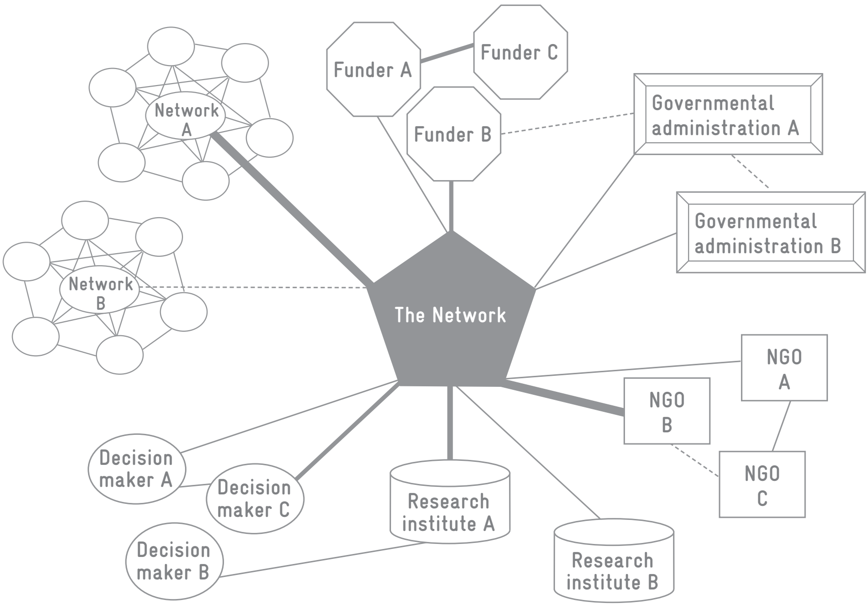
Together with the core group, make a list of all relevant groups, organisations and individuals that the network has an interest in and which the network wants to influence with its activities and services:

- Research institutes, formal networks
- International organisations
- Public administrations and political leaders
- Public and private funding sources
- Private sector
- Civil society organisations and NGOs
- Media: press, television, radio

Stakeholder map

Mapping stakeholders is an exercise that will help you define how to engage with the listed stakeholders (see figure 4). Put the network in the middle and group the stakeholders around the network according to importance (for example, place important players close to the network in the middle, key actors a little further away and less important actors towards the outer edge of the circle). Draw a line between the stakeholders. The thicker the line is, the more important the relationship is. The stakeholder map can also help you identify indirect relationships. Maybe you do not have a direct link to a decision maker, but a good relationship with a research institute that maintains a close relationship with this decision maker.

FIGURE 4: **EXAMPLE OF A STAKEHOLDER MAP**



Understand stakeholder perspectives and interests

Once you have the map of stakeholders, it is useful to carry out further analysis to better understand their relevance in relation to the network: the perspective they offer; their relationships between each other and the relationship or potential relationship to the network. The following questions might help you to analyse and understand the identified stakeholders better:

- Does the stakeholder have information, knowledge, experience or expertise on issues relevant for the network?
- How willing is the stakeholder to engage with the network? How does the stakeholder demonstrate that willingness?
- How much influence does the stakeholder have or could have in relationship to the network? What kind of influence does this stakeholder exert over the network?
- How important is it for the network to have this stakeholder on board? What is the stakeholder's potential or current contribution to the network?

For this exercise, it is important to establish a 4 x4 matrix where the axes are labelled 'low and high'. The x axis should be the 'level of interest' and the y axis should be 'power and influence'. This exercise will include a discussion and debate about where each stakeholder falls along the matrix, and plotting them on the grid. After you have placed all stakeholders on the grid, you can apply the following quadrant tactics:

High		
Power and influence	The network should communicate with this group infrequently but strategically, since they could help resolve issues of the network.	This group of stakeholders should be the focus of networks activities and services. They could also support initiatives by providing resources.
	The network can share information with this group but this group is not target of network services.	The network should engage this group as champions or network advocates. They could receive specific services and they can also be engaged in the delivery of key activities.
Low	**Interest**	High

Prioritise: rank stakeholder relevance and identify issues
Based on the results of the previous analysis, the network should be strategic and clear about whom to engage with and how. You can make a list of priority groups and stakeholders. It will be important to contact all those stakeholders that have been prioritised and to discuss with them the following questions:
- Which issues and needs do they have?
- What services and products would they like to benefit from?
- What resources (expertise, knowledge, people and budget) can they provide?

Considering the dynamism of networks you have to take into account that your stakeholder map might change over time and that you might have to revise it every two to three years.

Once you know who the most important stakeholders are, you have to actively nurture good relationships with them (☞ section 8.3). This may be achieved by providing them with information on a regular basis, inviting them to events, workshops or online discussions. Also, it is useful to continuously monitor the needs of your stakeholders, e. g. through regular workshops, hearings or surveys (☞ section 10.2). These needs may change over time and your network has to respond to and consider new demands proactively.

4.3.2 Establish strategic partnerships

Some external stakeholders can represent an opportunity and a threat for the network at the same time: these are organisations, research institutes and networks operating in the same or similar thematic areas of your network.

On the one hand, these organisations might be direct *competitors* for funding and could monopolise interesting topics. Even if they are competitors, you have to keep in touch with them, know what they are doing, and know what their plans for the future are.

On the other hand, these organisations might become *strategic partners* of the network, so that you can carry out joint activities, such as organising workshops or larger conferences, or write and publish joint declarations to raise awareness about certain topics.

In the case of a strategic partnership, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), an agreement defining your collaboration, can help govern the partners' relationship. An MoU can also be of advantage in fundraising, as you can show potential contributors that you are well connected to other partners.

4.3.3 Get in touch with decision makers

As networks strive to achieve an impact in a certain area, decision makers in public administrations and politics, development agencies and international organisations, business and civil society play a crucial role for networks because they have the decision making power to influence the political agenda and its implementation.

Typically, decision makers work at the executive level in organisations and have the authority to make decisions in their area of competence. Depending on their position and function, managers at the operational level and technical experts may also be decision makers. They prepare political decisions, suggest topics for action, and, in particular, provide quite a lot of room for manoeuvre during implementation.

You could get in touch with different *decision makers* who can support your network, open doors to other people or organisations, or even provide funding for the network. In order to involve them, you must learn how they work and you need to be aware that they may be very busy. Therefore, it may be difficult to gain access to them and obtain an appointment.

4.3.4 Involve decision makers in network activities

To involve decision makers in networks, two sets of criteria are vital. Firstly, a network has to be attractive and interesting for the decision maker. Secondly, decision makers can use networks to gain access to information and other people; they will only get involved in a network if they perceive that it is of personal benefit to them. Thus, to engage with decision makers, networks should strive to identify common ground among their objectives and the objectives of the decision makers.

Often, decision makers do not have or take the time for direct involvement in activities. They are also hesitant to expose themselves, as their statements are often interpreted as representing the organisation they work for, or their comments are associated with a political agenda. Nevertheless, decision makers might stay indirectly involved in a network by following e-mail discussions passively, participating in workshops or conferences now and then, or being members of the advisory board. Additionally, decision makers may participate in networks through their staff, by sending them to network meetings and workshops or by assigning them to participate in discussion groups, to provide and retrieve information, facilitate discussions, or even run the network's secretariat.

Experienced decision makers know that building up a network and generating a return on the investment takes quite some time. Yet network managers should regularly remind decision makers of this fact and explain why this is so.

Approaching decision makers in networks requires personal relationships that are based on a good understanding of each other's preferences. Once you have established trusting relationships, they have to be nurtured continuously (☞ section 8.1).

Establishing contact with decision makers merely by sending an e-mail often does not work. They receive many e-mails every day and have to be very selective about reading and answering them. They will also be reluctant to answer an e-mail sent by somebody they do not know. The best approach is to contact a decision maker with a *polite and* *formal letter* and a follow-up phone call. They may also be contacted informally during *workshops or conferences*. Sometimes it may be appropriate to find a member who knows the decision maker and can act as a door opener. Finally, *support staff* can provide an entry point to decision makers.

CHECKLIST 3: INVOLVE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

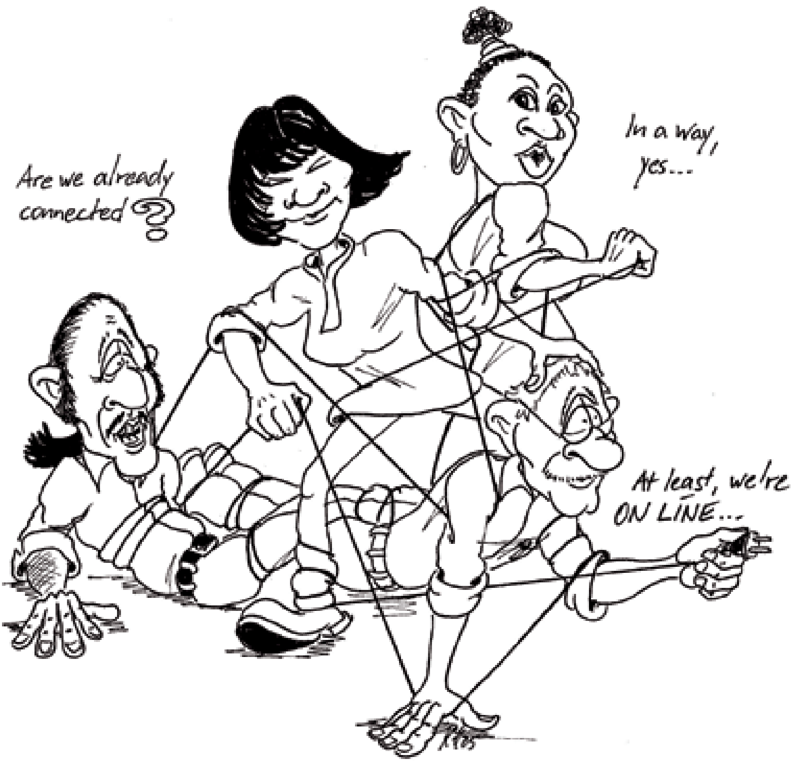
- Know your stakeholders
- Establish strategic partnerships
- Get in touch with decision makers
- Involve decision makers in network activities

5 | Set up the network

5.1 Develop the network concept

Every journey starts with an idea. Setting up a network will require you to further develop the initial idea and to formulate the concept and rationale behind it. If you formulate your concept carefully, it will save you time and you will avoid many pitfalls in the long run.

Below, the most important steps in putting down the initial concept are outlined. These steps are meant as an orientation, you do not have to follow the sequence strictly, as many of them overlap each other.



5.1.1 Consider the demand and work out a rationale

First you need a notion of the needs or demand the network is going to address and of the rationale behind it. The motivation for setting it up may come from any number of directions: to improve collaboration, to avoid duplication of efforts, to improve dissemination of information and knowledge, to learn from existing experiences, to achieve a better impact in a specific thematic area, or simply to do a better job (☞ section 2.1). Sometimes, the demand is clearly expressed by a group of interested people who have been building loose links among each other and see the need for a more structured way of collaborating. Therefore, it is important to assess whether there is a real demand for the network and try to identify the specific needs of its potential members.

Often, the idea of a network evolves after a conference, a meeting or a training activity. Thus, in order to verify if there is an interest or a need for the network, share this idea with those who are interested, e.g. other colleagues, experts, potential members and decision makers, and get their feedback, either informally or formally.

5.1.2 Find a specific niche

Once you are sure there is a real demand for the network, you should verify if your idea is *really unique*. Are there other networks or communities already covering the objectives of your planned network? Are there other organisations working in similar areas? What do potential members of the network really need? Where could your network produce real added value? What could be the unique selling point?

Setting out from the answers to these questions, you may have to adjust your concept. Try to find a specific niche for your network; if you cannot identify one, you should consider joining an existing network.

5.1.3 Get backing from relevant stakeholders and decision makers

To set up a network, you will need much more than the support of a group of interested people, such as friends and colleagues. You will need support not only from your superior, if you are working in an organisation, but also from a wider group of potential members and stakeholders of the network (☞ section 4.3.2). Important decision makers and other key people working in the area of your planned network need to 'get on board'. Get in touch with them, discuss your idea, and see what they think of it (☞ section 4.3.3).

You also have to make sure that the core group has time for working with the network. Thus, support from their organisations is important, since they would need to agree to support network activities through the participation of the core group member.

Additionally, they can provide in-kind contributions, technical competence, or might have other means available to support your idea (☞ section 4.1.1).

5.1.4 Prepare a concept paper

Once you have collected the necessary information, summarise it in a short *concept paper* written in simple language.

Based on the discussions and the work you have carried out so far, it is now time for critical reflection. Take a look at the following questions and see whether you can answer them with a clear YES.

CHECKLIST 4: REVIEW YOUR NETWORK CONCEPT

- Do you have a core group of about three to five leaders who are firmly committed to setting up the network?
- Have you identified a facilitator for your network? Does he/she have the knowledge, skills and qualities to coordinate the activities of your network?
- Do you have a distinctive network idea and is it shared by others?
- Have you checked whether other networks are already covering the thematic area of your network?
- Could you explain what will be the value added of your network?
- Have several people or organisations confirmed that they agree with the rationale of your planned network and that they really need it?
- Is there a favourable context to set up your specific network?
- Have you identified a number of potential members that support and adhere to the network's concept?
- Do you have the support of your superior or stakeholders? Are there allies that could be of strategic value for the network?
- Have you reserved sufficient time and resources to set up the network?

How many of these questions can you answer with YES? If you cannot answer the majority with a clear YES, you should honestly consider whether setting up this network really makes sense.

If you have passed the test and you are still convinced that setting up your network is a good idea, then you have already taken the first important step towards establishing a network.

5.2 Plan initial activities

During the start-up phase, you should have a plan to initiate activities, deliver some services or even carry out small projects. In the beginning, you can focus *on a few* services or projects that can be launched quickly and do not absorb too many resources. Do not wait too long, do something and talk about it!

5.2.1 Ensure initial resources

At an initial stage, it will be important for the core group to have a clear idea of how the network will fund its activities over an initial period of time, remembering to start with resources already available in the network.

First, you have to calculate the financial *resources required* for conducting the main activities of the network. Typically, every network will need a basic network infrastructure, such as a website or a platform, and will have to provide key communication services, such as online discussions or workshops.

In addition, resources will be required for specific projects initiated by the network and its members. Make use of resources and expertise already available in your network. For example, you can check if there are experts in setting up websites among network members, so there would be no need to hire someone to do it. Often, expenses might be covered by in-kind contributions of network members or by membership fees; however, if the network is to grow, gaining the support from public or private sponsors should be considered (☞ section 6.2).

5.2.2 Start with a few but useful activities

The promise of sufficient resources for establishing the network will give you and your core group a real boost. Do not wait too long to launch activities and *use this initial enthusiasm and motivation* to start setting up the network right away. Bear in mind that not only you but also potential members, supporters, partners and other stakeholders will have high expectations in the beginning. So inform them regularly about your progress. It is important to manage expectations from the very beginning, keeping an eye on what is possible and what is not in order to avoid disappointment.

An important cornerstone for a successful start-up phase is proactive *communication, communication and more communication* (☞ section 8.1.1)! Contact all relevant people individually on a regular basis. Particularly in the start-up phase, people are keen to know how the network is progressing. Many questions have to be answered, misunderstandings clarified and expectations managed. As long as you practise reliable and consistent communication, you will soon establish a trusting relationship among network members.

Both the energy level and the expectations are high during the start-up phase. You should make use of this by *starting early with one or more concise activities* or small projects to show that the network is actually doing something to meet the needs of its members. Even if they are minor ones, these initial activities will also help you to refine the focus and clarify the network concept. And finally, they will help weld together the network community. At this point, nothing works better than jointly planned and implemented activities (☞ section 7.2). In this way, you can show results and good-practice examples at early stages of the network.

Examples of initial activities are the following:
- Prepare short information products about the network that can be shared online through social media, websites and e-mail.
- Set up an electronic workspace with an e-mail discussion list via which you can send regular information about the network's progress. It can also be a closed online platform, where network members can have private discussions.
- Organise a conference session, an online discussion or a webinar about a relevant topic of the network.
- Set up a website where you can collect relevant information about the network.
- Write and present a paper on the topic of the network with other network members.

Providing services and carrying out useful activities in the initial phase will give you several advantages:
- You can show members and stakeholders that the network is not just a 'talk shop' but also a 'work shop'.
- Potential public and private sponsors will be more interested in an active network.
- You can raise the awareness of potential members and stakeholders.
- You will get early feedback on people's interests.
- The members come together as a network community.

5.2.3 Organise a start-up workshop

A good idea during the initial stages of the network is to have a *start-up workshop* bringing together not only the core group, but also potential members, stakeholders, and supporters. The objectives of this event should be to present your network concept and to foster the network spirit. At the same time, this would be a good opportunity to learn more about the expectations of potential members, to collect feedback, to get to know what the possible contributions of network members and their roles will be, and to explore ideas. The workshop should serve to develop a commonly shared vision, mission, and goals (☞ section 7.1). Document the results of the workshop and share the report with all interested stakeholders and members. An example of a start-up workshop program can be found in section 11.3.3.

5.2.4 Plan time wisely

In order to establish a good working habit between the facilitator and core group members, it will be important to identify the most important steps in building up your network. Some activities will have to be carried out before you can start with others. Mark the completion of every activity with a milestone so that you can assess the achievements.

Building up networks always takes longer than you expect. Try to develop a *realistic time plan* by calculating the amount of time necessary for each activity, taking into consideration long absences of core group members, holidays, and other commitments. Remember that the core group is unlikely to work full-time on network activities. In this time plan, you can determine which activities the network will launch in the coming year, assigning clear responsibilities and deadlines.

5.2.5 Stay realistic

In many cases, members are very enthusiastic when networks are being set up. Big promises are often made at the end of planning meetings and workshops. People are often enthusiastic about what they will contribute, but when reality takes over, enthusiasm crumbles. What is happening? It is not that members are acting in bad faith, they are just too optimistic, unrealistic, and, in some cases, not quite honest about the time they are able to devote to the network. In all planning exercises, you should be aware of this planning illusion and check carefully with everybody whether their promises are realistic.

CHECKLIST 5: PLANNING INITIAL ACTIVITIES

- Ensure initial resources
- Start with few but useful activities
- Organise a start-up workshop
- Develop a time plan with clear responsibilities and deadlines
- Stay realistic

5.3 Motivate members and encourage their participation

In a network, many different members and organisations are involved, and they come from various cultural and professional backgrounds. They all have specific interests, different modes of communication and working, and diverse histories.

Therefore, it is important to understand that there are different degrees of involvement for members (☞ section 4.2.5). Moreover, most members will only get involved in networks if they perceive that they are of personal benefit to them. Additionally, members need time and resources to participate in networks, for example, to join online discussions or to attend conferences. Finally, depending on the country and status, the possibilities of participation may be limited by a lack of access to technology or other communication means. In some countries, it is still difficult for some people to use the Internet or attend meetings, workshops, and conferences. Thus, network facilitators have to be aware of these limitations and look for tools and strategies that can ensure the participation of these members (☞ section 9).

5.3.1 Preconditions

Good management, trust and transparency are the most important preconditions that make networks attractive for their members and motivate their active participation.

Good management

Good management is not only important for the network's success; it is also of high priority for members. They will only participate in networks that are managed professionally by a committed team.

Well-managed relationships with members ensure the necessary institutional and public support, provide access to additional relationships and a broader funding base, and thus help to achieve the network's goals. So it is worthwhile for networks to manage relationships with their members in a systematic and coordinated manner.

Trust

Trust is a lubricant for networking and sharing knowledge. Members will only become involved in networks if they can trust them. Reliable and consistent communication will support this.

Members are more likely to trust a network if they perceive that they are integrated into its decision-making processes and that their ideas and suggestions are appreciated and taken seriously. You should therefore *encourage them to make comments and suggestions* *wherever possible*. This may happen in a consultative way by including them in an existing working group or a consultative board, or even by asking them to suggest working groups or other activities for specific topics. Even if some members do not respond – and this may often be the case (☞ section 4.2.5) – they should at least have access to the different documents and reports.

The relationships among members are the arteries constituting the network and they should be cared for attentively and nurtured *continuously* in order to build trust (☞ sections 5.3.1 and 8.1). This can be done in a number of ways:

- Contact members regularly
- Involve members actively in joint projects
- Form working groups or thematic sub-communities
- Encourage peer learning, buddy-systems or mentoring possibilities
- Send monthly or quarterly electronic newsletters providing them with the most important news. Electronic newsletters can give members the opportunity to contribute by sharing news or ideas
- Organise electronic discussions via e-mail, in an electronic forum or on a virtual platform
- Organise opportunities to meet face-to-face at least once a year
- Invite members once a year to give feedback about their needs in an electronic or offline survey

To maintain a trusting relationship, you should encourage members to meet face-to-face at least once a year. Otherwise, the relationship will tend to fade and sooner or later come to an end. Regular contact with and among members may be very time-consuming for network managers, but they are indispensable.

In between meetings, regular communication through electronic or paper newsletters, electronic discussions or occasional e-mails will help to keep members connected with the network. It is important, however, to avoid overloading members with information. E-mails, letters and documents must be written in a simple and concise language and the frequency of communication should be moderate (☞ section 9.2).

A relationship will be more lasting if it not only has a technical but also a personal connotation. Networks should therefore establish and nurture *personal relationships* with and among members. Enough time and space during meetings, workshops, or conferences for informal socialising and gathering is essential. Good occasions for socialising are a joint lunch or dinner, or splitting up longer meetings and workshops over a two-day period so that participants have the opportunity to meet informally in the evening. Additionally, social media tools are also good spaces for socialising. These spaces should be carefully moderated (☞ section 9.2).

Another way of building trust is by having incentives to participation in networks and by recognising members' contributions explicitly (☞ section 5.3.3). Members who contribute often to the network appreciate thank-you letters, words of thanks at conferences, or being mentioned in the annual report.

Transparency

The transparency of networks is an important precondition for convincing members to get actively involved. Members need to be able to quickly grasp the network's vision, mission, and goals. They also want to know how the network is organised, who is involved, who has which influence, how activities are funded, and how such funds are being used.

5.3.2 Benefits

In every network, there will be those who participate for altruistic reasons and others who do so only out of personal interest. Most people like to receive some *benefit or added value* from networks. If people do not benefit from the network, they will sooner or later lose interest in it.

Network members not only have to perceive benefits from participating in networks, they also need time to participate in them. Time is a scarce resource for most people and thus, they will only participate in the network if they perceive it as a priority over other engagements. That means that they have to be really convinced of the network's benefits (☞ section 2.1).

Individual gains

By participating in networks, members may receive individual benefits not directly related to their job. For instance, they may find opportunities for personal and professional development. By participating in networks, members can also improve their prestige or gain a new status or profile. This will particularly be the case if a network has a good public reputation.

Community building

Many members would like to be involved because networks give them a unique opportunity to meet people and expand their social connections. Good relationships among colleagues working within an organisation as well as with other professionals, friends, and relatives, are among the most valuable resources for effective and efficient work. In particular, regular meetings or participation in workshops and conferences organised by networks provide excellent opportunities for members to build up and nurture their personal and professional connections.

Networks are also a unique way of building up partnerships with governmental organisations at the local, national or regional level, with private companies, with NGOs or with academia. In the network, members who represent government institutions, for example, might find a platform for interaction with external parties, such as NGOs, in a more informal way than in structured meetings.

Access to information and knowledge

One of the strongest incentives for becoming involved in networks is gaining access to information, knowledge and new ideas. In this way, networks have an important role in collecting, filtering, validating, creating access to and disseminating high-quality information, knowledge and experience of and for their members.

Access to validated information and knowledge through networks empowers members to work towards achieving their goals. A network can give members strong arguments for political discussion, for example.

Coordination

Some members are bound to their organisations and their available, and often scarce, financial and personal resources. Networks can serve as multipliers as they are able to pool resources from different network partners to realise common solutions or launch joint projects or initiatives. Better division of work and responsibilities are also incentives that make participants become active in networks.

Power of persuasion towards joint action

Some members are looking for evidence and arguments to justify decisions and actions vis-à-vis the various stakeholders. By participating in networks, members learn what others are doing and how they are thinking, and might join forces for a common good. Also, by citing investments of partner organisations or pointing to standards being developed by a network, they can justify their actions. The effect is well known: Many people are more willing to accept something if it has already been accepted by many others. If they can say that their opinion is not only their own but also that of the network, this will give their arguments much more weight and power of persuasion.

5.3.3 Incentives

Even though some members do acknowledge the benefit of participating in networks, they still might not give networks a priority. Thus, incentives, monetary and non-monetary, encourage active participation from those members who are still not sure about how to make the best out of networks. Non-monetary incentives are as important as monetary ones. It is often the case that the latter are short-term motivators and if they are used regularly they can be counter-productive; thus, non-monetary incentives are to be encouraged. Also it is often more effective to give incentives to teams instead of to single individuals in order to foster cooperation. The type of incentive chosen should be in line with the mission and values of the network.

There are different types of incentives that can be used by networks. The following check-list presents some key ones that will enable networks to establish appropriate incentives to motivate their members:

CHECKLIST 6: INCENTIVES FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Specific time and budget allocated or reserved by organisations for their staff to participate in networks
- Inclusion of networking activities in job descriptions
- Assigning specific tasks within a network, such as expert contributions or training
- Annual appraisal or pay award for outstanding contributions to the network
- Public recognition of members' contributions to the network

6 | Structure the network and grow

The more the network grows and matures the more complex it becomes and, thus, the higher is the need for structure, rules and guidelines. The following paragraphs provide some insights for ensuring growth of a network through a well-established governance structure and solid financial basis.

6.1 Establish your governance

The governance structure of networks entails a system of rules, practices and processes that guide the network towards attaining its objectives. It also determines the network's basic organisational elements. When addressing governance, it is advisable to start simple and only add complexity where really needed. For communities that are still small, some rules of engagement will be sufficient, whereas for bigger networks, clear organisational functions and guidelines should be in place. Large networks require systems of governance that consider the difficulties of international collaboration: The members of a network are often scattered all over the world, the distances to travel for face-to-face meetings are long and meetings are therefore expensive, time zones affect communication and different cultures with diverse working styles come together. Under such circumstances, a clear, transparent, and simple governance structure is advisable.

6.1.1 Organisational chart

An organisational chart shows the most important structural elements of a network. Bigger networks often have several organisational elements with different functions, whereas small networks or communities might have a core group and members as the main organisational elements. The best method of finding an appropriate structure for your network is by holding a workshop with the core group or with all members. The size of your network will also help to define its organisational structure.

The following are possible organisational elements and they may vary according to local practices, preferences of members, size and objectives of the network:

EXAMPLE 11: **POSSIBLE ORGANISATION ELEMENTS IN A NETWORK**

Organisational element	Function
Board or steering committee which may be led by a chairperson	Strategic guidance of the network, control of operational work
Advisory committee	Advice to the network, for example, technical support or practical tips
Committee of honorary members	Prestige and experience
Secretariat, executive director, facilitator (s)	Coordination of the network, its administration and communication (internal and external)
Sub-networks, regional networks, hubs	Operational tasks and implementation
Members	Activities

Many international networks have a *board* or *steering committee* consisting of representatives of the most important member organisations or of the sub-networks. Depending on how the network is structured, these bodies could be represented by elected members or through volunteer nominations. The functions of the board are to give strategic guidance and approve financial plans, reports and operational programmes. A chairperson with a representative and strategic role leads the board. Some successful networks practise rotation of leadership. Others fail because it is too difficult to hand over responsibilities and to organise rotation successfully. One form of applying '*shared leadership*' (☞ section 4.1) is by ensuring the rotation of representation and functions on the board or steering committee.

Networks are often tempted to expand the board, aiming for a very broad representation and looking for strong connections with the most important stakeholders. However, it is advisable to keep the board small (e.g. between 5-8 persons) in order to have effective decision-making processes. Some networks have some kind of technical advisory committee or resource persons supporting the network in technical matters.

In order to stay in touch with a circle of important stakeholders, a committee of honorary members, consisting of persons with a good reputation who support the idea of the network, can be established. This committee has no executive function and they might be regarded differently from regular members because they might play a different role within the network. This committee will support the network and will contribute to its prestige. It may act as a door opener to gain access to other organisations or to find funding.

Finally, a network may have sub-networks, sub-communities, working groups or committees addressing specific sub-themes of the network, supported by a facilitator who will be in charge of coordinating the network's activities (☞ section 4.1.2). As seen before, leadership can be assumed on a rotational basis. However, rotating the secretariat is often too ambitious; thus, it is better if some responsibilities or functions rotate but at the least a set of key activities remain the responsibility of the secretariat or facilitator. In practical terms, the rotation of certain tasks like the organisation of an annual workshop or conference, or the facilitation of online communities can be an effective way of sharing responsibilities with sub-networks, sub-communities or committees.

The structure of your network might change through time, depending on how it evolves. It is important that changes in the structure are agreed upon by core group and key members and are clearly communicated to the wider membership.

6.1.2 Network guidelines

Every network needs guidelines governing its work as a whole and the collaboration of its members. They are basically the policies and rules that support the network in achieving its goals. They can be, for example, guiding principles or a code of conduct laying down ethical values, operational guidelines governing the day-to-day work, administrative and financial management guidelines, membership guidelines and rules of ownership and copyright. Depending upon the size of the network and the needs of its members, the scope of the guidelines may vary. In order to ensure ownership, they have to be clear and well communicated to all members.

Guiding principles or code of conduct

In the guiding principles or code of conduct, basic ethical values of collaboration among members and with other partners are put down in writing. While there are certain universal principles, each network will have its own specific principles that are shared by its members. Specific principles should be developed jointly, for example, during a start-up workshop. They will also need to be revised in time as the network evolves and grows.

EXAMPLE 12: NETWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Members maintain their own identity and autonomy
- Equal rights for all members
- No discrimination among members
- Reporting responsibilities
- Branding of products
- Data protection
- Quality assurance of products and services

CHECKLIST 7: BASIC ELEMENTS OF OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

- Governance structure (☞ section 6.1)
  - Board, executive director, secretariat, committees, members
  - Responsibilities
  - Rules for election and re-election
  - Decision-making processes and rules
- Membership (☞ section 4.2)
- Activities and services (☞ section 7.5)
- Administration and financial management
- Ownership of network products and copyrights (☞ section 6.1.4)
- Rules for communication (☞ section 8.1.5)

Operational guidelines

Operational guidelines determine how the network is organised: structure, membership and the most important processes.

Membership guidelines

In order to manage membership in a network, it is advisable to have membership guidelines covering some of the following points:

- Criteria for membership (☞ section 4.2.4)
- Duties and responsibilities of members
- Rights of every member, for example, voting and election rights or participation in decision-making processes and access to information
- Membership fees or contributions (☞ section 6.2.3)
- Sanctions in case of conflict, insulting behaviour, betrayal and other unacceptable behaviour

Administration and financial management

As networks grow, the demands to establish a sound administration and financial management system for the network also increase. Some of the challenges perceived in networks are the following:

- Since networks are spread all over the world, projects tend to be managed in multiple currencies and network projects can be affected by fluctuating exchange rates
- The implementation of network projects can also be affected by different accounting systems with different requirements of member organisations
- In some cases, transaction costs for each organisation to process financial transfers might outweigh the benefits of their participation

In order to overcome these challenges, networks should develop administration and financial management guidelines and procedures that can be modified to suit individual network projects. These guidelines and procedures will generally follow the accounting and administration practices of the strictest member. However, given that organisational practices might change over time, these will have to be reviewed periodically.

6.1.3 Legal status of the network

As the network matures, it may start collecting membership fees or fundraising for projects or activities. At this point, its legal status becomes an issue. Funding is only provided to legally registered organisations. There are two basic solutions to this:

- The network or a specific project or activity can be hosted by a member who acts as the legal representative.
- The network is registered legally.

Hosting by one or several of the members is widespread and represents a simple and pragmatic way to deal with legal registration. Host organisations can prepare proposals for projects and raise funds in the name of the network. Additionally, hosting organisations tend to provide important resources and in-kind contributions.

However, it is important for the network to be aware of possible disadvantages of being hosted by a member organisation. The organisation hosting the network could begin to play a too strong or dominant role in the network, disturbing the balance among its members. Problems may occur if the host organisation changes its strategy or runs into financial or reputational difficulties. However, this approach has become a good alternative for many networks and if well managed, more benefits than problems can be observed.

The other option, *legal registration*, is more demanding, as the network has to undergo the whole procedure of legal registration. Depending on the law of the country of registration, the legal slot will be that of a non-profit organisation, a foundation or an association with special consideration of the characteristics of the network.

It is often the case that international networks are decentralised in hubs and several of them are registered. Thus, the network might be registered in different countries.

Before you register your network, it is important to assess the benefits of legal registration. Many networks are successful even if they are not registered legally.

6.1.4 Options for ownership of knowledge, products and copyright

Through networks, a lot of information is collected and shared and products such as publications, websites or databases with technical information and expert directories are being produced. The network can even develop special standards, specifications or give rise to innovations.

Who owns these information products and who has the right to copy them and build on them? These are crucial questions that should be addressed once the network develops information and knowledge products. If members use or rebrand these products, standards or innovations for their own purposes without consulting other members, disputes might arise and the reputation of the network might be at risk; therefore, clear rules of ownership of information products and copyright should be established. To do so, the following approach has proven to be useful:

Define the ownership of core information products

To define the ownership of each information product, the following questions ought to be answered:

- What are your core information products, e.g. publications? Who owns network publications? Are reproductions allowed? If so, under which conditions?
- Who owns the website(s), the related databases and other databases of the network? How may the information they provide be used? Who should have access to the information provided on the website?
- What happens to the website, databases, secretariat library if the network is dissolved?
- Who owns other products created by the network, for example, software, toolkits, maps, specifications or patents?
- Who owns the network's logo and corporate identity?

In general, all information products, or standards produced on behalf of or in the name of the network should be jointly owned and *freely accessible* to all network members and, if possible, to all stakeholders. Open access to information and open co-production of knowledge should be one of the aims of the network. The more your network focuses on knowledge sharing and joint learning, the more open access to information it should foster. Network members have the option of jointly producing new information and knowledge products, commonly known as the 'knowledge commons'. Online encyclopaedias like Wikipedia, Energypedia, or Akvopedia are good examples of knowledge commons (☞ section 11.2).

However, to kick-start and maintain such knowledge commons, you will then need a carefully regulated system of incentives and quality control checks, including an appropriately open copyright license. For this, the so-called 'copy-left' licenses, such as the creative commons' attribution 'share alike' (☞ section 11.2), have proven to be successful. They provide the necessary degree of openness to reuse information, while prohibiting misuse, misappropriation and re-privatisation of jointly created information.

To follow this approach, you must also take into account the ownership rules and regulations of contributors or financiers of the network. For instance, some government institutions follow the principle that 'public money produces public goods'. Other contributors may have specific regulations that have to be taken into consideration as well. So it is possible that publicly funded publications remain the contributor's or financier's property. These issues are more important than you might think, and the experience of some networks shows that it is worthwhile clarifying them in advance with the respective contributor or financer.

Initiate strategic discussion on 'openness, control, learning and outreach' in your network

Your copyright strategy should be closely aligned with the goals and strategy of your network. Therefore, it is useful to initiate a strategic discussion on 'openness, control, learning and outreach' in your network. You will have to consider the advantages and disadvantages of having either an 'open access to' approach or a 'control of information' one. The following points might help you to steer such strategic discussion within your network:

ADVANTAGES OF OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN NETWORKS:

- **More outreach and ownership**
  Members and stakeholders are 'free' to reuse and build on material produced by the network; they '(co-)own' it and can share it with third parties.
- **Better learning and capacity building possibilities**
  Members and stakeholders learn by updating the material and by sharing open information material.
- **Promotional effects**
  Your network or member organisations will be acknowledged in all future versions of publications.

- **Contribution to large third party repositories of open resources**
  Material will be incorporated to large third party repositories like Wikipedia, which often requires the use of open licensing.

- **Input to own material through other communities**
  Material will receive 'free' updates from third parties and it will contribute to a global pool of knowledge commons.

- **Easier monitoring of impact**
  Open sharing allows open tracking.

- **Lower risk of competition distortion**
  Material can freely be accessed by private sector competitors. Commercial and non-commercial use by all parties is possible, unless a 'non-commercial' clause is used in the open license.

- **Sustainable use of material**
  Commercial and non-commercial use of information by your network and by stakeholders is assured.

RISKS OF OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN NETWORKS:

- As a copyright owner, you have less control over the (re-)use of the material ('freedom of others'); therefore, it is important to make sure that your network and its members are not inappropriately associated with future versions of the material. A good tool is a 'disclaimer' attached to all future versions.

- It is essential to own all copyright of the material before releasing it under open licenses. Often, problematic areas include photos and charts taken from other sources, which have not been appropriately licensed. One solution to this risk is to only use one's own material or material which is compatible to the open license chosen.

- Some business models and innovation paths are restricted by open licenses. E.g. selling the information material itself or building proprietary solutions based on such information bodies. A possible solution for a network is to go for business models involving services such as mentoring, tutoring, facilitation, training services and open innovation models.

- Open co-production of knowledge involves issues around quality control of material. Ways to mitigate this risk involve decentralized systems of quality control or 'approved versions' of evolving material and technical measures against 'spamming' or inappropriate additions, such as 'report this' buttons, for example.

You might have to determine the options for copyright of jointly owned information products based on different needs and goals of the network. In section 11.2 there is more information on 'creative commons' that can help you assess which licence is right for your network.

6.2 Funding

6.2.1 Financial needs

Networks have various financial needs. First of all, the network has *fixed costs* for basic infrastructure such as the secretariat and website. Networks are well advised to keep these costs as low as possible. If the network has hubs or chapters, they will also incur on similar costs. Networking involves also *variable costs* such as face-to-face or virtual *meetings, workshops and conferences*. The network has to find ways to cover the costs of running these events. Last but not least, most of the funding will be required for other *communication technologies, projects or publications* that have been initiated by the network. How should networks fund all these activities?

6.2.2 Ensure sufficient funding

In order to grow it will be important to make an estimate of how much funding you need to carry out initial network activities including the support of the secretariat, hubs or facilitators. Try to do this as realistically and honestly as possible; then assess whether you already have enough funding. You will need initial funds to support the network infrastructure that allow people to participate and share. Thus, it will be important to start with easy-to-absorb grants. But you should also be on the lookout for public and private contributors who might be willing to support the network further. Often, growth in funding implies that the network or at least some of its hubs have a legal status (☞ section 6.1.3). Additionally, it is also important to consider that managing funds costs money and time. Thus, the management of funds has to be financially viable for the network.

International networks sometimes have to cope with the fact that salaries, living costs and allowances vary a lot among the countries involved. Reimbursements can create a strong incentive to participate in workshops and conferences, which is not always for the good of the network.

There is no perfect solution to this problem and every network has to find its own way of funding its members' participation in meetings, workshops and conferences. In the following, there are some suggestions for dealing with this situation:

- Participants should receive the same allowances, although this might create an unwanted incentive. In this case, the network secretariat must have funding for the participation of members.
- Participants have to find funding themselves. Experience shows that many participants find ways of funding their participation if they are really interested in the conference or workshop and if they can expect concrete personal benefits for their work.
- A combined model could be applied in which the network funds participation of members from poorer countries while those from richer countries pay for their own expenses.
- The secretariat organises a competition. Interested participants write a paper and the authors of the best papers receive funding for their participation.

6.2.3 Types of funding

How can the financial needs of networks be covered? Networks are well advised to fund their services and projects from several different sources. This will make them more independent and contribute to the network's financial sustainability.

In-kind contributions

In many networks, at least some services and activities are in-kind contributions by members. Organisations belonging to the network allocate some of their staff's time to facilitating an online community, they maintain and host the website of the network for free or they offer their facilities for workshops. Such in-kind contributions are an effective way to fund some of the network's activities. Often, it will be easier to receive some in-kind contributions than to raise funds.

Membership fees

A network is a common undertaking of its members and it is obvious that they, especially member organisations, contribute to funding the network. In general, members receive benefits from the network and they might be willing to make a contribution in order to sustain network operations. Many networks do not include membership fees because the financial resources of their individual members are limited, particularly in developing countries. Another reason might be that it can be too costly for the network to manage membership fees. However, membership fees should not be ruled out since they could contribute to the regular core funding of the network. Why not start with a small membership fee, which could even be voluntary? You should at least think about it or find out through a survey if and how much members would be willing to contribute.

Selling services

Some networks sell services to other organisations or networks, for example, the hosting and facilitation of online conferences or consultancy services related to their area of expertise. If you have the opportunity to sell network services you should consider doing so, as this will contribute to your network's funding. However, the purpose of networks is not necessarily to sell services. There is in fact a danger that a focus on selling services might distract members from the network's core interests.

6.2.4 Fundraising

Successful fundraising is crucial to every network. Fundraising is an art unto itself and it would be beyond the scope of this guide to discuss it here in detail. Resources on fundraising are to be found in sections 11.1 and 11.2.

Some important elements for fundraising are listed below:

CHECKLIST 8: FUNDRAISING ESSENTIALS

- Make yourself familiar with fundraising techniques by reading a fundraising guide or by attending a fundraising training course.
- Build on the strengths of your network (☞ section 7.4).
- Develop a *clear vision, mission and goals* for the network that you can communicate easily so that potential public and private sponsors understand what you are doing (☞ section 7.1).
- Know the *strategies of potential sponsors* and what motivates them to fund networks (☞ sections 4.3 and 5.1.3).
- *Fundraising is friend-raising*, so try and establish close relationships with potential contributors (☞ section 4.3 and 5.1.3).
- Once relationships have been built up, nurture them continuously by sending regular information about the network (☞ section 8.1 and 8.3).
- *Include supporters* of the network in the board (☞ section 6.1.1).
- Be active and patient. Building up relationships until you receive funding *takes time*. Sometimes you will have to wait a year or longer.

Fundraising from public and private sources

Many networks receive funding from *public sources* like public authorities, governmental organisations, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and from *private sources* like grant-making foundations or private companies.

In order to receive funding from external stakeholders, you need to know them (☞ section 4.3.1) and the network's goals have to *match with their strategies*. Grant-making foundations increasingly follow a clear strategy, and companies will often only support a network if its services and projects fit into their strategy.

Many public and private contributors are more interested in funding *projects or programmes* than funding *running costs*. This is also one of the reasons why private companies and foundations might be reluctant to support networks. Through their support, they seek to acquire the profile of socially responsible entrepreneurs and hence prefer projects that are easy and simple to publicise. The activities of networks are often too abstract for them. Nevertheless, if you have good contacts in the private sector, use them to secure funding.

It is also important to take advantage of the network's regional or national hubs. It is often easier to find supporters of network projects at country or regional levels. Additionally, in some cases, member organisations are already in contact with local public or private institutions that might be willing to support network projects. Member organisations in those countries can be better suited to find funds for specific projects that would benefit the network's activities in that specific country.

Crowdfunding

Another way of raising funds for specific projects of the network might be through crowdfunding, which is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people through an Internet platform. There are more than 400 Internet platforms that support crowdfunding and it is up to the network to choose which one is best suited and for which purpose. Links to some platforms that can be of interest for networks are presented in section 11.2.

6.2.5 Mixed funding structure

Experience has shown that the funding structure of many networks is very complex. Public and private contributors to the network have quite different requirements and formats for funding arrangements. Funding networks often consists of a *mix of funding types*, and network budgets are made up of different blends of core and project funding. Decentralised funding is combined with core funding for the secretariat and the duration of these funding types usually varies.

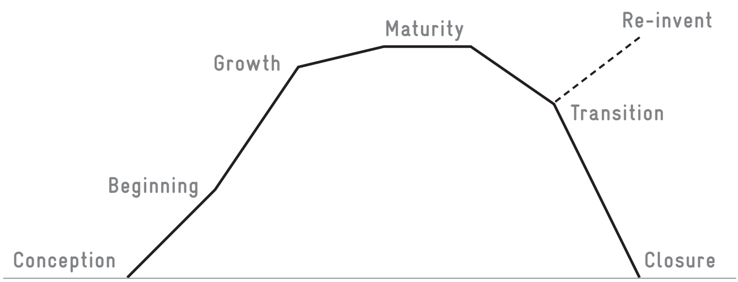
This variety leads to a certain financial robustness of networks. One important advantage is that they *do not depend on support from a single source*, a situation that ought to be avoided whenever possible.

On a less positive note, this complexity makes fundraising and network management difficult. These difficulties should not be an excuse for a lack of transparency or excessive administration and the members of the network should strive for *consolidated accounting*, giving a clear overview of where funding is coming from, how the money is spent and by whom (☞ section 10.1.4).

6.3 Evolution and innovation

Networks should be viewed as dynamic systems that continuously evolve (☞ section 11.1.26).

FIGURE 5: **TYPICAL LIFE CYCLE OF NETWORKS**



New networks should *start small and take time to mature* to the point at which they really function effectively and this requires patience on the part of members, stake-holders and supporters, but also effective community management skills from the part of the secretariat or core group members. Often, it can take three years for a network to begin functioning well.

Once established, networks are exposed to a *continuously changing context*. Anything that might be the right thing to do now could become obsolete in the future. Networks have to adjust constantly to changing circumstances and needs. This may be quite challenging, but only those networks that are able to adapt to the changing environment and demands are able to ensure their long-term viability.

Ideally, networks regenerate themselves in an *evolutionary way*. With *incremental innovations*, they can continually adjust and improve their structure and contents, activities and services. A perceptive mind-set is essential for this. Regular feedback from members, decision makers and stakeholders will help you decide what has to be done. You yourself will be able to detect everyday possibilities for improvement. Systematic monitoring will also give you guidance (☞ section 10.1).

A practical way to innovate is through a *regular tidying up*. The economist Joseph Schumpeter called this ‘creative destruction’, because stopping certain activities will create room for new activities and innovation. Each year, the network should systematically review the portfolio of services and activities along with the members and decide which of the services and activities they want to continue and which ones should be discontinued (☞ section 7.5). In many networks, a lot of activities are undertaken and when time or funding become scarce, they are only partly carried out. Stop these activities and focus your investment on the most important, requested and strategic ones!

However, incremental innovation is not enough. Networks will only thrive and remain dynamic if they have the ability to *launch new ideas and projects*. A good starting point for new ideas is a regular evaluation that should take place every three to five years (☞ section 10.3). Develop these ideas strategically by asking the following question: What should the network do today in order to be successful in the future? This will help to keep abreast of changes. Also make sure to have a quality assurance mechanism to deliver quality services and products (☞ section 7.8).

To enrich discussions, *invite external experts* who are not directly linked to the network or the cultural context and who can think ‘outside the box’. Such people can offer independent views on relevant issues. Another way of collecting new ideas is by inviting stakeholders of your network or of others for peer assists (☞ section 10.3).

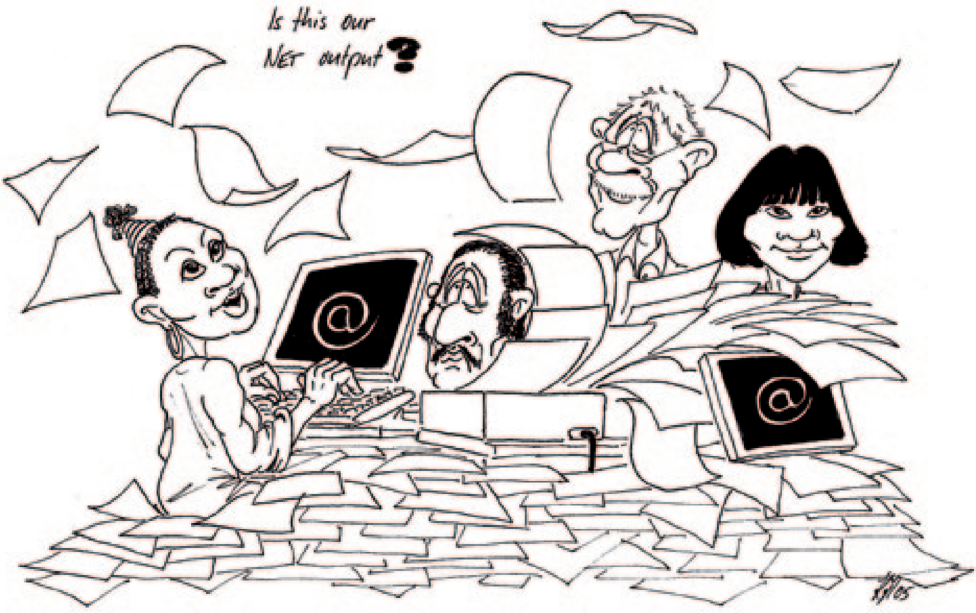
Depending on the type and mission of the network, it might be necessary to determine for how long the *network will create value* or what criteria should be used to decide when it should close. Networks are dynamic systems and it might happen that their objectives are achieved or other networks become more successful. In this case, one should avoid continuing just for the sake of it, as it will then be better to close down and direct your energies to new initiatives!

CHECKLIST 9: EVOLUTION AND INNOVATION

- Develop the network in an evolutionary way with incremental innovations
- Tidy up network activities and plans regularly
- Launch new activities and projects regularly in a strategic way
- Invite external experts or other networks to give their views
- Create a common notion of how long the network will remain valuable

7 | Develop network services and projects

All networks should deliver some sort of tangible output, such as products and services based on the demands of their members and stakeholders. Mature networks have to focus on a number of core services and conduct specific projects that would allow members and stakeholders to add value to their work and that of the network. Also, it is important to ensure the quality of products and services. Thus, a quality control system is essential.



7.1 Adopt a strategy for network services and projects

Prior to defining your core services and projects, you need to define the network strategy. A strategy guides the network, brings all members in tune with each other and holds the network together over time. The strategy consists of agreeing on a vision, a mission and the goals of the network. The operational plan, activities, products and services of the network should then derive from this shared vision. Members need to have an understanding and ownership of the strategy, so that they can commit to it and realise the 'network advantage'.

Vision

The vision of the network describes a desirable future state that does not yet exist today: the shared hopes, dreams and images of network members about the ideal *state of a situation or the world in general*. The purpose of developing a vision is to have network stakeholders thinking about possibilities, rather than being limited by current reality. There should be a clear picture of the achievable and sustainable future that the network would like to see in the context in which it works. It can be aspirational and the network should not feel that it alone can achieve this vision. A good vision is inspiring and challenging, short and easy to understand and remember. The vision should take you where you want to go.

Key questions to develop the vision of your network could be:

- What needs to be changed, what are the main issues or problems?
- Why should these issues be addressed?
- What is the ideal final state?

Mission

The mission statement should describe the purpose of your network in short: *what the network would like to contribute* to make the vision come true. It helps to establish direction for your work and to consider how activities, products and services of the network contribute toward or detract from what you want your network to be. It should help focus on your goals, prioritise efforts and be aligned with your values. A well-written mission must be clear, easy to understand and communicate and it should be succinct so that it can be well internalised. It should also be realistic and motivating.

Key questions to develop the mission statement of your network could be:

- What is the problem the network wants to address?
- What are the underlying causes of the issue or problem?
- What would a solution to the problem or issue look like?
- What will be the network's contribution to that solution?

Network goals

Under goals, the network describes in more detail what kind of impact, long-term changes and effects it would like to achieve. Defining network goals helps to conceptualise and articulate the future direction of your network, thus allowing those responsible for setting this direction to develop a common understanding of where the network is heading, keeping the mission and vision in mind. The more carefully you define your goals, the more likely you are to do the right things and achieve what you wanted to accomplish in the first place. The goals of the network should be tied to its mission statement. Do not formulate too many goals. A maximum of five goals is a good rule of thumb and will give the network a focused profile.

Key questions to articulate and define the goals of your network could be:

- What do we want to achieve with the network?
- What is the final outcome we want to realise?

EXAMPLE 13:

VISION, MISSION AND GOALS OF THE RURAL WATER SUPPLY NETWORK (2012-2014)

Vision

RWSN's vision is of a world in which all rural people have access to a sustainable and reliable water supply, which can be effectively managed to provide sufficient, affordable and safe water within a reasonable distance of the home.

Mission

RWSN is a global network of professionals and practitioners working to raise standards of knowledge and evidence, technical and professional competence, practice and policy in rural water supply and to fulfil the vision of sustainable rural water services for all.

Goals

Equality, non-discrimination and inclusion (ENDI)
Targeting of service provision at all scales is inclusive of the needs and rights of those who are frequently excluded from access to services.

Sustainable groundwater development
Ground water resources are properly considered and sustainably used for developing drinking water supply sources.

Sustainable services
Water professionals have a better understanding of how to put in place successful management and support systems for rural water supply through participation in a professional network of colleagues interested in this theme.

Accelerating self-supply
Self-supply is a recognised option for drinking water supply in rural areas by government, development partners and water users themselves.

7.2. Operational plan

Networks need an *operational plan* that breaks down its vision, mission and goals into operational objectives, such as services, products and activities. Operational objectives define what kind of outcome or direct benefit the network would like to achieve in a given time framework.

When you set up the operational plan *consider the following*:

- Operational objectives: What will be achieved in the next one or two years?
- Output: What products and services will be offered in order to achieve the operational objectives?
- Activities: What are we going to do to deliver the products and services?
- Time framework: How long will it take to finish the activity? When should we have the products and services ready for delivery? The time framework will help you keep track of the network's performance and it is an important part of the monitoring system (☞ section 10.1).
- For each activity, a responsible member or partner should be designated and a due date fixed. It is advisable that responsible persons are aware of the workload lying ahead when taking over responsibilities for certain activities. Delegating responsibilities to persons who cannot assume them properly can hinder the achievements of objectives.

Set your objectives, outputs and activities in a *realistic and achievable way*. Keep the network's vision and mission in mind; reflect which activities could contribute most to producing the relevant services and products that would support the achievement of the set operational objectives. Select a few essential activities on which to focus. Concentrate your efforts and do not dissipate your energy in too many activities.

The operational plan should be *updated regularly* and completely revised by core group members or the steering committee at least every year. It should be published so that all network members can have direct access to it, if interested.

Network members should also identify thematic areas in which they have particular *strengths* in order to actively contribute to the delivery of the expected network outputs. The interface of specific strengths and demand for them will finally determine the specific activities that the network members will carry out.

A network that tries to do everything is not doing anything right. To be effective, networks have to focus on a specific area or topic, even if it is only for a specific period of time, keeping in mind that network members might bring in a whole *variety of interests*. In addition, decision makers, stakeholders or contributors may try to push the network to embrace wider thematic areas or to take up other issues. However, it will be very important that the network finds the right focus.

EXAMPLE 14: OPERATIONAL PLAN OF THE RURAL WATER SUPPLY NETWORK

Goal:	Equality, non-discrimination and inclusion (ENDI)
Lead organisation:	WaterAid
Organisations involved:	SNV, SDC, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water, WEDC, UNICEF and Water for People

Topic	Objectives	Outputs	Activities	Dates
Realising the human right to safe drinking water	RWSN members understand and start to implement the guidance set out in the Handbook on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation	Learning materials to use the Handbook on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation	Establish a task force of practitioners and professionals to understand how to use the handbook	November 2014
			Develop and disseminate learning materials for the handbook	First semester 2015
Overcoming barriers to universal access	Key rural water supply agencies have evidence of incentives and tools that support governments to overcome barriers to universal access to rural water supplies	Multi-country study on government perspective about challenges to reaching the most marginalised in order to achieve universal access to safe drinking water in rural areas	E-discussion on ENDI perspective on local government	April – May 2015
			Structured e-discussion on how to ensure access for the hard to reach	October – November 2015
			Study on barriers to universal access to rural water supplies	Throughout 2015

Inclusive design	National governments in four countries have adopted and are implementing inclusive and accessible design standards for rural water supply	RWSN publication: Inclusive Design for Rural Water Supplies Knowledge sharing events	Follow-up in-country implementation of inclusive design Promote existing tools & approaches for inclusive WASH (gender & violence, inclusive design, disability) Share practical experiences of inclusive WASH through events	Throughout 2015 April – May 2015 October – November 2015 Throughout 2015

7.3 Stakeholder map

As a first step in developing a service portfolio for your network, it is recommended to have a stakeholder map to understand the relationships among different stakeholders that affect and are affected by the network. This map will give you a better picture of all the actors who have an interest in your network and could influence the delivery of those services. It can also reveal current and potential network resources. It can also provide important insights about which services the network should and can deliver, based on existing resources including the engagement of key stakeholders. Finally, it can also reflect how stakeholders can coordinate and cooperate to provide services to others. To develop a stakeholder map go to section 4.3.1.

7.4 Internal network analysis

Based on the results of the stakeholder map, you should then analyse your network's competences by carrying out a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a practical way of analysing the network and identifying its past and present strengths and weaknesses, as well as current and future threats and opportunities.

Ideally, the SWOT Analysis is carried out in a participatory way to include key network members and the most important stakeholders. In this way, key members have the opportunity to learn from the past and to refresh or adjust their vision of the network's future. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses focuses on internal factors of your network. This suggests that your network should tie its strengths and weaknesses to the requirements of key stakeholders.

Strengths (internal, positive factors)	**Weaknesses** (internal, negative factors)
Strengths describe the positive internal attributes, tangible and intangible, of your network, which are within your control. ■ What are we doing well as a network? ■ What internal resources do we have? ■ What are our advantages of working together? ■ What other positive internal aspects offer our network a competitive advantage?	Weaknesses are aspects of your network that detract from the value you offer or place you at a competitive disadvantage. You need to enhance these areas. ■ What can the network improve? ■ What is missing or what is lacking (e.g. resources, expertise, and access to skills or technology)? ■ What problems could be avoided?

The analysis of opportunities and threats looks into the environment that exists independently of the network. In order to recognise them as external factors, it would be important to answer the following question: Would this issue exist if the network did not exist?

Opportunities (external, positive factors)	Threats (external, negative factors)
Opportunities are external attractive factors that have an influence on your network. They are favourable conditions or situations in the environment that could produce rewards for the network if acted upon properly. ■ What are possible external support schemes the network can make use of? ■ Do new markets exist for the network's products and services? ■ Are there new technologies that the network can exploit? ■ What changes in technology and regulations are taking place that might contribute to the development of the network? ■ What changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle and economic factors are observable that might affect our network favourably?	Threats include external factors beyond your control that could place your strategy or the network itself at risk. They are conditions or barriers that may prevent the network from reaching its objectives. ■ What changes in technology and regulations are taking place that might affect the development of the network negatively? ■ What changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle and economic factors are observable that might affect our network negatively? ■ What obstacles does the network face (regional, political, economic, demographic)? ■ Are there troubling changes in the networks environment (security issues, technologies, regulations)?

It is important to understand how all the elements of the SWOT Analysis work together. Matching internal strengths to external opportunities will create the core competencies the network requires to meet the needs of stakeholders. In addition, the network should act to convert internal weaknesses into strengths to deal best with the threats and take advantage of the opportunities. Since the network will not remain static through time, it will be important to carry out a SWOT Analysis periodically, for example every three to five years.

Available resources

After you have identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the network, the next step is to further identify what are its tangible, intangible and human resources.

- **Tangible resources** are the easiest to identify. They are mainly the financial resources and physical assets a network already has. This could include, for example, existing financial and in-kind contributions of members such as: a website platform, existing funds to run the secretariat, available physical space or infrastructures that enable members to work together.

- **Intangible resources** are largely invisible, but they can be the main source for a competitive advantage of the network. Examples include reputational assets such as: brand, image or influence of both, the network and its members.
- **Human resources** or human capital include skills, knowledge, experience and available time of the secretariat, core group, steering committee and members. Considering that networks have an advantage over individual organisations or people, it is expected that the human capital of the network is addressed by consolidating the existing relationships and using the aggregated value of human capacities.

7.5 Service portfolio

Once you have a clear strategy, an operational plan, a map of your stakeholders with a clear understanding of their needs and an analysis of your network's strengths, weakness and resources, you are ready to consolidate your service portfolio.

Network's core services

Successful networks provide a number of continuous or regular core services that respond to the real needs and demands of members and stakeholders (☞ section 2.1). Typical core services can be:

EXAMPLE 15: **NETWORK CORE SERVICES**

- Member profiles
- Capacity building events, such as training courses
- Websites with regular updates on information
- Electronic newsletter
- Workshops or conferences
- Webinars
- Online discussions
- Regular information exchanges through an e-mail discussion forum
- Question and answer services
- Electronic conferences
- Online chats with experts on selected topics
- Working groups and sub-communities
- Policy briefs for decision makers

The core services of a network should also have a rhythm corresponding to the preferences of its members and stakeholders. Some services should take place regularly, for example, an electronic newsletter can be sent every three months. This establishes a reliable time structure for all members. If members have the impression that nothing is happening, they will withdraw their attention or forget about the network. On the other hand, if there are too many activities they will feel overloaded. Thus, it is important to have a good balance of services included in your service portfolio.

Network projects

In addition to the core services, a service portfolio for networks can also include specific projects with the objective of achieving a planned outcome and sustainable impact in the sector or region in which the network is active.

Examples of network projects are:

- Action-research projects in one of the network's topics of interest
- Pilot studies on the network's thematic field of expertise
- Capacity building and training projects
- Documentation of experiences and joint-writing

By developing and implementing projects, the network and its members can show their competence and innovative spirit in their thematic area of competence. In addition, projects that are jointly planned and implemented will bind network members together. At the same time, carrying out joint projects is one of the most effective methods of mutual capacity building and learning.

In order to launch projects, network members would have to prepare proposals for securing funds for their implementation (☞ section 6.2.4). It is of utmost importance to assign clear responsibilities for generating or allocating funds in order to implement them. If the network has its own legal form, it can submit the proposal itself. If this is not the case, one or more members should submit the proposal as individual persons in the name of the network making sure it has the brand mark of the network. At initial stages, the network can also establish 'innovation funds', which are modest amounts of funding for projects led by members who want to work together. Once funding is received, one network member should take the lead for the project. Implementation of projects can also be outsourced to consultants who will implement them on behalf of the network.

7.6 Portfolio analysis

The following method can help you with this analysis (more information about this method to be found in section 11.1.9).

Make a list of all your services and projects and, together with the core group and relevant stakeholders, place each service or project into one of the following quadrants, considering the following descriptions:

1) STARS Services and projects with potential for growth. They are dynamic, popular and creative. They can become stable projects or be short-lived shooting stars.	2) RISKY New or innovative services or projects, which have not been tested or proven. They can be considered risky, since they may become stars, but can also fail.
3) STABLE Reliable, safe services and projects that provide a degree of financial security or credibility. They can be popular and get sponsorship.	4) UNFEASIBLE Services and projects that use management and financial resources but provide little or no added value for the network.

After you have placed all your services and projects on the matrix, in order to consolidate the analysis, it will be important that, together with the core group and key stakeholders, you **find the answer to the following questions:**

- How well balanced is the portfolio (creative, risky and stable)?
- How might each service or project move from one quadrant to the other over the next year?
- How can risky services and projects become stars? Would it be worth the investment of time, effort and resources?
- How to address the unfeasible services and projects? Can you invest on them, hand them over or close them down?

Once you have identified the strategy for managing your services and projects, it is important **to select those that respond to the following criteria:**

- Stable projects
- Star projects that have the potential of becoming stable
- Short term star projects that can enhance funding or reputation of your network
- Risky projects that have the potential of becoming stars

7.7 Consolidate your service portfolio

Once you have a list of services and projects, you will have to analyse and classify them in order to prioritise your activities. Your service portfolio should include a selection of the most adequate services and projects. The following table may help you in getting an overview of what your service portfolio can look like:

Objective	These objectives have to be those included in your strategic plan (☞ section 7.1.).
Target group	Based on your stakeholder map (☞ section 7.3), list all the stakeholders who will benefit from or will 'buy' the products, services or projects.
Services	The selected services and projects should be reflected here.
Activities	List selected services and activities needed to produce the services and projects you want to offer. These activities should also correspond to your operational plan (☞ section 7.2).
Resources	List the resources you need to fulfil the activity and, based on your internal network analysis (☞ section 7.4), you need to allocate the resources you have within the network.
Responsibility	Identify who will be responsible for leading the implementation of each one of the activities. For this, it is important to apply the concept of shared leadership (☞ section 4.1) in order to ensure that different members assume the responsibility for delivering a task or a product.
Deadlines	Set a time frame defining clearly when activities have to be completed.

Once you have your consolidated service portfolio, you have to promote it using the communication tools of the network (☞ section 9).

7.8 Quality assurance

The satisfaction of key stakeholders depends upon the quality of the services and projects of the network. Hence, networks need to establish a system for ensuring their high quality. The reputation of the network depends on the quality of the work delivered by its members. Many organisations adopt certified quality management systems to ensure their work is efficient and effective. By encouraging members to adopt quality management systems, networks can contribute to the overall quality of products and services. In most cases, it is too complicated and expensive to introduce a certified quality management system into a whole network, and other appropriate ways to ensure quality still have to be found. Systematic monitoring and regular evaluations including professional peer assists are mechanisms to ensure quality control (☞ section 10).

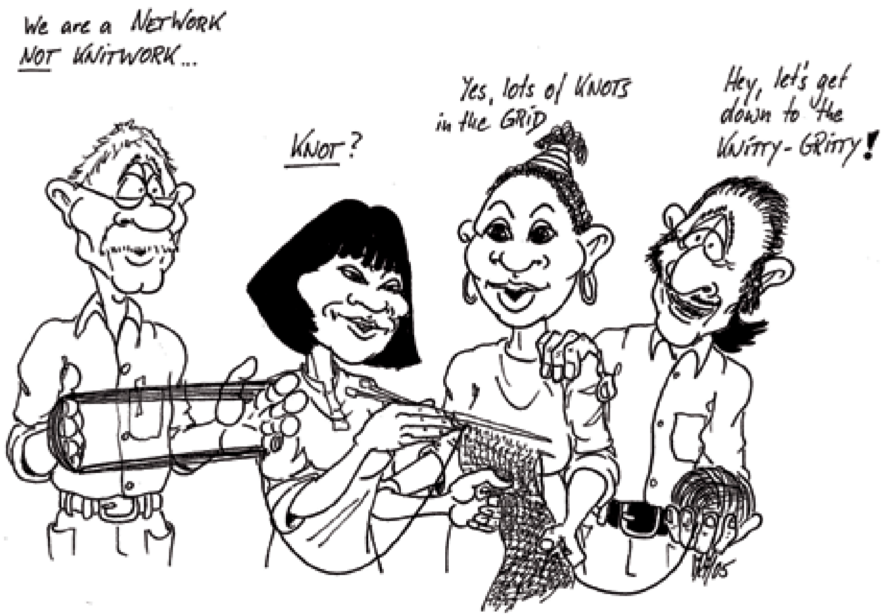
CHECKLIST 10: NETWORK SERVICES AND PROJECTS

- Adopt a strategy that reflects the vision, mission and goals of your network
- Develop an operational plan including your operational objectives and how and by when you plan to achieve them
- Know your stakeholders and members and who can contribute to or benefit from the services and projects of the network
- Have a clear idea of your network's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Know the tangible, intangible and human resources available in your network
- Assess the services, products and projects your network can deliver
- Set up a quality control mechanism of the services, products and projects

8 | Communication and collaboration

The relationships among members and stakeholders are the network's arteries. Communication is the lifeblood running through these arteries; it keeps the network alive and active. A good communication flow is vital for all networks and deserves the utmost attention.

The communication flow within the network and with your internal audiences will be smoother if a few basic principles are considered.



8.1 Internal communication

8.1.1 CCC: Communicate, communicate, communicate

The first principle is the three Cs: communicate, communicate and communicate. Remember that communication is the lifeblood of the network: nobody will know the network exists if you do not actively communicate its functions and objectives, and people will not respond if they do not know what progress is being made or if they are not addressed in an appropriate way. If conflicts occur, they will not be resolved without communication. Be proactive in your communication, approach your contact and take the first step to get in touch with other people. Be responsive and answer in time if someone contacts you.

8.1.2 Face-to-face communication remains important

Although a number of electronic tools are available for communication, such as the telephone, e-mailing, videoconferences or social media instruments, these tools cannot replace face-to-face communication, which remains important. Face-to-face meetings are often required when somebody is not familiar with a foreign language, as non-verbal communication can help to get a message across. Be aware that misunderstandings and most conflicts can be more effectively solved through face-to-face communication. Also face-to-face meetings are good for people to informally get to know each other. Face-to-face meetings should therefore take place to the extent possible, regardless of what other modes of communication are used (☞ section 9.3).

8.1.3 Be aware of cultural differences

In international networks spanning several countries or even continents, cultural aspects considerably influence communication. All network members, in particular network facilitators, need to be aware of what issues might be sensitive or controversial among members, taking their cultural backgrounds into consideration.

The various cultures represented in international networks enrich their content, contribute to a comprehensive and integrated view of the world, and make the network a more fascinating one. There are, however, complex sides of culture that have to be dealt with as well. It would be naïve to ignore them.

People communicate and share information and knowledge with others in different ways. Some share it proactively without being asked and others keep information to themselves and hoard it like a treasure. Often this does not happen in bad faith, but out of a personal or cultural habit. In some cultures, for example, people may withhold information if they feel it can be used to maintain some sort of relative advantage over others. The network facilitators should be able to understand and address such situations in order to ensure the most appropriate communication and avoid misunderstandings.

One aspect that varies among cultures is seniority and power distance. In some corporations, for example, hierarchy has become flatter in recent years, and the primacy of senior staff or senior officials has been reduced. Yet, in more hierarchical organisations like government bureaucracies and bilateral and multilateral organisations, as well as in some countries, *seniority* is still very important. A similar issue is power distance, where the access to and communication with decision makers or managers is difficult (☞ section 4.3.3). This varies among cultures and organisations. Network facilitators and members have to be aware of and able to deal with seniority and power distance in order to avoid misunderstandings.

A situation that network facilitators often face is people telling them that suggested improvements or changes are not possible or do not work because they are *not appropriate to the specific context and to cultural habits*. This is all too often an excuse to avoid any change altogether. Change always goes along with resistance, as people have to modify their routines and familiar work patterns. In such cases, they find it quite comfortable to hide behind the 'cultural curtain'. Network facilitators are therefore well advised not to be blinded by these excuses. Cultural habits and traditions deserve a lot of respect and are very important. However, they should not be accepted as an excuse to avoid changes.

8.1.4 Language

Language is one of the biggest constraints for communication in international networks, and it poses a challenge that is underestimated far too often. Basically, it is very important for everyone to understand the languages used. This does not only mean understanding the actual working language of the network, it also means understanding different cultural usages of the same language.

In many networks, however, this is not possible. As international networks cover different countries and regions, the largest common denominator is chosen and everybody might feel equally uncomfortable. The language chosen in most networks is English, in some regions French, Spanish or another language. Only too often it is forgotten that these languages are not the mother tongue of many members. The results may be little understanding or lots of misunderstandings. People who are not fluent in the network's official language will be hesitant about entering into discussions and will have difficulties in expressing their opinion clearly. They will also avoid writing letters or e-mails, as they are not willing to risk losing face in public. Those who are not able to speak the network language are excluded from the network. There is no simple way of dealing with different languages however, a couple of measures could be useful.

- **Multi-lingual network facilitators:** Network facilitators have to be aware of the language requirements of the network and need to contribute to mutual understanding. Ideally, the facilitator should be fluent in those languages most used within the network.
- **Regional or local sub-networks:** International networks can set up sub-networks in regional and local languages. The network secretariat has to ensure, in collaboration with regional networks, that basic documents are translated into the respective languages.
- **A website with different languages:** Information on the website could be provided in at least two languages. However, the translation of all the content on a website might be too expensive for some networks. This problem can be dealt with if members of the network use online tools to translate websites. With this function, some web tools give users the possibility to translate any website into a desired language.
- **E-mail discussion groups in different languages:** It is also possible to conduct e-mail discussion groups in different languages by having different facilitators for each discussion group. A summary of the discussions could be translated into other languages and shared within the groups. Some documents or contributions could easily be translated by online websites.
- **Publications:** It is often the case that network publications are written in the language most used by the network. Translations of publications can be made based on demand. Some of the members might also be interested in translating the publications into their own language.

When addressing different languages, the facilitators and network members have to remain flexible and open. Nowadays, technology allows online translations that are not always optimal, but sufficient for ensuring people to understand the content.

8.1.5 State the rules for communication

Rules facilitate interaction among people and reduce transaction costs. Members should therefore agree upon the rules for communication and designate authority to handle the same. However, care must be taken in this regard, as too much regulation or standardisation can stifle or limit effective sharing of information.

Examples for such rules might be the following:

Ensure crisp and informative communication

Communication in a network should be crisp and to the point – not boring or rambling. Applying this principle requires care, and consideration should be given to the nature or purpose of the communication, the language abilities of the members, the medium of communication and the analytical abilities of individuals or groups. In any case, communication should be informative and comprehensive.

Ensure an optimal frequency for communication

You should assess the optimal frequency of communication to ensure a smooth communication flow. The optimal frequency of communication depends on many different factors: the communication mode(s), the nature of the content, the role of members, or the importance of certain individuals. Face-to-face communication among members of a network and with the most important stakeholders should take place at least once a year or every two years. In addition, weekly or at least monthly e-mail contacts should take place in order to keep the network's momentum. In e-mail discussion groups, there may even be exchanges every day at certain times.

Accept dissenting and manage domineering voices

In a network, dissenting voices should be accepted. The network should have ample room for dissenting voices and not impose conformity on its members. This can be achieved by encouraging a culture of accountability for views held and information exchanged.

In a network, an atmosphere of censorship should be avoided at all costs, although the communication rules should clearly state what is acceptable or unacceptable in terms of tone and content. However, it is also important to be able to manage domineering voices so that more quiet members also have a chance to express themselves.

Avoid a sense of hierarchy
No matter how many known 'innovation gurus' or individuals are in the network, a sense of hierarchy should be avoided in its communication. Proactive steps should be taken to ensure that network members, in spite of having different social or professional standing, feel comfortable sharing information; this may involve organising separate discussion sessions, breakout sessions or meetings for different groups of members. However, within the network, all members should have the same opportunity to participate and share their opinion.

CHECKLIST 11: RULES FOR COMMUNICATION

- Ensure crisp and informative communication
- Assess the optimal frequency of communication
- Accept dissenting voices
- Manage domineering voices
- Avoid a sense of hierarchy

8.1.6 Establish a netiquette for online communication
E-mail is often one of the main communication means of online networks. With the increased importance of online communication and discussions, there is an increased potential of making certain 'communication' mistakes that might affect the spirit of your network. There are certain ways of behaving that are considered correct when communicating online. Netiquette stands for Network Etiquette and is a set of rules for behaving properly online. The communication flow within the network and its members will be smoother if a few basic principles of Netiquette are considered:

Remember the human
When you communicate electronically, all you see is a computer screen. You don't have the opportunity to use facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice to communicate; written words are all you have. Thus, it is easy to misinterpret the meaning of a message and to forget that your correspondent is a person. It is important that you are polite and treat others the same way you want to be treated. Remember also that any message you send or post could be saved or easily forwarded to a wider group of people. You have no control over where it goes. If you write something inappropriate, you might be embarrassing yourself. Thus, some tips are important to remember:

- Introduce yourself if you send e-mails to persons you haven't met before.
- Don't forget the signature with your address and phone numbers (recipients may want to contact you).
- Be friendly, polite and considerate and watch your language.
- Ask yourself, 'Would I say this to the person's face?' If the answer is no, reread and rewrite your message.
- Do not write in UPPERCASE, since it is considered as shouting.
- Give other people a chance and space to respond.
- Use I-statements, do not generalise.
- If you have an unsolved issue with anyone or if someone says something that is offensive to you, do not respond to the whole list, but rather in a private e-mail. Settling conflicts by e-mail normally does not work; face-to-face meetings or phone calls are necessary.
- If you do decide to inform someone of a mistake, point it out politely and in private e-mail rather than in public.

Respect other people's time and capacities

When you send an e-mail or post onto an e-mail discussion group, you're taking up other people's time. It's your responsibility to ensure that the time they spend reading your posting is not wasted.

CHECKLIST 12: DOS AND DON'TS FOR ONLINE COMMUNICATION

DOS

- Make sure your messages are clear and logical.
- Use the KISS principle: keep it short and simple.
- Structure your sentences well and avoid using foreign words or technical terms the readers might not understand.
- Always write short and informative subject lines to inform your receiver about the subject of the message.

DON'TS

- Don't send the same note to the same mailing list repeatedly.
- Don't copy e-mails to many people unless they request to be on copy. Before you copy people on your messages, ask yourself whether they really need to know.
- Don't use abbreviations that others might not know.
- Don't address too many different topics in one e-mail; it is better to write two mails on two different topics.
- Don't use the option 'priority mail' unless it is a very urgent matter.
- Don't send personal information or attachments as pictures to the whole mailing list. Do it on private e-mails and to people who would be interested in receiving this information.
- Don't send self-promoting or advertising messages.
- Don't send e-mails with lots of attachments, rather upload documents on a platform, such as *Dropbox* (☞ section 11.2), or on a website and inform people via e-mail where they can find them.

8.2 Ensure knowledge sharing and collaboration

Every network should foster a culture of proactive information and knowledge sharing, where members receive and give information and advice based on their experience and knowledge. Creating this culture is crucial to the network's success and to enriching its members with knowledge. An information and knowledge sharing culture has to be nurtured explicitly among network members. Additionally, it is highly encouraged that network members share the knowledge and information they get from other networks into their network, becoming 'boundary spanners' who enhance further learning.

There are different tools and methods for knowledge sharing that can be used by networks, which are listed below:

CHECKLIST 13: TECHNIQUES FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND LEARNING

Technique	Description
Metaplan technique	The metaplan is a technique for collecting, visualising and analysing ideas and information in a participatory manner during meetings and workshops. The participants have to write their information inputs or ideas in readable handwriting on cards. Different coloured cards may be used for different questions. The cards are collected afterwards and pasted on large pin boards. This enables everybody to read the cards, which can then be grouped, placed in relation to each other or connected with lines to show relationships.
Brain-storming	Brainstorming is an organised approach to producing and collecting ideas. Brainstorming can be done either individually or in a group. In brainstorming sessions in groups, the participants are encouraged to share their ideas freely with one another (there are no bad ideas!). The key to brainstorming is not to interrupt the thought process with discussion. The collection and the analysis are strictly separated. The metaplan technique can be used for subsequent analysis.
Peer assist	Peer assist is a structured process based on mutual respect. A team of people who are working on a project or activity call a meeting or workshop to seek feedback and insights from people from other teams. First, they introduce the background to their project and their capabilities. Then, they express their specific needs and explore, in collaboration with their peers, new solutions or possible ways to cope with problems (also see the description of peer assist in section 10.3).
After action review	An after action review is a structured discussion to learn from recently completed activities or projects. In this discussion, the stakeholders involved participate. They learn by asking what happened, why it happened, what went well, what needs improvement and what lessons can be learned from the experience. The spirit of an after action review is one of openness and learning and is not about problem fixing or criticism. Feedback should be constructive and positive contributions recognised (also see the description of after action review in section 10.3).

Fish bowl	The fish bowl is a special way to structure discussions. Questions for discussion are prepared and considered one at a time. Fish bowl participants are assigned to either a listening or a discussion group. The two separate groups are positioned so that the listening group is seated around the discussion group. The first discussion group has a certain amount of time to discuss one question. During the active discussion, the listening group takes notes and prepares comments. The groups then swap positions, and the listening group provides rebuttals or further examination of the issues discussed and any further issues not discussed previously.
World café	The world café is a method of providing a diverse group of people with an opportunity to share information and insights into complex issues. This method is suitable for large groups of people. A number of questions is prepared and documented on a number of tables. Either a tablecloth (which can be written on) or large note pads are provided at each table. Groups are initially assigned to a table and given a set amount of time to respond to the questions. People are invited to talk in small, intimate groups about topics of interest. They are then asked to rotate to another table and to add to the responses made by previous groups. When the final rotation has occurred, a plenary session is held to create a sense of connection with the wider group. This offers the whole group an opportunity to connect the overall themes or questions presented and talk about the possibility for further action (also see the description of after action review in section 11.2).
Open space	Open space is a method of organising meetings, workshops and conferences. With the support of a moderator, the participants organise themselves and establish and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions. Open space is a proven and effective method of developing strategies to deal with conflicts, to induce change or to include diverse opinions. The method works in groups of 5 to 1,000 people and may last one to three days (also see the description of after action review in section 11.2).

8.3 External communication – promotion of your network

All over the world, thousands of organisations and institutions, NGOs and networks are vying for attention. At the same time, many people are suffering from an overload of information that is hardly manageable anymore. You have to respond to this situation through professional and targeted promotion of your network.

8.3.1 Develop a promotion strategy

To promote your network, you must develop a promotion strategy defining the principal stakeholders of the network, identifying their interests, formulating the messages you would like to convey and showing how you will actually promote the network.

For the promotion strategy, target audiences should be listed and mapped (☞ section 4.3). For each target group, the information needs and appropriate promotion tools should be defined.

8.3.2 Provide targeted information products

Develop information products that are targeted to the demands of different audiences. Avoid sending all the information to everybody and thus, contributing to information overload. Potential members, for example, like to receive technical information and news about the network. Decision makers prefer short information leaflets summarising interesting success stories and impacts. Supporters of the network and potential donors are interested in the annual report, the financial figures and outputs achieved. Try to economise by using the same data for different information products.

Networks often lack hard facts or statistical data that could be used for promotion. Frequently, there is no direct correlation between their services and projects and the impact. A systematic monitoring system will help you to collect not only basic information and data about the networks' services and projects, but also success stories describing practical illustrative examples on a regular basis (☞ section 10.1.5).

8.3.3 Brand activities, publications and projects

A very effective way of communicating the network's activities is by giving its brand to projects, activities and publications of members, along with the network's name and logo. Not only is this an added value for the members, as they can show their stakeholders that they are working in a coordinated way and in partnership, but it also adds to the prestige of the network. It is advisable, however, to develop basic branding rules among network members, defining the type, scope and quality of activities, projects and publications required, permitting them to use the brand or the corporate identity of the network.

8.3.4 Work with mass media

Through mass media like television, radio broadcasting and newspapers, large audiences can be reached. Also social media plays an important role in reaching wider audiences (☞ section 9.2). That's why they are an effective means of promoting the network, raising public awareness and also mobilising decision makers. To achieve good media coverage, networks have to establish professional public relations. The basis for this is a well presented and maintained website, attractive information material about the network and its activities and carefully prepared information. Many networks are also using social media to promote their activities and catch the attention of the media through these channels.

Good coverage of a network and its activities in newspapers, on television, on the radio or on social media not only promotes the network, but also becomes an incentive for decision makers to participate in events organised by the network, as they can show their commitment to the public in this manner (☞ sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4).

Networks should take advantage of the media not only to promote themselves and raise public awareness, but also to share and disseminate information on their knowledge products with a wide audience.

Whenever appropriate, radio broadcasting has proved to be an excellent information delivery mechanism, particularly in areas without Internet access. Community radios play an important role in reaching out to the grass roots. *Community radios* respond to the needs of the community they serve and they contribute to its development in a progressive manner by promoting social change.

8.3.5. Promotion is a continuous task of all members

Promotion is not something you carry out once or twice a year. Rather, it is a continuous activity of all network members and, in particular, of the network secretariat. Networks should make use of every opportunity to show what they are doing and make sure their achievements are visible. There are a lot of ways of doing this: an electronic newsletter, the website, social media, mailings or stands at conferences.

CHECKLIST 14: PROMOTION OF THE NETWORK

- Develop a promotion strategy
- Provide targeted information products
- Brand activities, publications and projects
- Work with the media
- Consider promotion as a continuous task of all members

8.4 Communication strategy

Communication in networks is a given in one way or another and you might have the impression that everything is alright. However, members may not be participating, conflicts may be arising, some people may not be receiving the information they should have or the network's stakeholders may not understand what you are doing. Then you might realise that the network's communication system should have been planned more carefully. Accordingly, you should develop a strategy demonstrating how your network's communication is organised: internally among members and externally with stakeholders. The communication strategy should be in line with your network's mission and goals (☞ section 7.1). It should identify target audiences and define the best ways and mechanisms of communicating with them.

Target audiences are the groups of people that your network is hoping to influence in some way. For a network, there are two types of audiences:

- Internal audiences: the other people who participate and work in the network, such as the board, core group, secretariat and members (☞ sections 4.1 and 4.2)
- External audiences: stakeholders, such as professionals interested in the activities of the network, contributors, media, research institutes and supporting organisations who are potential members (☞ section 4.3)

The ways in which targeted information and communication products and services are developed and used have to be defined:

- Means and tools of communication
- Messages and information
- Frequency of communication
- The people responsible for ensuring a smooth communication flow

8.5 Capacity building for communication

In everyday life, we communicate all the time and we might have the feeling that we know how to communicate. However, the reality in many networks tells a different tale. Effective communication has to be carefully tailored. In particular, the use of the information and communication technologies requires training and capacity building. People's attitudes towards technology can have an influence on how to approach training and capacity building (☞ section 9.5).

8.5.1 Network facilitators and secretariat

First of all, the network facilitator, the staff of the secretariat and the facilitators of online discussion forums or workshops need training on the following:

- How to select the right communication tools
- How to use the various communication tools
- How to facilitate discussions
- How to facilitate online communication
- How to settle conflicts

8.5.2 Network members

Communication training should be provided to network members as well. In particular, this applies to the use of electronic information and communication technologies. Network members should know the following:

- How to write concise e-mails
- How to navigate a website, make contributions to blogs and use social media
- How to participate in online discussion forums and chats
- How to make a good presentation on webinars or workshops
- How to use network online platforms or mailing lists
- How to facilitate a working group at a workshop

For some network members, it may be too expensive or too time consuming to organise or attend training courses. Still, there are a variety of possibilities for training the staff of the secretariat or other network members. Training will always require some resources. In the end, however, lack of training will be much more costly.

Create and seize opportunities to train network members, as given in the following examples.

- The network secretariat or members can write and publish simple and hands-on manuals and guidelines.
- Ideally, websites are set up in a manner requiring no further explanations on how to navigate them. Help sections on the website will assist less experienced visitors.
- The network secretariat can organise training courses for network members. With these courses, basic knowledge can be provided.
- The network secretariat can encourage members to attend courses by selecting interesting ones and informing network members about them.
- Online courses are often cheaper than face-to-face courses, so during an interim period, they can be offered on almost every topic.
- A very effective way of providing training is to combine it with events that would take place anyway. At workshops, new methods could be introduced by a facilitator and tested during the workshop. During conferences, training sessions could complement the agenda.
- Peer groups are very effective for training: groups of people who would like to improve their communication skills and who meet regularly either face-to-face or online. In peer groups, the members have a chance to exchange experiences with others, support each other and give feedback.
- Communication skills can also be improved through coaching by an external professional. The members of the secretariat, in particular, might benefit from working with an external coach.

9 | Tools for communication and collaboration

Nowadays, various tools support communication and collaboration in networks. More and more information and communication technologies are being used. However, traditional means such as meetings and workshops remain important.

This section briefly describes the most important tools for communication and knowledge sharing available for networks, and it sets out their advantages and their disadvantages. It is important to consider that nowadays, the Internet makes it possible to integrate real-time communication with other technologies for better communication and collaboration among network members. It is up to you and the core group to choose which tools are best suited for your network as a whole.

9.1 Real-time online communication tools

When using the following communication tools in networks, time zones need to be considered, as people will be communicating in real time: **people are talking to each other directly and at the same time.**

Telephone and mobile phones

The telephone facilitates frequent interaction. Phone calls are an effective way of communicating once a relationship is established. They are useful for quick and urgent information, to discuss sensitive issues that could be misunderstood if written by e-mail or to talk about confidential matters. For very short messages and reminders, SMS (short message service) or text messaging are also used increasingly.

Nowadays, *voice over Internet protocol (VOIP)* technology provides an opportunity to make telephone calls over the Internet at little cost, thereby revolutionising telecommunication. With services like Skype (☞ section 11.2), free telephone calls are possible and expensive long-distance calls no longer hinder frequent communication among network members.

Phone conferences are an effective alternative to face-to-face meetings. However, there should not be too many participants. When more than seven participants attend a phone conference, coordination might becomes difficult. What is valid for face-to-face meetings holds even more for phone conferences. Careful preparation and facilitation is crucial.

Online chats

Another way of communicating is using online chats, which are online messages, shared in real time with one or more people. When several members participate in an online chat, they have to be prepared and the conversation has to be facilitated carefully, otherwise, the result will be confusing. Online chats can be an effective way of *getting in touch with experts* and of interviewing them without incurring high costs. A network can invite an expert to respond to members' questions on a specific topic.

The advantage of online chats in comparison to phone conferences is that *everything is written down, the conversation moves quickly and it can accommodate large numbers of people.* However, there is often little time to reflect on the postings and the fast speed of discussions can lead to an organised chaos.

Webinars

Web conferencing, sometimes referred to as *webinars* or *online workshops*, are meetings, training events, lectures or short presentations carried out over the Internet, allowing participants in different locations to see and hear the presenter, ask questions and sometimes answer polls. It can include voice- and video- as well as text-based messages.

Webinars are useful since network members can participate in an online meeting, without having to leave their desks. Attendees at a webinar can be at home, in the office or in a coffee shop. However, as with any other electronic tool, users run the risk of technical difficulties, especially if they have limited access to Internet. Each webinar participant has a different computer with a unique operating system configuration, connection speed, Internet browser and software applications. Corporate firewalls can block the connection to the webinar and prevent participants from downloading information; thus, it is important to contact, run tests with and even train participants early enough to ensure that they all have equal access to the webinar session without any technical hurdles. During a webinar, the presenter has virtually no control over the audience: with a muted phone line, a webinar 'participant' can check his e-mail, do other work or surf the Internet. In order to ensure good results from a webinar, it is important to prepare well for it.

9.2 Other online communication tools

When using the following tools as communication means in networks, time differences are not that important, since people will communicate at their own time zone. These types of tools do not require people to communicate simultaneously.

E-mails

E-mails have become a widespread means of communicating and have even begun to replace postal communications. E-mails provide excellent possibilities of cheap and rapid interaction, disseminating information or collecting feedback. E-mail does have problems, however. For instance, senior officials or decision makers may be reluctant to use e-mails as their statements are written down and can be forwarded very quickly to a wide audience. Another disadvantage of e-mails is their perceived anonymity as well as the increasingly informal language. People are generally hesitant to answer e-mails if they do not know the sender.

Additionally, people have increasing difficulties handling the growing number of e-mails they receive every day. Spam – e-mails for promotion – flooding inboxes aggravates this problem. Also, sending e-mails through a distribution list can be detected as spam and thus, important e-mails can end up lost in the spam mail folder (☞ section 8.1.6). In order to avoid this, free online software, such as *SendBlaster* (☞ section 11.2), may facilitate sending large amounts of messages automatically so that they do not end up as spam.

E-mail discussion groups

Many networks use e-mail discussion groups to communicate with their members. E-mails are sent to a server that distributes the messages to all subscribed members. This way, everybody involved in the network can follow the discussions, can take time to reflect on the posts and to compose and edit own contributions. A disadvantage of e-mail discussion groups is that they often generate numerous e-mails that are not read. Skilled facilitation of e-mail discussion groups and the regular synthesising of information can solve this dilemma (☞ section 8.1.6).

In e-mail discussion groups, it is quite common for only a few people to participate actively. The remaining members – also called lurkers – participate passively by reading the contributions (☞ section 4.2.5). Some may become active participants as soon as they are familiar with the community participating in the group. The facilitator could contact them bilaterally to request their contribution to the discussion if it is considered important.

Newsletters

Newsletters are an effective way of *regularly informing the network's members and stakeholders* about on-going activities, interesting events or other relevant information. Newsletters should not be long and should include web links with contact details showing where information is available. Every newsletter should have a disclaimer and instructions about how to unsubscribe. If newsletters are well edited and attractive to read, they remain an effective way to deliver regular information to a wide group of people.

Websites

Websites are an effective way of collecting information and delivering it to a large audience. Access to the Internet is growing rapidly and the number of Internet users is growing worldwide. Nevertheless, networks should be aware that in many places, Internet access is still not available or if it is available, it is very slow.

What is valid for print publications is also true for websites: information must be provided in an *attractive way*. The website must have a simple structure and texts have to be written in a concise way. Networks can help their specific target audience to find information by structuring the websites properly: with pages designed for decision makers, sponsors and contributors, professionals, experts or the media.

Websites must be *updated regularly* and planning for the resources to do this is absolutely necessary. An outdated website is worse than no website at all. Thus website managers are well advised to keep the information up to date and to send reminders to other members responsible for updating information. Websites have become the 'business cards' of networks and should be cared for accordingly.

Blogs

A blog is an online page that serves as a publicly accessible online journal for an individual to record events, experiences, opinions and links to other sites on a regular basis. Blogs often reflect the personality of the author. Networks often use blogs as an alternative to websites for documenting and storing network information and experiences, because they are easier to set up and do not need much technical knowledge. You can either register to a blog site or use a free blog site such as *WordPress* (☞ section 11.2). Writing a good blog can be time consuming and would require good efforts. Considering that the information posted on a blog will be accessible for everyone, it is important that care is taken when a blog is developed and published. The image of your network might be at stake if your blog is inappropriate.

Social media

Social media technologies are web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online and enhance interaction and networking among people. They take on many different forms, including internet forums, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Many networks use social media not only as a platform for exchange among members, but also to promote network activities and topics. Here are some prominent examples of social media:

Social media platforms:

- **Facebook** is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.
- **LinkedIn** is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to keep in touch with or to meet other professionals.

Microblogging tools:

- **Twitter** is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.

Collaboration platforms:

- **Wikipedia** is a free, open content online encyclopaedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles.

Other tools:

- **YouTube or Vimeo** are free video-sharing websites that let registered users upload and share video clips online. To view the videos, you are not required to register.
- **reddit** is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as 'subreddits.' Each subreddit has a specific topic, such as technology, politics or music. reddit site members, also known as 'redditors', submit content, which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.
- **Pinterest** is a social curating website for sharing and categorising images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions, but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them.
- **Instagram** is an online photo and video sharing service that enables users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms.
- **Hootsuit** is a social media management system for brand management. The system's user interface takes the form of a dashboard and supports the integration of various social media platforms.
- **ResearchGate** is a social media site for scientists and researchers to share papers, ask and answer questions and find collaborators.

Social media can easily be used to create cost-effective campaigns that can prove to have successful results for networks. It can also be used to lead audiences to your website, blogs and articles. Social media brings people together, especially when promoting global campaigns and ideas, since it allows people from different geographical locations to express their views on one single platform.

However, social media should be used carefully by networks, since the information that you post will be accessed by a wide audience. For example, if you post something inappropriate on social media, hundreds or thousands of your online audience will know. Also, as third party providers, these platforms cannot offer any kind of liability or support. Thus, your network should explore important questions regarding user privacy before using them. In order to get social media's full effect, you need to understand how it works, when and how to use it and which channels to focus on, depending on your network's goals.

It is recommended that whenever possible, your network uses its own platforms to ensure open sharing among network members. As an added benefit, you won't have to worry about privacy protection issues and you have a clearly defined audience. In addition, you have complete control over your content and more detailed options to restrict or encourage content-sharing.

9.3 Face-to-face tools

Face-to-face contact remains an essential core activity of networks. In spite of online information and communication technologies, *face-to-face events remain important for enhancing knowledge sharing and collaboration* (☞ section 8.2 and 9.3). They are essential for establishing trusting relationships, settling conflicts, discussing complex topics or exploring questions in more depth.

Workshops and conferences

The organisation of workshops and conferences is a core activity of most networks and is used to convene a large number of participants. In general, the official goal is to address a specific topic or theme with presentations, case studies, working groups and (panel) discussions. However, most workshops and conferences are excellent means of liaising with other network members and stakeholders to share ideas and discuss on-going projects in separate meetings.

Conferences mainly serve as a means to obtain an overview on certain topics or to raise the awareness of a wider audience. For in-depth discussions and intensive interaction workshops with a small circle of participants are more effective. It is also important to provide enough free time and space for socialising informally during workshops or conferences, so that valuable spin-offs are produced.

Badly prepared and conducted face-to-face events lead to lengthy sessions and unsatisfactory results. You are well advised to prepare network conferences and workshops as carefully as possible. Often, participants have to fly in from all over the world and you should do everything possible to achieve maximum results out of meetings.

Face-to-face events are much more efficient and satisfying if you use a variety of methods that will help people to learn from one another and share information with each other (☞ section 8.2). Familiarise yourself with these methods by consulting one of the many toolboxes available on the Internet, reading a book on workshop methods or attending a training course.

Some tips for ensuring successful face-to-face events are presented below:

CHECKLIST 15: TIPS FOR ORGANISING FACE-TO-FACE EVENTS

PREPARATION

- Announce the date of the event well in advance
- Define and communicate the main goals and the expected results of the event
- Contact participants and collect possible discussion points from them
- Draft the agenda in advance, showing how much time is available for each topic
- Prepare presentations and presenters
- Prepare and share the documents in good time so that everybody can read them before the event

CONDUCTING THE EVENT

- Facilitate the event, explain the procedures and document the sessions
- Use a wide variety of methods for interaction, sharing and learning
- Stick to the schedule
- Plan the follow-up by defining tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines

FOLLOW-UP

- Make all relevant documents and presentations available to everybody
- Write a report of the event, including tasks, deadlines and responsibilities
- Send the report to every participant no later than two weeks after the event
- Regularly review the task list

Costs become an issue for participation in international workshops and conferences. Attendance is still too expensive for many people. Fortunately, it is usually possible to find financial support for those genuinely interested in attending (☞ section 6.2.2).

Other face-to-face activities

Events like concerts, exhibitions or different types of live performances are an effective means of raising the awareness of stakeholders and the public at large about the activities of the network. Events are often not only used to convey a (political) message, but also to rally support for certain topics or for fundraising (☞ section 6.2.4). Organising these events provides you with the opportunity to invite important decision makers and raise their awareness of the network.

Field trips, exchange visits and study tours provide the means of exploring and sharing practical examples of good practices or problems among network members, interested stakeholders and decision makers. They can produce quicker results than lengthy discussions or reports. Direct contact transmits a lot of information in a short time and makes participants aware of what should be done or avoided.

9.4 Printed publications

Printed publications are a format widely used by networks to provide information about their activities. Publications enjoy a high degree of credibility, but the abundance of publications has led to a situation in which some are no longer being read. Many people do not have the time to read lengthy reports. So publications should be written in a concise and understandable manner, technical language and abbreviations must be avoided and the text should be illustrated with examples, graphs and pictures.

There is a wide variety of types of publications: books, reports, fact sheets, brochures, leaflets, policy briefs, flyers, manuals and guidelines. The choice of a publication format should depend on the target audience. Scientists or experts prefer a book or report that is reasonably detailed. However, decision makers prefer short documents, brochures or policy briefs that give them quick snippets of information. A good size for these documents is two pages. Longer reports should always contain an executive summary highlighting the most important messages in the publication.

Finally, in many cases it is very useful to provide electronic versions of publications, e.g. as PDF files, which are available for download from a network's website or are disseminated electronically. This way of disseminating information is quite cheap and those interested can download the publications at any time.

9.5 How to choose the right tools

The variety of communication tools sometimes makes it difficult to choose the right one. A number of issues have to be considered in selecting appropriate communication tools.

People think, share, learn and *communicate in different ways*. Some prefer 'traditional' means of communication, such as face-to-face contacts or writing letters so that statements can be prepared carefully. Others favour phone calls or sending e-mails.

There are three types of users: those who are keen to use technology and enjoy using it, those who are hesitant to use technology and prefer to wait to be convinced by it and those who are resistant to technology because they feel intimidated and do not want to try it.

Last but not least, access to the Internet can still be slow, unreliable or simply too expensive in some areas. Some developing countries are catching up quickly, but rural areas in particular often lag behind.

The appropriate means and tools for communication depend upon the objective and the *nature of the relationship*. When it comes to exploring a topic in depth or developing complex projects, workshops are indispensable. Rapid feedback and ideas can be collected easily by e-mail or online discussion groups. To establish a new relationship, a formal letter is more appropriate than an e-mail. Once a relationship has been established, an informal phone call or an e-mail will be faster and easier. However, dissension or conflicts are preferably settled in face-to-face meetings.

All these considerations suggest that there is no golden rule governing which of these tools should be used. The network facilitator should be aware of the different types of users and provide them with support in order to make best use of communication tools. Also, a set *mix of tools* is the best way to communicate in a network and the best tool can be chosen to fit specific objectives and situations.

CHECKLIST 16: TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Way or tool	Objective	Prerequisites	Costs
Online information and communication tools			
Telephone, VOIP (Skype)	For follow-up, information briefs, to clarify personal or confidential issues	Access to telephone or VOIP	Quite low if local or VOIP
Online chats	Real time discussion and exchange on certain topics	Access to the Internet and a virtual chat room	Low
Webinars	In particular coordination of projects, training, online conferencing	Access to the Internet	Quite low, you need software
E-mails	Information briefs, queries, maintaining relationships	Access to the Internet	Low
E-mail discussion groups	Discussing topics, collecting ideas, receiving feedback and support from peers	Access to the Internet, a skilled facilitator, resources for the facilitator	Quite low
Newsletters	Information briefs on news and events	Access to the Internet, a good compiler and editor	Quite low
Websites	General information, dissemination of publica-tions, yellow pages, chat rooms or discussion lists	Budget for establishment and maintenance, access to the Internet, editing and regular updates	High
Blogs and social media	Communication, sharing information, networking, posting ideas, campaigning	Access to the Internet	Low

Way or tool	Objective	Prerequisites	Costs
Face-to-face or combined tools			
Workshops and conferences	For presentations, formal and informal discussions, building up and maintaining relationships	Good organisation and facilitation skills, good peer reviewers, venue	Very high
Events	To raise the attention of a wider public	Good organisation skills	Very high
Field trips, exchange visits and study tours	To visualise problems, to create ownership	Good organisation skills	Very high
Printed publications	In-depth information about certain topics	Good writing skills, editing, distribution channels, good peer reviewers	High

10 | Network monitoring, evaluation and reporting

A very important part of network management is **monitoring, evaluation** and **reporting** on your network to ensure accountability vis-à-vis network members and stakeholders, and to contribute to the learning process of the network. On the one hand, as network manager, you will often have to decide which aspects of your network are worth keeping up and which ones need to be re-adjusted or changed. Monitoring and evaluation will help you take such decisions in a timely manner. On the other hand, you will be under pressure to report to stakeholders that your network is achieving the expected results with the available resources and that it is managed in an efficient and effective way. Taking stock of and reporting on what your network has achieved is a matter of continuous learning and adaptation that should not be taken for granted.

As we have seen in this guide, networks are complex systems that function differently from organisations thus, the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of networks should be systematic, but should also take their dynamic nature into account.

10.1 Planning the monitoring of your network

Monitoring is the on-going observation and measurement of the progress and achievements being made by the network. It consists of an 'internal' measurement system that enables to check if the network is operating according to the requirements and the expectations of members and stakeholders. Thus, often the **efficiency** and the **effectiveness** have to be monitored periodically. Normally, the monitoring of the network should be carried out every six months to a year. A good monitoring plan will not only allow you to take effective and timely decisions regarding the adjustments needed to enhance network activity, but it will also save you time, efforts and resources.

10.1.1 Define the purpose

The first question to answer is 'What for do you need to monitor the network?' In order to answer this question, take the vision, mission and goals of your network into consideration (☞ section 7.1). Typically, you will need to monitor your network in order to be able to report to funders and members on the network's achievements; you have to make decisions about how to best manage your network; or you have to gather lessons learned about the performance of your network. Whatever the purpose is, it is important that it is agreed and shared by the secretariat, the core group of the network and key members and stakeholders. Then, the network will be ready to get feedback from the monitoring information collected and to work according to its recommendations.

10.1.2 Define the information you need

It is important to identify the information you need early enough, keeping in mind that what you are looking for is measurable evidence about your network. Considering that some aspects of networks cannot necessarily be measured, qualitative information might help to look at important areas of observation from a wider perspective. Qualitative information can help to identify and detect unintended results, understand how different aspects relate to each other and why certain things are happening within your network.

In section 11.3.4, you will find a list of the most useful questions or issues used for monitoring networks.

10.1.3 Assess the resources you need

To monitor a network, the secretariat and other stakeholders involved will need time and skills to collect, systemize and analyse data as well as to prepare a report. As we have seen before, the concept of 'shared leadership' (☞ section 4.1) should also be applied when monitoring your network. At early stages, the secretariat or the core group should know who will be responsible for which monitoring activity and ideally, members will be also involved at least in some of the stages of the monitoring exercise. Involving key members can ensure the ownership of results and it can lead to a collaborative exercise. Members will have the opportunity to learn from each other about what is working well in the network and what needs to be adjusted.

10.1.4 The monitoring report

The network monitoring report is done mainly to encourage network leaders to use the results and to provide resource material for evaluations (☞ section 10.3). The report is also important for learning, capacity building and accountability. It should be coherent, cohesive, objective and well structured, building logically from the summary through to the conclusions and recommendations. Quotes, testimonials, diagrams, figures and tables help to support the main argument presented in the report. The tone in which the report is written is important and should depend on the kind of evaluation carried out as well as on the people who will be reading it. Before the report is written, it is important to identify who is the audience of the evaluation. There may be multiple audiences, each with their own requirements. For networks, typical audiences are funding agencies, partner organisations, the steering committee, core group members, the secretariat and members.

COMMON STRUCTURE OF AN M&E REPORT

- Title page: Name of the authors and date
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents
- Executive summary: It should contain the main reasons for writing the report, the main findings, conclusions and recommendations. It should consist of two to three pages. The conclusions and recommendations can be written in the form of bullet points
- Main Report
  - **Introduction**: background information and context
  - **Results**: report on activities, finances and accounts during reported period
  - **Conclusions and recommendations**
  - **Lessons learned**
- Annexes: ToRs, timetable, people interviewed, list of documents used

Pay attention to the executive summary, main findings and conclusions and recommendations sections, since they are the sections that are often mostly read.

10.1.5 Dissemination of results

Before the report is disseminated, main results should be discussed among the steering committee, core group and the secretariat. Once the report has been approved by all the parties agreed in your governance structure (☞ section 6.1), the results should be presented and disseminated to the various target audiences. You need to communicate effectively and appropriately to each audience. Different elements of the report could be shared differently with different audiences. A report can be presented in written form, orally or visually.

10.2 Selected methods for monitoring networks

In order to select the most appropriate monitoring methods, you need to be clear about the questions to be answered, and you need to know the resources available in your network. Considering that networks are about relationships, monitoring methods should consist of elements responding to their dynamic characteristics: they have to be simple, include learning and feedback loops and address the unexpected. It is important to apply different methods that best fit your network requirements. Some of the methods presented here can be applied simultaneously or independently, depending on the available resources of your network. All these methods can be used to collect information systematically. Keep in mind that it is better not to collect more data than you need, but make sure to collect enough information to produce a useful monitoring report.

A health check for monitoring the performance of your network

This method will demonstrate if your network is operating correctly, using the different development levels addressed in this guide. More information about the origins of this method can be found in the following books in sections 11.1.15 and 11.1.16. The way it works is to assess how your network is fulfilling a set of criteria at different levels of network evolution as presented in the Flipchart at the beginning of this guide (☞ section Flowchart). By answering the different questions, you will be able to monitor your network's performance at different levels. In case there are issues which are not yet well addressed by your network, you will have to review and adapt them as suggested below:

LEVEL 1: MONITOR THE SET UP THE NETWORK

- Do you have a core group of about three to five leaders who are firmly committed to setting up the network? (☞ section 4.1.1)
- Have you identified a network facilitator? Does he/she have the knowledge, skills and qualities to coordinate the activities of your network? (☞ section 4.1.2)
- Do you have a distinctive network idea and is it shared by others? (☞ section 5.1.1)
- Have several people or organisations confirmed that they agree with the rationale of your planned network and that they really need it? (☞ section 5.1.1)
- Have you checked whether other networks are already covering the thematic area of your network? (☞ section 5.1.2)
- Could you explain what will be the value added by your network? (☞ section 5.1.2 and 5.3.2)
- Is there a favourable context to set up your specific network? (☞ section 5.1.3)
- Have you identified a number of potential members who support and adhere to the network's concept? (☞ sections 4.2 and 5.1.3)
- Do you have the support of your superior or stakeholders? Are there allies who could be of strategic value for the network? (☞ sections 4.3 and 5.1.3)
- Have you reserved a reasonable amount of time and resources to set up the network? (☞ section 5.2.1)

If you answered all these questions with a YES, you might go to the next stage. If you answered some of these questions with a NO, you have to go back to the respective section and adapt changes in your network accordingly. If you answered the majority with NO, then you have to consider if it is worth setting up the network.

LEVEL 2: MONITOR THE STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

- Have you agreed and defined the network's organisational elements and functions? Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined? (☞ section 6.1.1)
- Are the network policies and rules clear and well communicated to members and stakeholders? (☞ section 6.1.2)
- Are the vision, mission and goals of the network clearly defined and well communicated? Can members identify and relate to the vision, mission and goals of the network? (☞ section 7.1)
- Has there been 'mission creep' outside the agreed thematic, organisational or geographic boundaries? (☞ section 7.1)
- Do you have a network strategy and an operational plan? (☞ sections 7.1 and 7.2)
- Do you have a communication strategy in line with your network strategy? (☞ section 8.4)
- Have you secured enough funding that will allow you to cover operational costs (such as the secretariat work and communication) and to carry out planned activities? (☞ section 6.2)

If you answered all these questions with a YES, you might go to the next stage. If you answered some of these questions with a NO, you have to go back to the respective section and adapt changes in your network accordingly. If you answered the majority with NO, you have to go back to level 1: set up the network.

LEVEL 3: MONITOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK

- Does the network have core services and projects in line with your operational objectives? Are different members involved in the implementation of projects or in the delivery of services? Do you have mechanisms in place to ensure quality control of network services and projects? (☞ section 7.5)
- Are there appropriate rewards and incentives in place to motivate members to participate in the network? (☞ section 5.3)
- Is the network promoting knowledge creation and sharing among members? Do members have a sense that they are gaining new knowledge thanks to their participation in the network? (☞ section 8.2)
- Is the network's fostering communication among members and with stakeholders? Does the network have the appropriate communication tools and mechanisms for communication? (☞ sections 8 and 9)
- Are you promoting the network's activities through different channels? Is the network well-known among practitioners and organisations working in the same thematic area of the network? (☞ section 8.3)
- Do you and the members consider your network to be innovative and continuously evolving? (☞ section 6.3)
- Is the performance of the network periodically monitored? Have you conducted an external evaluation of your network? Did key network members participate in both processes? (☞ sections 10.1 and 10.3)
- Is the leadership of the network ready to receive feedback from monitoring and evaluation exercises and to make the respective adjustments to the network? (☞ section 10.2)

If you answered all these questions with a YES, you have to keep up with the good work in managing your network. If you answered some of these questions with a NO, you have to go back to the respective section and adapt changes in your network accordingly. If you answered the majority with NO, you have to go back to level 2: structure the network.

It may also be important to conduct an external evaluation of your network. Depending on the results of the evaluation, you can either reinvent it or make the necessary adjustments. Otherwise, you should consider closing the network.

Monitoring failing symptoms of your network

Another way of monitoring performance of your network is by identifying and addressing its failing symptoms. More information about the origins of this method is to be found in the following books in sections 11.1.15 and 11.1.16. According to research and experience with networks there are several key factors that affect the success or failure of a network. These are presented in the following table:

Success Factors	Failing symptoms and underlying causes	Proposed actions for handling or avoiding the failures
Leadership	■ **There is no leadership of the network** – The network facilitator does not fulfil his/her role as a coordinator – The network facilitator is not committed to the network ■ **The network facilitator is too dominant or too insecure/unsure** – The network facilitator does not have the knowledge, skills, abilities or time to lead the network ■ **Too much activity for the secretariat to handle** – Activities are on the shoulders of one member or organisation – No clear understanding of the roles and functions within the network – No sense of shared leadership ■ **There is no fully dedicated core group of leaders** – Core group members are uncertain about their roles and responsibilities	■ **Re-establish the leadership and make changes to the core group and/or the facilitator** (☞ section 4.1) ■ **Review your organisational chart and re-assign roles and responsibilities** (☞ section 6.1.1) ■ **Conduct a new stakeholder map** (☞ section 4.3.1) **and re-consider your partnerships with external stakeholders and decision makers** (☞ sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.3)
Shared objectives, aims and interests	■ **The network does not have an identity** – Vision and purpose of network are being questioned – No shared goal – The network does not have a real focus and no real reason for existing – There are too many objectives and there is no focus on the most important ones – Members have a different understanding of the purpose of the network	■ **Re-consider the demand for the network and re-work its rationale** (☞ sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2) ■ **Adjust the strategy and the operational plan of your network** (☞ sections 7.1 and 7.2)

Governance and structure	■ The principles, procedures, structure and regulation mechanisms within the network are not clear ■ No core or insufficient funding to support network activities ■ The network does not have the support of key decision makers or stakeholders	■ Re-define your network guidelines (☞ section 6.1.2) ■ Adjust the funding mechanisms of the network (☞ section 6.2) ■ Engage key decision makers in network activities (☞ section 4.3.4)
Benefit for members	■ Few members participate in network activities or have little time to participate in network activities – Mistrust – Conflict among members – Perceived insufficient delivery of value for members – Members do not have the skills, interest and experience to be part of the network – Members do not have the endorsement and support of their organisations	■ Re-establish or adjust your membership base (☞ section 4.2) ■ Adjust the way members are being motivated and encouraged to participate (☞ section 5.3) ■ Re-adjust your mechanisms for communication and knowledge sharing (☞ sections 8.1 and 8.2) ■ Re-connect with decision makers and stakeholders and encourage their support to their staff by providing incentives and rewards for participation (☞ sections 5.3.3 and 4.3)
Service delivery	■ The network is neither dynamic nor active – The intended services and projects have not been defined – The network is delivering few services – The quality of the services is low – No regular activities	■ Review the strategy of the network and re-define its services and projects (☞ section 7) ■ Ensure the quality control of services (☞ section 7.8)
Communi-cation	■ Inadequate communication and sense of disconnectedness – Information overload – Information is not being shared – Insufficient technological infrastructure – Technology is not user-friendly	■ Review or re-adjust your internal communication approach (☞ section 8.1) and strategy (☞ section 8.4) ■ Continue providing capacity building for communication (☞ section 8.5) ■ Adapt the tools for communi-cation and collaboration (☞ section 9)

Some symptoms will be more permanent than others and it is unlikely that all of them occur simultaneously. Some will be more intense than others and some will only be temporary. In that sense, it is important to tackle those symptoms that affect the network's performance in a stronger way. If the network has too many failing symptoms that are important and you cannot tackle them in a timely manner, then you have to consider if it is worth continuing with the network.

Contributions assessment

The contributions assessment (☞ section 11.1.11) aims at revealing what people are willing and can contribute to the network. It allows monitoring the resources it has access to, how they might be shared, multiplied or exchanged. As opposed to the needs assessment, the contributions assessment allows the network to assess how members' contributions enable to meet the 'network advantage'; in other words: if network members contribute over time and how that contribution has added value to the network. The contributions assessment can be carried out through interviews or surveys or during a workshop. It is important that you collect information directly from network members.

The following rules have to be considered if you carry out a contributions assessment:

- Be clear about what the network is aiming for in order to focus the contributions around those aims and see how the contributions realise those aims
- Focus on contributions and not on needs or wishes
- Define clearly who the contributors are and how they are delivering their contributions
- Assess what the secretariat or core group can do to enable other members to contribute more effectively

Monitoring network's knowledge sharing and communication activities and tools

In networks, the effectiveness of knowledge sharing and communication activities and tools requires periodic monitoring. The questions to answer are:

- Was the development of the communication and knowledge sharing activities planned adequately?
- How could communication and knowledge sharing activities be more effective?
- Were network objectives achieved with the support of communication and knowledge sharing activities?
- What unforeseen circumstances affected the success of the communication and knowledge sharing activities?
- What steps can be taken to improve the success of future communication and knowledge sharing activities?

The information can be collected from minutes of network's conference calls and meetings; contracts with members, workshop reports, newspaper articles, attendance registers, publications' distribution records and website statistics.

Anecdotal information and stories

In many situations, hard facts or statistical data about networks are lacking. It is often difficult to show the impact of networks and what they have achieved if there is no data available. A practical way of overcoming this problem is by collecting anecdotal information and stories, which can be used to compellingly describe progress, success, failure and evolution of a network. The systematic collection of stories should lead to the setting up of cause-effect connections. Only systematic collection ensures the reliability of the measurement. Stories and anecdotes could be collected through storytelling, interviews and surveys. These anecdotes and stories should be written down and used in network communications.

Membership surveys

Surveys are useful for gathering numerical data by collecting answers to specific questions and are good tools for monitoring the opinion of members about products and services of a network. Due to the relative ease with which surveys can be distributed, they are particularly useful for gathering data from large groups of people; thus, they allow you to get quantifiable information from many people quickly and easily. They are useful for collecting baseline information, for before and after comparisons. Surveys can be completed anonymously; often their administration is inexpensive if they are done online. They are commonly used to obtaining information about opinions and attitudes of network members. The cheapest surveys are those that are short, simple and self-administered. There are also online surveys that are practical to use (☞ section 11.2). If the survey includes demographic questions about participants, you can correlate performance and satisfaction among different groups of users. Surveys can be administered in person, by mail, via the phone, via e-mail or online.

10.3 Evaluation of your network

Evaluation is an in-depth 'external' measurement system that enables to assess the extent to which the vision, mission and goals of a network are consistent with the priorities and needs of members and stakeholders. The evaluation of networks also takes into account the context in which the network is embedded or which it wants to influence; that means the interplay and interconnection between the larger world and the network. It addresses the changes observed in the knowledge base of members;

and in the way they communicate and collaborate with each other. Thus, the relevance and impact of the network have to be evaluated.

Evaluations draw heavily on the data generated through monitoring; thus, the network monitoring report will become an important source of information for evaluation. Normally an evaluation of the network will be required about every three to five years. Depending on the funds available, it is often advisable to engage an external evaluator or a team of evaluators to carry out the evaluation of the network. Also you can consider conducting peer assists, where other networks carry out the evaluation. Below, some evaluation methods are presented.

Results-based monitoring and evaluation

A good approach to evaluation is the results-based method, which can provide evidence that the network contributes to its short- and long-term objectives. It can also help to assess the progress the network is making to achieve valuable results. This method is used often to monitor and evaluate projects, but it can be adapted to networks by addressing the following criteria and questions:

Relevance	■ Are the vision, mission and objectives of the network still valid? ■ What is the added value of the network for the members? ■ Is the network doing things right?
Impact	■ What has happened as a result of the network's activities? ■ What has changed thanks to the products and services of the network?
Effectiveness	■ Is the network doing the right thing? ■ To what extent have the objectives or goals of the network been achieved? ■ Is the network fully realising the advantages of working together?
Efficiency	■ How economically does the network produce its services and products? ■ Does the network have the required resources to operate?
Structure and governance	■ How is the network organised? ■ Who is taking decisions and how are decisions made? ■ Are structural and governance issues supporting or impeding the network's effectiveness?

Outcome mapping

Outcome mapping (☞ section 11.1.28) is an innovative methodology for planning, monitoring and the evaluation of projects with a strong focus on participatory learning. It is suitable for networks because it focuses on the changes in behaviour, relationships or actions of those individuals, groups or organisations with whom the network interacts. This method emphasises on flexibility, reflection and continuous learning. It is particularly applicable for complex and dynamic initiatives like networks and is useful for supporting the development and assessment of network theories of change, promoting learning and improvement by incorporating feedback. There are generally three stages to outcome mapping:

Intentional Design Stage	It helps the network to establish consensus on the macro level changes it will help to bring about and plan the strategies it will use. ■ Why? – the vision to which the network wants to contribute ■ Who? – the network's boundary partners ■ What? – the tangible changes that are being sought; and ■ How? – the network's contribution to the change process among its boundary partners
Outcome and Performance Monitoring stage	This stage provides a framework for the on-going monitoring of network's actions and the boundary partners' progress toward the achievement of outcomes based largely on systemized self-assessment.
Evaluation Planning	It helps the network identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan that makes good use of resources and provides strategic benefit to the network.

The following rules have to be considered in carrying out outcome mapping:

- Allocate enough resources for capacity building of facilitators or key partners
- Plan your resources to enable an adequate number of personal meetings and visits for monitoring, follow-up and clarification
- Reserve adequate time for reflection and conceptualisation of how to use the method
- Involve the services of external consultants and professionals to apply outcome mapping for the first time and gradually build the capacity of network members to do it themselves
- Develop the outcome map one step at a time with the involvement of the people that need to understand the map
- Be flexible and adaptable in applying the guidelines for constructing the outcome map

After action review

After action review is an approach that seeks to provide insights into what happened or why it happened and helps to evaluate what goes well, what does not go well, what needs to improve and what lessons can be learned from an experience. It is a simple tool and is useful in giving various stakeholders an opportunity to share their views and ideas. This method provides an opportunity for network members and key stakeholders to reflect together about the network's performance and achievements.

There are many different ways to conduct an after action review, but the whole process should be kept as simple and easy to remember as possible.

It could be carried out in the form of a workshop where the participants of the after action review reflect on the following questions:

- What was supposed to happen?
- What actually happened?
- Why were there differences?
- What worked?
- What didn't?
- Why?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What did we achieve?
- What were the successes? Why? How can we repeat the successes?
- What was disappointing? Why? How can we avoid them in future?

Post the questions on flipchart sheets prior to the session. Write answers on the sheets as the session progresses. An uninvolved note-taker should be asked to take notes. This will make sure lessons learned are captured. Put action plans in place to sustain the successes and to improve upon the shortfalls.

The following rules have to be considered when carrying out an after action review:

- Appoint a facilitator to support the discussion and to summarise the lessons learned
- Create a supporting and learning environment where participants have a positive and learning attitude and should avoid criticising or blaming one another for failures
- Actionable recommendations should be as specific as possible
- Carry it out immediately after an event that needs to be assessed or reflected upon, while participants are still available and memories are fresh

Peer assists

Peer assists are practical ways of evaluating your network by other network practitioners, may they be members or external network managers. These so-called peers should perceive themselves as being at the same hierarchical level and give recommendations in a helpful and collegial way. Peer assists allow critical feedback on performance by providing a 'safe' and protected space. One reason for creating protected spaces is the need to learn from failures and mistakes: a valuable source for new insights. For this, however, cultural aspects have to be considered. Most people do not like to share their negative experiences. In some cultures, admitting mistakes means losing face and may have drastic consequences. In other cultures, people rarely feel responsible for any failures. In addition, you have to take into consideration that some members will be reluctant to share failures or mistakes in public due to their status. Thus, proper planning of the peer assist process is important in order to ensure good results of the exercise. In order to conduct a peer assist, the following steps should be included:

Preparation	Clarify who will be involved; define the roles and responsibilities, the goals of the peer assists and how the results will be documented. At this stage you should select the peers that will conduct the evaluation.
Conducting the peer assist	The peers, who are conducting the evaluation collect, analyse and document their observations and findings. Meetings and workshops with different network stakeholders could be organised. In order to ensure the likelihood of a successful peer assist, make sure that parties with experience in evaluation and self-assessment are involved in the process. The peers have to be aware that they have to remain flexible and open to listen and to learn from the participant stakeholders.
Peer assist report	Once the main sessions have taken place, the peer assist team should prepare a report providing the information in a transparent way and including a set of realistic recommendations. The peer assist may: ■ Confirm what is already known ■ Provide or support ideas for improvement ■ Detect blind spots and new areas for improvement ■ Highlight strengths which can be utilised
Presentation of results	Peers should make a presentation of the main results of the review. All the people involved in the process should participate, if possible.

The following rules have to be considered if your network has decided to undergo a peer assist:

- Be cooperative, supportive and non-judgmental in your responses and feedback and remember that people will do the best they can with the resources they have
- Be as honest as you can – you do not have to look competent in front of the group. It is vital to learn from mistakes
- Declare any conflicts of interest
- Be alert to and respect differences in culture, gender and professional orientation that may emerge from differing opinions, points of view or ways of working

10.4 Applying results and recommendations from evaluations

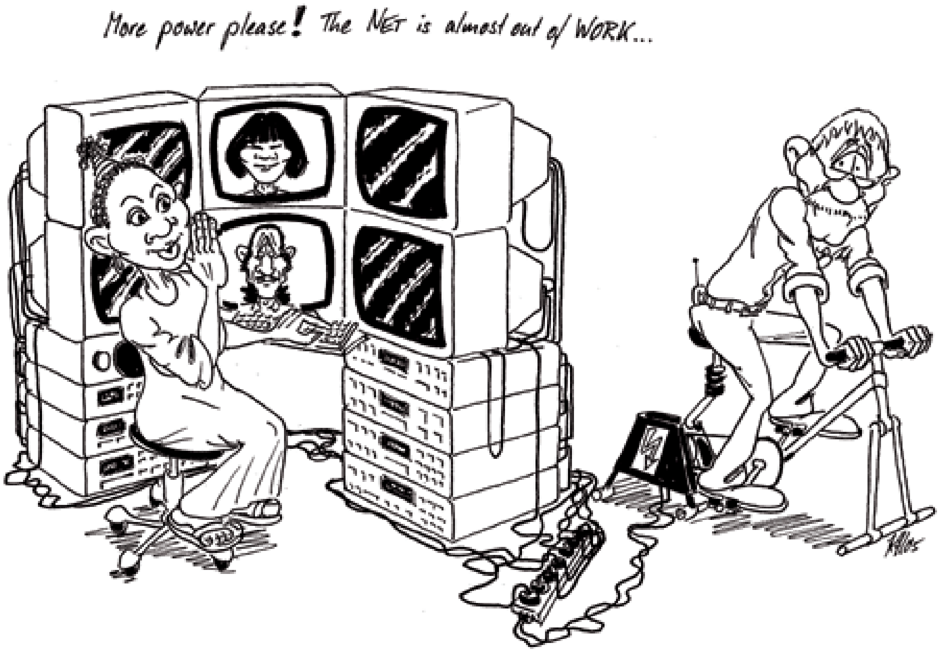
After the evaluation has been concluded, you might find the need to change a number of things so as to enhance the work of the network. To do this, you will need the support of the steering committee, your core group and your team in the secretariat. Informing members and stakeholders about the evaluation is particularly important because if the appropriate members and stakeholders do not take it on board, the evaluation exercise may not meet its objectives. If key members and stakeholders are kept informed from the start about the evaluation and its progress, they might be more likely to be receptive to its conclusions and recommendations and to apply them.

CHECKLIST 17: NETWORK MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

- Plan well the monitoring of your network
- Involve key members and stakeholders from the beginning
- Ensure enough resources for monitoring and evaluation of your network
- Use a variety of methods for collecting information
- Report on monitoring results regularly
- Use external people or peers to evaluate your network

11 | Resources for networking

This section lists selected resources for networking, such as useful books, publications, toolkits and websites. The resources are sorted according to topics and listed in alphabetical order.



11.1 Publications

Communities of practice

Publications about setting up and managing communities of practice:

1. **Snyder, William M.; de Souza Briggs, Xavier (2003)**
   'Communities of Practice: A New tool for Government Managers'. IBM Center for the Business of Government. Arlington, VA
2. **Wenger, Etienne; Mc Dermott, Richard; Synder, William M. (2002)**
   'Cultivating Communities of Practice – A Guide to Managing Knowledge'. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press

Creative Commons

3. **Schmidt, Philipp (2009):**
   'Commons-based peer production and education'. Free Culture Research Workshop, Harvard University

Fundraising

A general hands-on guide for fundraising is:

4. **Mutz, John; Murray, Katherine (2000)**
   'Fundraising for Dummies'. Foster City, Canada: IDG Books Worldwide

Knowledge management

Publications that explain about knowledge management:

5. **Collison, Chris; Parcell, Geoff (2004)**
   'Learning to Fly – Practical Knowledge Management from Leading and Learning Organisations'. Chichester: Capstone
6. **Davenport, Thomas H.; Prusak, Laurence (2000)**
   'Working Knowledge – How Organisations Manage What They Know'. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press

Management

Networking always goes along with changes. A useful book with many tips is:

7. **Doppler, Klaus; Lauterburg, Christoph (2000)**
   'Managing Corporate Change'. Berlin: Springer

For a book addressing intercultural cooperation in a comprehensive way, see:

8. **Hofstede, Gert Jan; Hofstede, Geert (2004)**
   'Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind'. New York: McGraw-Hill

A book about how to do strategic planning:

9. **James, Rick; Hailey, John (2007)**
   'Capacity Building for NGOs – making it work' INTRAC

A book describing what effective management is in a simple and practical way:

10. **Malik, Fredmund (2003)**
    'Managing Performing Living – Effective Management for a New Era'. München: DVA

Monitoring and evaluation

Comprehensive guides for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects and networks:

11. **Church, Madeline; Bitel, Mark; Amstrong, Kathleen; Fernando, Priyanthi; Gould, Helen; Joss, Sally; Marwaha-Diedrich, Manisha; de la Torre, Ana Laura; Vouhé, Claudy (2002)**
    'Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New Thinking On Evaluating the Work of International Networks'. DFID, London, UK
12. **Castañer, Eva; Doi Germann, Dorsi (2011)**
    'Monitoring and evaluation for TVET-related development interventions – A guide for practitioners'. GIZ Cairo and FAKT Consult for Management, Training and Technologies. Stuttgart, Germany
13. **United Nations Development Programme (2009)**
    'Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results'. New York

A practical guide for evaluating effectively the delivery of information products and services:

14. **Visser-Mabogunje, Lola; Cummings, Sara; Gast, Lisette (1997)**
    'Smart Toolkit for evaluating information products and services'. ACP-EC Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Netherlands; the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), the Netherlands; The International Institute for Communication and Development IICD, the Netherlands

Networks

Publications on how to effectively manage knowledge and other networks:

15. **Back, Andrea; Enkel, Ellen; von Krogh, Georg (2007)**
‘Knowledge networks for Business Growth’. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer
16. **Back, Andrea; von Krogh, Georg; Seufert, Andreas; Enkel, Ellen (2010)**
‘Putting Knowledge networks into Action – Methodology, Development, Maintenance’. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer
17. **Bacon, Jono (2009/2012)**
‘The Art of Community. Building the New Age of Participation’. O’Reilly Media, Inc., Sebastopol, CA
18. **Benkler, Yonchai (2006)**
‘The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom’. Yale University Press. New Haven and London
19. **Creech, Heather; Williard, Terry (2001)**
‘Strategic Intentions: Managing Knowledge networks for Sustainable Development’. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development
20. **Lerch, Frank; Sydow, Joerg and Duschek, Stephan (2009)**
‘Network Consulting in Regional Clusters’. Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
21. **Liebler, Claudia; Ferri, Marisa (2004)**
‘NGO Networks: Building Capacity in a Changing World’. A study supported by Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance – Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation
22. **McLeod Grant, Heather (2010)**
‘How to Build a Network to Change a System’. Monitor Institute
23. **Scearce, Diana (2011)**
‘Catalyzing Networks for Social Change A funder’s guide’. Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for effective organisations, USA
24. **Schwaab, Jan; Seibold, Balthas (2014)**
‘The Potential of Networks for Strengthening the Sustainability of Development Cooperation’. In Global Funds and Networks Narrowing the Gap between Global Policies and National Implementation, Edition: 1. Edition 2014, Editors: Lena Rüther, Citlali Ayala Martinez, Ulrich Müller, pp.157 – 178, Nomos
25. **Von Krogh, Georg; Nonaka, Ikujiro; Rechsteiner, Lise (2012)**
‘Leadership in Organisational Knowledge Creation: A Review and Framework’. In Journal of Management Studies 49:1 (240-277), Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing

Online Communities

Guides for setting up and managing online communities:

26. **FAO (2006)**
 'Information Management Resource Kit: Building Electronic Communities and Networks'. E-learning Initiative in Information management and knowledge sharing

27. **Preece, Jenny; Maloney-Krichmar, Diane (2003)**
 'Online Communities' In J. Jacko and A. Sears (Editors): 'Handbook of Human-Computer Interaction'. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Inc. Publishers

Outcome mapping

28. **Earl, Sarah; Carden, Fred; Smutylo, Terry (2001)**
 'Outcome Mapping: building learning and reflection into development programs'. International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, ON, Canada

11.2 Websites

Communities of practice

- For a community of practice on communities of practice, go to: www.cpsquare.org

Creative commons

- Wikipedia: www.wikipedia.org
- Energypedia: www.energypedia.info
- Akvopedia: www.akvopedia.org
- Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence:
  www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au

Crowdfunding

- A publication of GIZ on Crowdfunding:
  'Crowdfunding: What's in it for development aid?'
  www.10innovations.alumniportal.com/crowdfunding.html

  Crowdfunding pages for Non-Profit and Charity Projects Fundraisers:
- This crowdfunding page helps thousands of social projects to collect donations online with tools and tutorials. Donations of both, time and money are possible. www.betterplace.org/en
- Kiva works with microfinance institutions in five continents: www.kiva.org

Fundraising

- An overview of resources for fundraising on the website of the Non Profit Resource Centre: www.not-for-profit.org
- The Resource Alliance is an international network working to build the capacities of non-profit organisations for mobilising funds and local resources for their causes: www.resource-alliance.org

Information and communication technologies (ICTs)

- A collection of relevant resources for computer and Internet training for development and social change is provided by:
  www.itrainonline.org
  www.gc21.giz.de

Knowledge management

- For a community of practice on knowledge sharing and knowledge management in development cooperation, go to KM4Dev: www.km4dev.org

Mind Maps

- FreeMind is an open source mind mapping software available for free: http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/main_page
- Commercial mind mapping software is provided, for example, by: www.mindjet.com or www.mindgenius.com.au

Monitoring / Evaluation

- For an overview of key terms related to results-based monitoring and evaluation, see the website of the OECD: www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation

Networks

- The International Institute for Sustainable Development has special webpages on networks: www.iisd.org/networks

Online Communities

- FAO's Information Management Resource Kit 'Building Electronic Communities and Networks' E-learning Initiative in Information management and knowledge sharing: www.imarkgroup.org/#/imark/en/course/C

Online workspaces

- Dgroups provides electronic workspaces with e-mail discussion lists, a resource section for documents, a members' section and a calendar. Several bilateral and multilateral agencies have set up the online working space Dgroups for groups and communities interested in international development. This service is free at: www.dgroups.org
- The Internet service provider Yahoo offers online working spaces for free. The saving space is limited and you have to cope with commercials: http://groups.yahoo.com
- Google Groups is a free Internet service for online communities: http://groups.google.com

Open space

- The open space method has its own website: www.openspaceworld.org

Surveys online

- One of the many Internet based tools for carrying out surveys: www.surveymonkey.com

Toolkits for knowledge sharing

- A free repository of documents that keeps files and documents safe and makes it easy to share online: www.dropbox.com
- A bulk e-mail software that helps managing mailing lists: www.sendblaster.com
- Web software to create own blogs: www.wordpress.org

Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP)

- One of the many providers of free telephone services over the Internet is Skype: www.skype.com

World Café

- To know about this tool: www.theworldcafe.com

11.3 Examples of tools to use for network management

1. Example of terms of reference (TOR) for a network coordinator (section 4.1.2)

The following is an example of TOR for a network coordinator. They can be adapted depending on the needs of your network.

1) Background

Please give a summary on the background of the network:

- Vision, Mission, and Goals
- Main activities
- Membership Criteria
- Structure:
  - Secretariat
  - Board
  - Members
  - Working Groups
- Legal Status / Host Organisation / Location of the Secretariat

A network coordinator is needed to fulfil the following responsibilities and tasks:

2) Responsibilities

The network coordinator will be responsible for:

- Network coordination and management
- Communication and information sharing among members and with external stakeholders
- Fundraising

3) Tasks

Network coordination and management

General network coordination

- Implements the network's work plan in coordination with the board
- Follows up on the activities in the work plan
- Coordinates work meetings for board, working groups and task forces
- Keeps all network databases up to date, mainly the network's membership database
- Ensures that all files with relevance to the network are up to date
- Actively searches for new members in all member countries

- Prepares annual budgets for the board, monitors them and informs board / host organisation about status
- Liaises with the host organisation on the network's activities
- Builds new connections with other networks in the same area and liaises with them
- Reports to board and to the network about network activities and finances

Coordination with and support to the board
- Provides logistic and technical support for board activities
- Provides advice and support on fundraising and sustainability efforts
- Assists the board in ensuring transparency and information sharing with all the network's members

Support working groups
- Compiles, reviews and circulates proposals and reports for assessment by board
- Monitors working groups activities to ensure that they are on track with intended results and milestones
- Provides support to working groups as needed in identifying consultants, organising meetings and other activities for assessment by board
- Provides guidance to working groups in developing plans to present and disseminate their results
- Monitors working groups funds and reports on status to board

Quality assurance, evaluation and monitoring
- Develops and organises quality assurance measures and suggests necessary changes, improvements and initiatives
- Monitors progress regularly
- Organises external evaluations of the network

Communication and information sharing among members and with external stakeholders:
Network's website
- Administers the network's website, grants access for new members and monitors activities on a daily basis
- Assists the network's members in understanding the functioning of the website
- Keeps website up to date
- Develops strategies for encouraging the network's members to use the website

Social media

- Administers the network's social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)

Event management and organisation

- Organises regional or national workshops with members
- Organises board meetings
- Assists working groups in organising regular meetings
- Is jointly responsible with the board and working groups for documenting all events, workshops and other network activities

Communication

- Informs network members regularly about latest achievements
- Communicates local interests and efforts, forwards these and encourages sharing ideas and information for the benefit of the network
- Ensures a smooth flow of communication between board, host organisation and the network's members

Fundraising

- Assists the board in developing a marketing and fundraising strategy for the network
- Gets in contact with potential donors and host organisations
- Prepares any kind of needed documentation for donors and potential host organisations
- Regularly reports on latest achievements to board, host organisation

4) Qualifications

Expertise in (name the network's field of expertise)

Professional experience

- Experience working in project management

Other knowledge, additional competences

- High-level project management, communication and networking skills
- Experience with networks
- Proved experience with fundraising and donor relations
- Native / fluent in the network's communication langue
- High-level experience with website maintenance and development

5) Dates and duration of contract

- The project coordinator will start on date / month / year. The contract is initially for X months.

2. Example of a membership registration form (section 4.2.6)

Declaration of consent:
I agree that my personal data will be shared by the network. This consent is valid for a period of up to two years after signature.

Family Name	
First Name	
Middle Name	
Title	
Sex	☐ Female ☐ Male
Date of Birth	
Country of origin	
Nationality	
E-mail address	
Country of residence	
Languages spoken	1) 2) 3)
Professional skills	1) 2) 3)
Areas of expertise	1) 2)
Institution	
Function/position	
In case the information changes, contact info@network.net	

First and Family Names ....

Date and signature ....

3. Example of a start-up workshop (section 5.2.3)

Day 1	
Time	Content
09:00	**Introductions** **Presentation of workshop's goals and agenda** • Goals • Methods • Expectations
10:30	**Coffee break**
10:45	**Theoretical Input on networks I** • What is a network? • Benefits of networks • Best practice in networks
12:15	**Lunch break**
13:15	**Group Work 'Input & Benefits'** • Internal and external benefits of the proposed network • Potential cooperation partners, stakeholders and members • Sharing of results of working groups
14:45	**Coffee break**
15:00	**Group Work 'Vision & Mission'** • Discussion & definition of vision, mission and goals of the proposed network • Sharing of results of working groups
16:30	**Closing** • Summary • Open questions • Outlook
17:00	**End of Day 1**

Day 2	
Time	**Content**
09:00	Reflection on day 1 Agenda day 2
09:15	Theoretical Input on networks II • Leadership in networks • Structure • Organisational forms of networks
10:00	Coffee break
10:15	Network Analysis (SWOT) – Group Work
12:00	Lunch break
13:00	Setting up network's organisational structure – Group Work
15:00	Coffee break
15:15	Development of road map and next steps
16:30	Closing • Open questions • Summary • Commitments
17:00	End of Day 2

4. Example of indicators for monitoring or evaluating networks (section 10.1.2)

Relevance indicators

Added value	■ Perception that the services and activities of the network are appropriate and lead to the fulfilment of the vision and mission of the network ■ Members' reasons for joining the network ■ What added value do members perceive from their participation in the network? ■ Are the needs and expectations of members met by the network? ■ Members' satisfaction with activities of the network ■ Opportunities gained due to participation in network ■ The knowledge generated by the network is relevant to those outside of the network
Reciprocity	■ What is expected from the network and what is expected from the members in return? ■ What do members receive from and give back to the network? ■ Is that exchange clear?
Adaptation	■ How does the network adapt to its changing context?

Effectiveness indicators

Changes in the knowledge base	■ The network is generating new knowledge and / or repacking new knowledge ■ Substantial documented discussion on research issues by network members ■ Peer review of papers by members of the network ■ Joint research on projects (i.e. co-authorship) ■ Learning by doing: execution of specific research or field activities ■ Perception of members that their knowledge on issues under investigation has increased thanks to their participation in the network

Changes in communication practices	▪ Opportunity creation: The network organises its own workshops and consultations of its own in order to inform and engage decision makers and external key audiences ▪ Product lines: The network creates 'spin off' products: short policy notes, briefing papers, summaries for specialised journals and newsletters ▪ The network publishes articles in academic or professional journals ▪ Research results and other relevant information are available on a network website ▪ Individual-member websites are 'pointing' to the network's website ▪ Use of mainstream media: Members are pooling their media contacts and assisting with the development and distribution of media releases ▪ Members are preparing editorials for mainstream papers quoting the network
Changes in relationships	▪ The network has a clear picture of the agenda it is trying to influence, and the knowledge development and communications strategies of members are aligned with it ▪ The network has a good understanding of the key people who should receive their information and the 'connectors' who in turn could influence key people ▪ Decision makers and other key people know members of the network, know about the work of the network and are interested in the activities of the network ▪ The (number / sector / level of influence of) participants in network events ▪ Direct interaction of members with key decision makers on matters related to the network

Efficiency indicators

Internal communication and interaction among members	■ Use of a mix of tools to engage members in discussion and collaboration ■ Members' satisfaction with technology and communications tools ■ What infrastructure is needed to maintain and strengthen the connections? ■ How are on-line and in-person opportunities for connection integrated?
	■ Existence and use of an internal e-mail list ■ Amount of on-topic discussion and contributions ■ Number of participants in different activities of the network, number of messages in a discussion, number of messages per participant ■ Level of attendance and participation in network meetings
	■ Criteria for membership ■ Percentage of members who are still members after a certain period of time ■ Perception of strong ties among members: interactive, trustful and stable ■ Who is not participating that ought to be?
Institutional support	■ Number and type of institutions / organisations that are members of the network ■ Level of coordination and cooperation among member organisations ■ Number of staff per institution that are members of the network ■ Individual members have the backing of their institutions to participate in the network ■ Participation in the network and the results of the work carried out within the network are part of a member institution's corporate memory ■ Relationship to other networks ■ Contacts and relationships with other organisations working on the same issues
Systems and procedures	■ Members are satisfied with systems and procedures (for contracting, proposal development, financial disbursements, reporting) of the network ■ What policies are in place? How effective are the policies? ■ Continuous learning: how does the network know if it is working well or not? How does it make the necessary adjustments? ■ Reporting mechanisms to donors are simple (efficient) and satisfy the needs of all donors

Human resources	■ Turnover stability in the institutional representation of the network ■ Turnover stability in the coordination of the network ■ Right distribution of time and availability of time to perform network activities ■ Right mix of skills and abilities of network members to achieve network's goals
Financial resources	■ The network has the required financial and in-kind support to do its work ■ Number of organisations who are members of the network and raise funds ■ Different member organisations share the financial responsibility of the network ■ Network funding has leveraged additional grants or contracts
Timelines	■ Members perform their duties in a timely way ■ The secretariat performs its duties in a timely way
Products	■ Appearance, content, reach, user satisfaction, navigability ■ Web statistics: number of unique visitors, number of references or referrals, most visited parts, user characteristics
Services	■ Technology, design, reach, content, participation, facilitation

Impact indicators

Reach	■ What is the network's reach? ■ Who is being affected, influenced by the network?
Field-level impact	■ What progress is the network making on achieving its intended social impact (e.g. policy outcome, improvement in public health) ■ How do you know? ■ How are the network's work and practices making a difference? ■ Innovations emerging from the actions and services of the network ■ The knowledge generation, sharing and capacity building functions of the network flow beyond the immediate members

Structure and governance indicators

Structure of the network	■ Well-defined ToRs for the network coordinator (clear, specific and realistic) ■ The performance of the coordinator is monitored and evaluated ■ How tight or lose is the network structure? ■ Level of decentralisation or centralisation of the network
Governance and decision-making	■ Funding agreements with donors: Organisation/s that is/are accountable to the donor/s ■ Organisation/s carrying the greatest financial and reputation risk for success or failure ■ The duties and responsibilities of members are followed as laid out by network agreements ■ Members are held accountable for their commitments ■ Existence of clear mechanisms for decision-making (implicit/explicit) ■ Existence of clear agreements between the coordination body and the members ■ Funding agreements are translated into working plans ■ Member commitments are translated into actionable working plans

Sustainability indicators

Leadership	■ Leadership and responsibility is shared and distributed across the membership ■ Existence of a plan for succession of leadership
Ownership	■ Members have ownership of the network: they identify with the network
Management	■ The network has an adaptive management culture: systematic and frequent revision of objectives, internal monitoring system ■ Existence of mechanisms for anticipating and responding to change

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