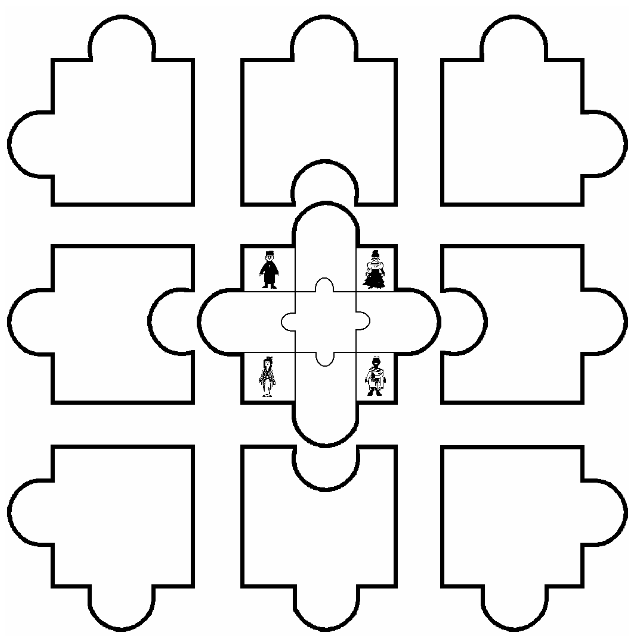
BUILDING NGO/CBO CAPACITY

For

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH



PART ONE: CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

FOREWORD

This series of training manuals, designed to enhance the overall management and operational effectiveness of non-governmental and community-based organisations, coincides with the launch of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) Global Campaign on Urban Governance. The theme of "inclusiveness," reflecting the Campaign's vision and strategy, is deeply embedded in the concepts and learning strategies covered by these manuals. While they have been planned and written to serve the developmental needs of non-governmental and community-based organisations, their leadership, and staff, they can easily be adapted to serve the needs of smaller local governments as well.

There is growing evidence and increased recognition of several values that define and frame the urban governance agenda for the new century and millennium. The first, inclusion, has already been introduced but bears repeating. Those local governments and communities that want to be on the leading edge of social and economic change must recognise the importance of including everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, in the process of forging decisions that affect their collective quality of life. This commitment must then be infused into the very heart of their operating culture.

The second recognition involves shared leadership that cuts across the spectrum of institutional and community fabric. This means, among other things, that non-governmental and community-based organisations (NGOs/CBOs) must be seen as competent and worthy partners in the sharing of leadership and responsibilities. The *Building Bridges* manuals in this series are designed to address the management of joint planning ventures as well as the management of conflicts and disagreements that cut across the spectrum of public and not-for-profit community organisations.

The final recognition is the need for organisational competencies within the NGO/CBO community-a combination of knowledge, skills, experience, and commitment that will strengthen their resolve to manage their financial and human resources and their outreach endeavours more effectively and efficiently. In order to be strong and effective partners, NGOs and CBOs must be able to demonstrate that their internal houses are also in order.

As described in the Prologue, this series of learning implementation tools has been a collaborative venture between the Open Society Institute and the Government of the Netherlands (the principal funding institutions), Partners Romania Foundation for Local Development, and UNCHS (Habitat). In addition, many others have been involved in the development of this series. They include:

1. a committed group of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Community Based Organisation (CBO) and local government leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa, who came together to define their learning needs during the UNCHS Capacity Building Strategy Workshop held in Nakuru, Kenya in November 998 and who took an active part in reviewing the drafts, culminating in a validation workshop in Nyeri, Kenya, 2001; and

2. a network of institutions and trainers representing the Regional Program for Capacity Building in Governance and Local Leadership for East and Central European Countries who participated in field testing the initial drafts of the materials.

Finally, I want to thank Fred Fisher the author of this manual and principal author of the series and the superb team of writing collaborators he brought together to craft these materials. The team of UNCHS staff professionals, headed by Tomasz Sudra, brought their considerable experience and expertise to polishing the final products.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL OUTREACH CAPACITY

Speak plain. Call bread, bread and wine, wine
Mexican proverb

He who would do great things should not attempt them alone
Seneca Proverb

The needle knows what it sews, and the thimble what it pushes
Colombian proverb

These proverbs highlight the three skills and processes that are central to building organisational outreach capacity: communicating, developing strategic alliances, and influencing others. The two skills, communicating and influencing, encompass many sub-topics, strategies, tactics, skills, tools, and processes even when the focus is narrowed to how NGOs and CBOs can improve their organisation's outreach by applying them. The craft of building strategic alliances is less problematic to cover as an organisational outreach process.

Communicating and influencing as skills and strategies embrace many variations of individual and collective action. They can be interpersonal, intra or inter-organisational, written, spoken, formal, informal, public, private, and more. They are resources of potentially unbounded vitality, often free to use but also very expensive to harness under certain circumstances. The challenge is to garner as much leverage as possible from the art and crafts of communicating and influencing with as little cost to your NGO or CBO as possible.

For the small CBO with few resources, it may be unrealistic to expect its leader to influence changes in policies and legislation even at the local level or to launch a major communication campaign to highlight the concerns of the community it represents. On the other hand, there is strength in numbers. NGOs and CBOs can work together to mobilise their collective voices when there is consensus about issues that call for communicating and influencing beyond their respective organisational boundaries. Building organisation outreach capacity is, by its nature, a process that involves others either as recipients of your communicating and influencing or by determining how you can create coalitions of like-minded institutions and individuals who can help in achieving common goals as NGOs and CBOs.

The Nakuru assessment workshop delegates provided some valuable guidance to this trilogy of challenges by discussing both their frustrations and expectations. They were asking in one way or another:

- How can we as NGO and CBO leaders communicate more effectively and convincingly with beneficiaries, donors, local governments, and the media? The smaller we are, the more difficult these tasks are.

- How can we learn to be better at networking, at linking ourselves together with those beyond our organisational boundaries?

- How can we have influence on legislation and policy formulation?

- How can we work more effectively with local governments on issues and problems of mutual concern?

- How can we form partnerships that will increase our abilities to communicate our concerns and increase our influence to achieve our missions and goals?

These queries span a host of potential interpersonal, organisational and inter-organisational strategies and skills. They correctly assume that *individuals* within each NGO and CBO have the potential to improve their *communication* and *influencing* skills. There is also the assumption that *individual organisations* can increase their outreach capacity through better communication and influencing strategies and actions. And finally, there is the realisation that, individually, most NGOs and CBOs simply do not have the resources and means to communicate and influence effectively on many issues and concerns that are central to their missions and goals. They must create strategic alliances if they are to have the necessary influence to bring about essentials changes in their working environments.

Roadmap: In an attempt to respond to these wide-ranging capacity-building concerns, we will focus in Chapter One on:
- How to develop an organisation communication plan and strategy.
- How to improve your listening skills, recognising that communication is a two-way process and listening more effectively to beneficiaries may be your best influencing tool.
- How to work more effectively with the media and improve your public relations.
- How to become a better "net worker". We will even try to figure out what this term means, given its current popularity as a management and personal effectiveness strategy.

In Chapter Two, the focus will be on developing strategic alliances and will concentrate on:
- The advantages of alliances and partnerships
- Types of alliances and coalitions, and
- How to create and maintain strategic alliances.

Chapter Three, the final chapter in Part One, will focus on various kinds of influence strategies including:
- The relationships between power and influence
- A systems approach to influencing strategies
- The policy thicket and how to cut your way through it; and
- How to lobby and influence policy making.

Part Two, the *Tools* section, will provide structured learning experiences in each of these skill development arenas. While some can be self-administered for individualised learning, training designs are provided with all the tools to assist those who plan to facilitate group learning experiences. The Tools are designed to mirror the concepts and strategies covered in Part One of the manual.

CHAPTER TWO
COMMUNICATING STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

To think justly we must understand what others mean;
to know the value of our thoughts,
we must try their effect on other minds
William Hazlett, 1826

Since *communications* is such a catchall term, one of the best ways to understand what you and your organisation can be doing to communicate more effectively is to develop a communication plan. This plan should be based on your organisation's vision and mission, the goals you want to accomplish, and the values and beliefs that are important to you, your staff, your beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders. Since the fine points of how you create your vision, define your mission, and establish operational goals and objectives can be found in the *Participatory Planning* manual in this series, we won't duplicate them here. However, we have included in Part 2 of this manual a form to help you and your colleagues develop a communication plan. (See Tool # 2: Developing a Communication Plan)

Develop a communication plan

Once you are clear about the foundation stones essential to organisation effectiveness and outreach, i.e., your mission, operating goals, core values, and beliefs as a service institution, you can begin to ask what you want to accomplish through communicating these and other messages to the outside world. In other words, *why* do you want to communicate? Are your communication goals to:

- Enhance your visibility in the community, city, or region?
- Generate positive attitudes and impressions of your organisation through better media coverage?
- Establish media contacts so they can be counted on in case of emergencies, either your own as an organisation or emergencies thrust upon your beneficiaries or constituents?
- Increase awareness about your programs and services in relation to a specific user group?
- Promote a change of attitude among certain members of the community?
- Generate support from the public, key policy makers, and others on such issues as policy reform?
- Generate financial support and contributions?
- Establish and maintain an interactive dialogue with your most important stakeholders?

> By the way, we've used the term *stakeholders* before and just realised that it might not be familiar to all of you. A stakeholder is any person, group, or organisation that can put a claim on your organisation's attention, time, resources, and services, or is affected by your organisation's existence and contributions. Stakeholders can either be friendly or hostile to the accomplishment of your mission and goals. Given this broad definition, your communication plan may need to be broadly defined.

These are the *Why* questions that are so important to consider when developing an outreach communication plan. If you aren't clear about why you need to communicate your message beyond the boundaries of your organisation, the chances are you won't communicate them either very effectively or efficiently. The *Why* answers will help you determine *What* you need to communicate in terms of information, ideas, values, goals, etc.

Once these questions have been thoroughly pursued, you will need answers to some other basic questions:

- To w*hom* do we need to get these messages?

- *How* will we do it?
- *How* will we know if we are being successful?

To whom should you communicate, and how?

When you delve into the *To Whom* category of inquiry, you will also want to think about *How* you can reach your critical partners. Let's assume that your CBO operates a day care centre next to a clothing factory in your community. As director, you need to get information to the mothers who use the centre about proposed changes in the service. The communication strategy might be as simple as letting the centre director know and having her pass the new information on to those who use the service. Or, you might want to personally be at the centre when the children are collected if you believe it is important for your clients to get the message from you directly.

If you want to communicate with your local government, it could get a bit more complicated. *What* you want to communicate to your local government and *how* you do it may depend on the procedures they have established for communicating with others. For example, the elected council might have very formal procedures about how to communicate with them. They may expect constituents to work through the clerk of council, or if it concerns management issues, the chief administrative officer. How you communicate with other organisations and their officials and staff will depend on their processes and procedures for communicating as well as your own.

If your intent is to reach a broad audience, i.e., the general public, then your strategy might involve the mass media if you have access to the resources they command, a mass mailing, or some other broad based strategy. Such communication strategies can become expensive, both in hard cash and staff resources. The final concern to address when putting together a communication plan is <u>how much will it cost.</u>

Since the potential audience for this manual is so diverse and their circumstances so varied, it is difficult to be specific about what your communication plan should include. If you can answer the questions just commented on, the *why, what, who, when* and *how questions* about communicating for outreach purposes, and assess the total costs involved in implementing your plan, you will be able to determine what kind of communicating strategy is best for your organisation. Finally, your plan needs to include an evaluation step that will assess how effective your communication plan has been in reaching its intended audience. Communicating the mission, services, and needs of your organisation can be expensive in money, time, and staff resources. Be strategic, and track the impact of your communication strategy.

The better world is not feasible for people who do not believe in it
Ladislav Briestensky

Listening is also a strategic communication option

Is *listening* to your constituents and other key stakeholders an important part of your communication plan? All too often we forget this critical component to the communication process when we put together our organisation's communication plan. Given this distinct possibility, we want to argue that *active listening* should be a critical part of any service-oriented institution's strategy to communicate and influence. (See *Tool # 3 in Part Two* for an active learning experience in listening.)

As we will point out later, listening has been identified as one of the most important communication skills of the manager, if not the most important. We believe it is the foundation from which all other parts of your communication program should be based.

We'll get to some of the techniques in a moment, but first we want to share some proverbs about listening from various parts of the world.

- From Peru: If I listen I have the advantage, if I speak the others have it
- Japan: The silent person is often worth listening to
- The Native American Yurok tribe: Silence has so much meaning

- The Jabo tribe of Africa: The one who listens is the one who understands
- Lithuania: Listen much and speak little

Being silent is no guarantee that we are either listening, or listening for meaning and understanding. Nevertheless, a generous dose of self-imposed silence is essential to the art of active listening. Expressions of support, empathy, and understanding are also essential. Sharpening the ability to listen effectively responds directly to the Nakuru workshop participant's top communication training priority: **how to communicate more effectively with *beneficiaries* of your services.** By listening to your beneficiaries and constituents, you become better prepared to communicate with other key stakeholders, i.e. governments, donors, and the media.

What is unique about active listening?

First of all, listening is one of the most important management skills we can possess. Several years ago, a research team at Loyola University in Chicago conducted a study to determine the single most important attribute of the effective manager. After involving hundreds of organisations in their research, they concluded that *listening* is a manager's most important skill. [(1)]

If listening is so important, why don't we do it better? There are several reasons. First, listening is hard work. It takes energy and concentration to listen actively. Second, we are bombarded constantly with messages, and we learn how to screen out a lot of the messages that are directed our way. Unfortunately, we screen out messages we shouldn't. Third, we often decide what the other person is about to say and jump in to respond immediately. This, of course, stops the listening routine immediately and often distorts the message we were about to hear. Finally, most of us never receive any training on how to listen effectively.

Have you ever asked yourself, "Just what do they mean by *active*, in active listening?" Well, we have also and the literature on listening is not very explicit about what is meant by *active.* To help us better understand the "active" in active listening, we turned to a fairly recent book on the role of the manager as facilitator. The authors define active listening as "a process by which we make a conscious effort to understand someone else." [(2)] This *conscious effort* to manage the listening process involves three interrelated techniques or skills.

1. *Sensing:* using all our senses to take in the information being offered.
2. *Interpreting:* assessing the meaning of what is being said.
3. *Checking:* reflecting on what has been heard in an effort to gain a mutual understanding of what the other person is saying.

So, active listening isn't just listening! It requires us to engage in a dialogue using all our senses and actually speaking, which seems on the surface to be a bit contradictory. But, the speaking is of a very different kind than we normally use when holding a conversation. What we say during active listening is directed to better understand what the other person is saying, not to impose our own thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc. It is tough to do, as we all know, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. Let's look at the three sub-skills just mentioned, the ones these authors have tucked under the larger skill umbrella of listening.

Sensing is taking in the full communicating environment, not just the sound waves that travel from the speaker's mouth to your ears. We also need to "listen" to their gestures, facial expressions, and the tone, rate and volume of the message, all those visual and vocal cues that accompany the actual words. The physical setting might also be an active partner in the communicating process. Some managers use big desks, a slight difference in elevation and even physical distance to convey a big part of their message. Sensing is taking in all the outwardly visible cues that are being used to convey the message.

Interpreting is the ability to take in the information being offered and to evaluate and analyse it. This is a major challenge in being an effective active listener although on the surface it looks quite simple. It requires us to not only get behind what the other person is saying to understand the words, but also to get behind any barriers we are putting up to not hear what the other person is saying. Have you noticed how some simple words can send you into orbit? On the other hand, other words uttered from across the table can make you feel so good. We also carry around these invisible earmuffs that filter out those things we don't want to hear. Sometimes these filters distort rather than block what the other person is saying. Interpreting is the most difficult sub-skill required of the active listener. It requires us to be non-judgemental.

Checking is perhaps the easiest and most important listening skill because it gives us a chance to talk. But it is not the kind of talking that finishes the other person's statement or conveys everything you were thinking about saying as soon as you get a chance to jump into the conversation. Have you ever caught yourself spending all your time thinking about what you plan to say while the other person is speaking and missing a good 90% of the message? Sure you have! So have we - and **it's not *active listening***.

Checking is also the fine art of asking questions for clarification and reflecting verbally on what the other person is saying. The clarifying question might be something like, "What do you mean by 'as soon as possible'? Could you indicate the day and time of day you have in mind?"

Reflecting statements are sometimes just utterances that indicate you are fully engaged as an active listener. They are as simple as a "hmmm", a nod of the head, or paraphrasing what has been said, "What I heard you say was …". It may also be asking questions to generate more or different information from the other person. "What other options have you been considering"?

Building organisational outreach capacity begins with the skills to be a more effective active listener

This is probably not what you had in mind in terms of building outreach capacity using communication strategies. After all, you need to get your message out. You need to be more proactive in communication with your beneficiaries, the government agencies, and donors that can support you and with the media that can help you spread the word.

As a service or support agency, your sustainable strength is based on being responsive; being attentive to your constituent's needs, interests and concerns; and more fully understanding what is important to them before addressing your own agenda, whatever it might be. This requires a strong and accurate information database. While you might acquire some of this through library-type research, your best source of insights, information, and ideas will come through your ability to listen actively by sensing, interpreting, and checking what your constituents, beneficiaries, supporters, and future partners are saying.

Richard Axelrod, in *Terms of Engagement*, has this to say about listening as a foundation for building relationships.

Listen, listen, listen until you feel you cannot stand it anymore, and then listen some more. Listening builds relationships. Listen with understanding and empathy. Work for understanding, not agreement. Imagine what it would be like to see the world from their perspective, based on their experiences. [(3)]

Reflection

Before moving on to more proactive communication strategies, spend a few moments reflecting on the quality of your organisation's current ability to listen actively to your significant stakeholders in a concerted attempt to better understand what they want or need from the relationship. Using a scale of 1 to 10 with *one* being **we don't listen at all** to *ten* meaning **we totally understand their wants and needs**, rate the following relationships and jot down ways you can improve your ability to listen to them more effectively.

- **Key Beneficiaries**: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  I plan to improve my listening to them by:
  ____
  ____
  ____

- **Local Government**: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  I plan to improve my listening to them by:
  ____
  ____
  ____

- **Our important donors**: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  I plan to improve my listening to them by:
  ____
  ____
  ____

- **Representatives of the Media**: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  I plan to improve my listening to them by:
  ____
  ____
  ____

What concerns me is not the way things are, but the way people think things are
Epictetus

The public relations twist to organisation outreach

Even if you are a small organisation, there are ways to build outreach capacity by being ready to share information with key officials and organisations when opportunities present themselves. For example, you are attending a meeting called by a donor organisation interested in telling you and others about what they are doing. You take this opportunity to introduce yourself and to give their representative(s) written information about your organisation.

A local government official happens to be in your neighbourhood looking at someone else's project, and you meet her at the local coffee shop by accident. Be prepared to tell her about what your organisation is also doing in the neighbourhood and offer to follow-up with written information about your projects if you aren't prepared to provide it on the spot.

A local newspaper reporter stops in to get directions to another NGO, and you seize the moment to promote your own organisation. Of course, "seizing the moment" in any of these situations means you will need among other things:

- A business card with a professional-looking logo
- A short letter of introduction to your organisation
- A one page, easy to read, fact sheet about your organisation
- Your vision, mission statement, and major operating goals
- Highlights of your most successful program or service
- Copies of newspaper articles about your organisation
- A current copy of your newsletter if you publish one
- Photos of your organisation in action.

These public relations packets need not be expensive and should reflect who you are, not an inflated portrayal of what you hope to be. The art of public relations is 90% preparation and 10% inspiration when the timing is right. It's taking advantage of opportunities to let others know who you are and what you are doing when they occur.

The media and organisation outreach

Media coverage just doesn't happen. Unless, of course, your warehouse burns down, your director gets kidnapped, or some other "newsworthy" event occurs to make your organisation memorable for the moment in the eyes of the media. If you have decided that getting news coverage is important to your organisation's sustainability, growth, and contribution to society, then here are some things you can do to make this a possibility.

- Make a conscious effort to develop a personal relationship with a reporter, editor, or other media gatekeeper.

- If there are key events or activities taking place in the community and your organisation is responsible for making them happen, get the word out to various media outlets in time for them to schedule coverage. They will determine whether it is newsworthy from their perspective.

- Write a short article about your organisation and what you are doing that is unique. Focus attention on those things you think will be of interest to their readers.

- Be alert to what the local news media are covering at the community and local level. Are local television and radio stations or the newspaper reporting on issues or concerns that your organisation is involved in? If so, what you are doing might be "newsworthy". Contact them about your efforts and offer to arrange site visits, interviews - whatever looks feasible and supportive to enable the media to expand their coverage of what your organisation is doing.

- Join forces with other organisations or individuals who are concerned about getting a similar message out through the public media. By joining forces, you may represent a story that gets their attention.

For small NGOs and CBOs, it is important to determine the cost of getting momentary publicity against the benefits that will accrue from the publicity. Given the competition for news coverage and the time and other resources it might take to get the media's attention, think twice and begin to look at other less costly and equally effective options for communicating beyond the boundaries of your organisation.

There is one obvious exception. For those who operate in smaller cities or rural areas where there is a daily or weekly newspaper, it becomes much easier to communicate through the media. The author lives in a small town with a daily newspaper, and it gives generous coverage to local NGO/CBO activities.

In dealing with the press, do yourself a favour.
Stick with one of three responses:
I know and I can tell you;
I know and I can't tell you;
and I don't know.
Dan Rather, newscaster

Before we move on to another outreach strategy, it is useful to reflect for a moment on the quotation by Dan Rather. It clearly conveys the media's self assessment that they control the news agenda. It's an important message to keep in mind as you consider the media as part of your organisation's outreach strategy.

Reflection

How would you rate your organisation's coverage by the news media? 1= rotten and 10=couldn't be better! Or, somewhere in between, i.e., 2 through 9.

[ ] Put your score in the [ ]s.

- How would you rate the need for your organisation to have better media coverage?
  1 = not a problem to 10 = can't live without it! **[ ]**

Based on this scientific analysis of your media situation, what, if anything, should you do to improve it? For example, if the answer to both questions is four or below, then we suspect you can give this part of your communication strategy low priority. On the other hand, if you gave the first query a low score and the second a high one, then perhaps you need to call a staff meeting to discuss it.

But before you take any action, jot down a few ideas about how you feel concerning your relations with the media and what you might consider doing, if anything.

All the beads in the world won't make a necklace until you string them together
Korean proverb

Networking as an outreach strategy

Networks have always been a valuable part of a community's ability to respond to human service needs outside the boundaries of formal organisations although they may not have been so identified. Networks and networking can also be valuable organisational outreach mechanisms for achieving the mission and goals of many NGO/CBO institutions. While we suspect many of you are world class networkers already, we will, nevertheless, describe this phenomenon in some detail since it represents one of the few resources that is relatively cost free and potentially valuable to your clients. (See *Tools # 4 and 5 in Part Two* for more on networking.)

Several years ago the author directed a research project to determine the validity of networks and networking as social processes for linking individual and community needs and resources effectively in an informal and spontaneous way. [(4)]

The research initiative was based part on the assumption that there are networks and networkers who operate largely in an informal, spontaneous way to link individuals in need of human services to resources represented by a variety of sources not necessarily within their own organisation.

To test the validity of this and other assumptions about the processes of informal and spontaneous networking, the project team asked directors of over fifty human service organisations, mostly NGOs and CBOs, to identify individuals who met the following criteria:

- Effectively assisted clients in mobilising resources from various agencies
- Willingly responded to requests for assistance from individuals in other agencies
- Actively sought out information on a wide range of human resource concerns
- Frequently worked beyond the boundaries of their own organisation and between the boundaries of established and formal systems to perform discrete tasks and provide particular services
- Unobtrusively took risks in order to help others, and
- Were highly energetic, action-oriented, and totally aware of human service problems and opportunities for solution.

The response was overwhelming. Over 150 individuals were nominated from a wide range of human service agencies. From those initially nominated, over twenty were selected and interviewed extensively to determine how they operated as "networkers". The propositions or proposals about networks and networking, their style of operations, values, and personal characteristics that resulted from that study have stood the test of time. To help you understand the process of networking and the individual attributes that are associated with those who are effective networkers, we present a number of propositions that were drawn from that study.

Networking propositions to consider

- Networking is a person-to-person and not an organisation–to-person process.
- Networking involves the sharing of power and resources.
- Sharing power and resources is not the same as giving them away.
- The effective networker believes that everything in the community is or can be connected to everything else.
- To intervene in one part of the community is to potentially involve an ever- widening circle of interaction.

- It is *whom* the effective networker knows as much as *what* she knows that determines her ability to engage in effective networking of community needs and resources.

- The effective networker never worries about being rejected just because others might not want to get involved.

- The effective networker always looks for other options when initial efforts to solve a problem or to connect needs and potential resources fail.

- The effective networker views every situation as an opportunity to learn.

- Effective networkers don't operate on a quid-pro-quo, direct exchange relationship when they act as the bridge between those who have resources or access to resources and those in need.

While these propositions provide insight into the process of networking and how net-workers operate, it will also be useful to look at other descriptions of this communication and enabling strategy.

Networkers are explorers who travel a universe that has no maps
Jessica Lipnack

As others define networking

Seymour Sarason, a psychologist who wrote about human services and the role of resource networks long before the concept of networking became popular, describes networks as having "no clear external boundaries surrounding them. They are relatively far-reaching and all-encompassing processes with single interactions among interested parties having the tendency to spread spontaneously, ultimately affecting many others." [(5)]

A 1997 British publication, *Networking for Development*, defines a network

As any group of individuals or organisations who, on a voluntary basis, exchange information, undertake joint activities, and organise themselves in such a way that their individual autonomy remains intact. [(6)]

Several points in this definition are important to note. The relationships are voluntary, involving mutual activities, and don't affect the autonomy or independence of those who are networking. Starkey, in his discussion of networking as a development tool, is adamant that we not describe all information exchange and collaborative actions as networking. Nor should such activities as mailing lists and newsletters be considered networks. Networks are much freer flowing and multi-directional exchanges of information, ideas, and resources than those we associate with formal processes of communicating.

Barron's Educational Series includes a Business Success Guide on *Successful Networking*, and the authors managed to write the entire guide without giving their own concise definition of networking. However, they do describe some attributes of the process. They say, among other things, that "networking is not a precise science nor is it an entirely tangible range of activities or behaviours. It is a complex and dynamic process, evolving from different roots, often established in different environments to serve different purposes." [(7)]

As you can see from these definitions, those who write about this process have a difficult time describing what it means. And yet, it is a powerful outreach tool, particularly with the advent of the internet. Perhaps a recent personal example of networking will help to clarify what it means.

I've been working with a woman from eastern Slovakia who is involved in a four-country rural development program funded by the European Union. One of the countries in the program is Iceland. When she heard that my wife and I were going to Iceland for a few days vacation, she e-mailed a colleague in that country to let her know about our trip. This resulted in a delightful evening with new friends we would never have known otherwise.

Just before leaving the hotel in Reykjavik to return home, I met a young Polish immigrant whose wife is importing furniture from Eastern Europe. When I asked him if she imports ready-made kitchen cabinets, he said, "No, but there is a new market opening for such goods." Since my son is in this business, this man's wife and my son are now in direct communication and hope to collaborate. Now, that's networking. Or, as my friend in Slovakia says, *networking is having a friend who has a friend.*

These kinds of networks have been in evidence for centuries although they have often been the privilege of those with power and resources. The "good old boy" chauvinistic networks of the graduates of the old universities in Europe and the United States have been notorious for their exclusive memberships and their ability to use their networks to get the best jobs and to dominate political leadership positions in their respective countries.

Fortunately, the networks that we are talking about are not *exclusionary* but very much *inclusive* and open to anyone who wants to contribute or to seek information and ideas. Because of this *information without barriers* feature of the new networks, networkers are able to reach out to others beyond their own organisations to exchange information, contacts, and even resources. The capacity to network at will has, of course, been greatly enhanced by the introduction of the Internet. This new capacity makes it impossible for despots and dictators to control the lives of those who want to be free. It also can be irritating to those managers who have a high need to control the information that comes into and departs from their organisations. Networkers are the bane of autocrats and bureaucrats.

In networking, you're only as good as what you give away
Harvey Mackey

How does one learn to network?

Assuming networking is a desirable skill to enhance organisational outreach, how does one go about learning how to do it? From various descriptions of the process, it would appear that personality traits are as important as any skills one might learn to further one's organisational outreach. Based on what those do who seem to be successful net-workers, here are some clues about how to learn the process.

- Learn to trust your instincts. If it feels right to reach out and make a contact for your organisation, do it. After all, there is much scientific evidence that we all possess instinctive powers in our right brain. Dust them off and give them a try.

- Don't be discouraged if those you reach out to initially distrust your motives. It happens but don't be discouraged. They may not believe that people actually provide information and ideas with no strings attached.

- This suggests the next valuable lesson to be learned: be willing and prepared to provide others with information and ideas with no strings attached. The investment will probably pay future dividends from some remote idea bank you never heard of. That's how networking works.

- Sit a while with someone whom you believe has good networking skills and experience. Ask them what they do to engage in this thing people call networking and to describe their successes and failures. The second law of networking is to be curious, so be curious. For example, ask them what the first law of networking is since we forgot. If you find out, let us know.

- Don't hesitate to ask naïve questions. This skill takes some serious practice since most of us learned a long time ago that it could make us look stupid in the eyes of judgmental others.

- Don't be judgmental, about your own motives for wanting to reach out to others for information or ideas, about the person you plan to contact, or about the reasons why.

Networking is a voluntary act of mutual engagement by individuals who are more interested in giving than receiving. It is obviously a self-taught skill and behaviour that is learned by doing. Otherwise, every training institute in the world would be offering courses on networking.

Travel Advisory Networking is a subject that many find frustrating. It all sounds so vague. And yet, millions engage is an interpersonal process we now call *networking*. Individuals have engaged in this "having a friend who has a friend" way of connecting for generations - millenniums! The major change in the process is the growing egalitarian and democratic features of networking that have been fostered by new communication technology. There is no doubt that networking is a critical part of building organisational outreach capacity, so bear with us while we describe two essential qualities of the process and what you can expect in return when you engage in networking.

Spontaneity and freedom

Two qualities, more than any others, characterise the networking process as it relates to human service organisations, many of which are NGOs and CBOs. These qualities are *spontaneity* and *freedom.* Spontaneity is the willingness of individuals to reach out at any time under almost any circumstance to help those in need. Freedom, on the other hand, is both an individual and institutional value that must be present if networking of needs and resources is to take place. It includes: freedom to act; freedom to redefine institutional and program boundaries in order to be more responsive in a time of need; and freedom to share power, influence and access to resources in a collaborative, non-threatening manner. It is through individual spontaneity and the freedom to act that the art of networking human needs and community resources is best exemplified.

These two qualities, spontaneity and freedom, drive the networking process and make it dynamic and responsive. They are qualities that are largely absent in the formal, bureaucratic, professionally staffed agencies that are charged with performing many of the human services in many parts of the world. This provides NGOs and CBOs with unique opportunities and challenges to optimise their use of networking techniques to serve their communities and constituents in new and bold ways.

One major strategy that can be a natural outgrowth of networking is the formation of strategic alliances and partnerships. The challenge is to form these coalitions without forfeiting the very qualities that may have brought them together through some networking process. We will be talking about building strategic alliances in the next chapter, so stay tuned.

Networking should be part of your communication strategy

Remember the trials and tribulations of Hercules, the mythical Greek hero? Every time he cut off one of the nine heads of the serpent Hydra, two grew back. So it is with networking. But, there are more practical reasons.

- **Networking gets us information, ideas, contacts, even resources.** Sometimes it gets us a lot of information, etc. that we don't want or need, but that's the price of being a good networker. The effective networker is also a good gardener, eliminating the Internet weeds before they take over the garden.

- **Networking helps us develop** knowledge, skills, insights, and values.

- **Networking provides us support** when we need an answer, when we need a friend, when we need guidance, and when we need to find another way to do something, and we know there are those out there who have done it before.

- **Networking gives us power and influence**. It helps us identify people who can open the right doors, be our mentor or advocate, increase our visibility, and help us do something better than we ever thought we could.

- **Networking is the ultimate *voyage of discovery.*** Networkers travel light, never buy roadmaps or purchase visas, pay no taxes, don't stand in line, and don't lose their luggage. They can, if they wish, travel the world constantly and never leave home.

If everyone in your network is the same as you, it isn't a network. It's an anthill
Harvey Mackey

Reflection

Networking is, by its nature, a quality, skill, value, and even a defining way of life for some. Because of this, it is difficult to make concrete just what networking means and how it becomes operational. Nevertheless, it is an important strategy to encourage and to support within the life of NGOs and CBOs. It is a way to stretch your own resources and to mobilise those beyond your control as a manager. Given these barriers and opportunities to understanding the process of networking, take a few moments and jot down examples from your own experience where either you or your colleagues have used networking to the benefit of your organisation and constituents.

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What are some networking actions you might take to improve your organisational outreach potential?

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Key Points

- Three strategies dominate the discussion of Building Organisational Outreach Capacity: communication, alliances and influence.
- Communication strategies and skills range for active listening to networking and touch a few other important bases in between.
- An effective communication plan answers the questions *Why, What, Who, When* and *How* your organisation needs to communicate with its significant stakeholders.
- At the heart of all effective outreach communication strategies is *active listening.* By listening to your beneficiaries and constituents, NGOs and CBOs are more effective when communicating with their other stakeholders.
- Media relations are important, but you need to weigh the cost versus the benefit of any concerted effort to be in the media spotlight.
- Networking is a voluntary and spontaneous act of reaching out to others for information, inspiration, help, ideas, mentoring, partnering opportunities, and personal development.
- Networking is a human service strategy for expanding informational resources that can become even more effective given new technology and understanding of the process.
- Effective networking can lead to building productive alliances. Stay tuned!

Endnotes

(1) Alessandra, Tony and Phil Hunsaker, *Communicating at Work.* New York, Simon and Schuster, 1993. p. 54.

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(3) Axelrod, Richard. *Terms of Engagement. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000. P. 91.*

(4) Fisher, Fred. "Resource Exchange Networking: Metaphorical Inventions in Response to Differentiated Human Needs in a Collective-Oriented Society", Volume 12, No. 1 of *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, January-March 1983

(5) Seymour Sarason and others. *Human Resources and Resource Networks*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers,1977. P. 152.

(6) Starkey, Paul. *Networking for Development.* London: International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, 1997. P.14.

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CHAPTER THREE
DEVELOPING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Developing strategic alliances as an outreach strategy falls somewhere between communicating and influencing. Alliances and partnerships often evolve out of *communicating-networking* efforts. Linking up with other NGOs, CBOs, or like-minded institutions in some kind of strategic alliance often results in more *influence* or is undertaken by the parties so they can have more influence. In these respects, it is useful to think about these individual outreach strategies as being interconnected and mutually reinforcing. (You will find more on how to develop strategic alliances in *Part Two: Tools 6 and 7.*)

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success
Arabian proverb

Alliances, creative collaboration, partnerships, coalitions – whatever you want to call them - have become popular topics and strategies for bringing about change and getting things done. And they seem to apply to all sectors of our societies, whether public, private or NGOs and CBOs. Some of what we hear is mere hype, rhetoric infused with hot air and little else, so it is useful to approach this discussion with a bit of scepticism.

For example, some coalitions or mergers have been spectacular failures, offering great case studies on how not to collaborate but little else for their efforts to form alliances. There are, of course, other examples where organisations have experienced mutually beneficial gains by working together in some kind of strategic partnership. With this cautionary note, let's see what the experts are saying about the potential of developing strategic alliances.

First of all, partnerships and the act of collaborating are often associated with community building, and this is good news for NGOs and CBOs. We are, of course, making the assumption that most NGO/CBO leaders are pro-community. In *Ritual: Power, Healing and Community,* Malidoma Patrice Some has this to say about community:

What one acknowledges in the formation of the community is the possibility of doing together what is impossible to do alone…. the community is where we draw the strength needed to effect changes. What we need is to be able to come together with a constantly increasing mind set of wanting to do the right thing, not even knowing how or where to start. [(1)]

Communities are formed by "doing together what is impossible to do alone". *Doing the impossible together* often translates into partnerships, alliances, coalitions, and collaboration among concerned parties within the community.

Frances Hesselbein, chairperson of the board of governors of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Non profit Management, says,

The day of the partnership is upon us. Leaders who learn to work with other corporations, government agencies, and social sector organisations will find new energy, new impact, and new significance in their organisation's work. [(2)]

She goes on to emphasise that these partnerships, whether they are between an NGO or CBO and a local government, a private corporation, and an NGO or all three together, require the various partners to have a clearly defined share of the responsibility with measurable outcomes. But, she reminds us that their leaders must care enough to dare to take the lead.

Before we get into the how-to part of our discussion about building alliances, here is another strong statement about forging partnerships across the boundaries of institutions that have traditionally worked in isolation of each other.

The twenty-first century will be the *age of alliances.* In this age, collaboration between non-profit organisations (NGOs/CBOs) and corporations will grow in frequency and strategic importance. Collaborative relationships will increasingly migrate from the traditionally philanthropic, characterised by benevolent donor and grateful recipient, into deeper, strategic alliances. These changes are already underway, and the landscape is rich in variety with businesses and nonprofits finding new ways to work together to achieve their goals and contribute to society. [(3)]

For many NGOs and CBOs, these types of alliances offer both advantages and risks. They also conjure up very different kinds of relationships between businesses and corporations and NGOs and CBOs. As James Austin assures us, "these alliances do not require grandiose strategic plans; patience and perseverance are often sufficient to turn small beginnings into significant strategic alliances."

Advantages that accrue from alliances

Some of the advantages for NGOs and CBOs to form alliances, either among themselves or with partners outside their sector, include:

- *Cost savings*: NGOs often share facilities, equipment, and even staff to eliminate duplicative costs and excess capacity.

- *Economies of scale and scope*: For example, day care centres operated by independent CBOs may decide to centralise the purchase of certain goods and services to get better prices per unit.

- *Achieving synergy*: This is where two or more organisations that have complementary capabilities and responsibilities join forces, thus accomplishing more together than they might separately. The local government, working with neighbourhood NGOs or CBOs, agrees to collaborate on an AIDS prevention program. The city government, for example, employs public health nurses who need to work at the grass-roots level but don't have access to individuals at risk nor facilities to operate from. Linking up with neighbourhood centres provides the city access and facilities, and the CBOs add to the services they are able to provide their constituents.

- *Revenue generation*: Many NGOs and CBOs are linking with private organisations to increase their revenue flow in order to maintain their economic sustainability. They may, for example, operate job training centres in lower income neighbourhoods or operate low cost transportation services to shuttle hourly workers to and from a manufacturing plant. These services might be carried out under a contract with an international firm that needs skilled employees and reliable transportation to assure their workers from certain areas of the city can arrive on time.

Corporations and private businesses also gain from alliances with NGOs and CBOs; otherwise they would not be interested in collaborating. Wise and competent business- persons will always ask, "What's in it for us to get involved"? Although the question might not be stated openly, it will influence their ultimate decision. While many of us believe profit is the sole reason private sector organisations collaborate with local governments or third sector organisations, there are other important reasons, and NGOs and CBOs can benefit from understanding them. Among them are:

- *Strategic engagement:* Often multi-national corporations as well as local businesses build into their strategic plans a broad-gauged involvement with the communities where they do business. Some even make community service an integral part of their performance measurement process.

- *Human resource management:* Many prospective employees see community involvement as a potential fringe benefit that enhances their motivation and morale. Managers and professionals view opportunities to volunteer with NGOs and CBOs as an important part of their own professional development, broadening their perspectives about the community by interaction with citizens from diverse backgrounds and exposing them to collaborative leadership situations.

- *Culture building:* For increasing numbers of companies, community service has become an integral part of their organisation culture. It helps to shape and reinforce core values that are vital to the success of their business.

- *Business opportunities:* Community service helps to build valuable linkages within the community and beyond. It enhances their reputation as a caring enterprise, builds goodwill, and expands their networks, relationships, and markets. [(4)]

Help thy brother's boat across, and Lo! thine own has reached the shore
Hindu proverb

Categories of alliances

Alliances come in many forms. Let's look at a couple of descriptive ways to categorise them.

Robert Hargrove, author of *Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration,* says most collaborations fall into one of the following categories.

- *Mandated collaborations*: Someone else for whatever reason said, "Thou shalt collaborate." While he gives positive examples, such forced alliances can often lack the fire of commitment that comes from being a part of the decision to collaborate.

- *Self-initiated collaborations:* These often emerge out of either problems or opportunities when one or more parties are willing to reach out for help or to share the good news.

- *Collaboration around a common concern:* This could be as simple as saving the trees along Main Street or as complex and vexing as an AIDS epidemic.

- *Serendipitous collaborations:* These are the alliances that evolve from chance meetings, where individuals realise they represent the opportunity for two parties to get together and make things happen. [(5)]

Rosabeth Moss Kanter takes a very different approach to sorting out types of collaborative initiatives by placing them on a continuum from weak and distant at one end and strong and close at the other. On the weak-distant extreme are those alliances that grow out of *mutual service needs.* These are similar organisations operating in roughly the same business or service arena that can pool their resources to accomplish shared goals or intentions. NGOs, governments, and international aid organisations operating in food relief distribution systems might be an example of *mutual service consortia.*

In the middle are those organisations that need the capability and resources of each other to succeed, circumstances leading to *joint ventures*. For example, the city council decides it needs to establish shelters for the growing numbers of homeless in their midst. They have some under-utilised buildings they think will work but no staff or expertise to renovate them or to operate them once they are renovated. A local building contractor has gained a reputation for buying up low rent housing on the edge of a rundown neighbourhood and forcing poor people out into the streets. He wants to rehabilitate his reputation and has agreed to renovate the city's buildings as a public gesture of goodwill. A large NGO in the city that already operates a modest homeless shelter wants to expand its services but is short on funds and facilities. The three parties recognise that they can all achieve their goals by collaborating, forming an alliance to serve the growing number of homeless in the city. They form a *joint venture* to put their plan into action.

Kanter says the strongest and closest alliance initiatives are the *value-chain partnerships*, such as supplier-customer relationships. For example, a product supplying organisation may need to link up with a different organisation to assure that installation and maintenance of the product they sell is assured to the customer. These two organisations link up to create added *value* for the ultimate user, thus the reference to *value chain.* The strength of these types of coalitions or alliances is in the commitment partners make to the relationship, the overlap in their operations, and the potential for a stream of opportunities to flow from the relationships as they support each other. [(6)]

The relationship I have with UNCHS (Habitat) and Partners Romania Foundation for Local Development (FPDL) and the Foundation's relationship with a network of training institutions in central and Eastern Europe represents a *value chain* set of partnerships. I do the initial writing (production) with funds from UN (Habitat) which, more often than not, gets its funds from some other source. The materials, in this case, will be used by FPDL as the basis for a regional training of trainers, providing the Foundation's clients with training in a new service area and products they can use in working with their constituents. The value chain involves a private entrepreneur, an international agency, a regional NGO and local service providers.

Interesting, you say, but how can NGOs and CBOs take advantage of this concept and strategy? Since each reader represents a different set of circumstances and opportunities in terms of developing strategic alliances, this is a question only you can answer. To help you grapple with what we think is a fascinating scenario for NGOs and CBOs, let's look at how the private sector makes these decisions.

Say your small company has just developed a new cure for AIDS. You want to bring this product to the market but you have been largely a scientific research firm. You realise it would be costly, time consuming, and probably risky to integrate the entire *value chain* from discovery and development of your new product to commercialisation within your own organisation. Based on these assumptions, you examine each and every step and process in the value chain and do what the experts call a *make/buy analysis* of each.

Based on these analyses, you decide that it is more cost efficient, less risky, and quicker to buy rather than develop within your own organisation all the manufacturing, storage, distribution, and sales capability needed for your new product. This is what is meant by the *make/buy* analysis.

Following the make/buy analyses, you determine the core competencies of those organisations you plan to seek alliances with, the steps in the process in which they excel, and the place to fit them into your value chain from the laboratory to the consumer. In this way, it is possible for your small research firm to manage the entire process without employing large numbers of employees directly or building the facilities needed to support the various processes. It frees your organisation and staff to continue doing what you do best, which is developing new products. This is what is meant by creating a *virtual enterprise,* one that uses the knowledge, skills, and experience of outside partners in lieu of their own. [7]

To win without risk is to triumph without glory
Corneille, *The Cid, 1636*

Reflection

We've presented some interesting concepts and strategies about creating functional alliances and suspect you might benefit from "chewing on them a bit" before we move on. Take a few moments and consider your own organisation, no matter how small, and the steps you go through to deliver your best-known product or service from the beginning of creating your "product" to its use by your clients. Break the overall process down into discrete steps and sub-processes. Once you have clearly described each step, do a "make/buy analysis" of each. The final step is to determine if a potential partner might do parts of your process equally as well or better than you can resulting in a net saving for your organisation without sacrificing quality or efficiency of delivery. We won't take the space it might require to do this analysis, but here are the questions to answer.

- What are all the processes and steps we currently take to provide services or goods to our clients? You will need to be rigorous in identifying all the steps and processes you now go through to be of service. This should include internal functions as well. For example, it might be more cost effective to contract out your financial bookkeeping needs.

- What steps or processes could we "buy" from other partners that would increase our efficiency and effectiveness in serving our constituents and not create adverse effects on our organisation or in our relationship with our constituents?

- With whom could we form alliances to perform these steps or processes? Remember: you will need to have the right fit in terms of missions, values, needs, and competencies.

- What kind of alliance, partnership, or collaboration should we undertake? A full partnership? A service purchase agreement? Some other arrangement?

- When should we consider entering into such alliances?

- How will such an alliance actually work in reality? This is a difficult question to answer but critical as you consider partnering to accomplish your own mission and goals.

- Once again, what are we trying to accomplish through creating an alliance with others?

Lofty words cannot construct an alliance or maintain it; only concrete deeds can do that.
John F. Kennedy

Eight I's and seven C's for creating and maintaining effective alliances

Building outreach capacity through strategic alliances can be very exciting and productive for NGOs and CBOs. They can also be risky and unproductive. As Walt Disney said, "It's kind of fun to do the impossible." To help you make future alliances a bit less risky and more productive, we want to close this discussion with two sets of criteria offered by Rosaland Moss Kanter and James Austin, both Harvard Business School professors and widely known and respected authors and practitioners in the art of forming strategic alliances.

Kanter's eight I's that create successful we's

- **Individual Excellence.** All partners are strong and have something of value to bring to the alliance. Their motives are positive for wanting to form the new relationship.

- **Importance.** The relationship is important to all partners. They want to make it work.

- **Interdependence.** The partners need each other. They come to the relationship with complementary assets and skills to accomplish what they couldn't do singly.

- **Investment.** They invest in each other to demonstrate their stakes in the relationship. These investments could be monetary, technical resources, cross-ownership and a myriad of other ways to demonstrate a long-term commitment to each other.

- **Information.** Information and ideas are shared openly.

- **Integration.** They create many working linkages between many individuals and work units at different levels of their organisations.

- **Institutionalisation.** Big word! It means the relationship is given formal status with clear responsibilities of the partners and unambiguous decision processes.

- **Integrity.** Their behaviour toward each other is honourable, justifying and enhancing mutual trust [8]

Austin's seven C's of strategic collaboration

- **Connection with purpose and people.** Alliances are successful when key players connect personally and emotionally with each other and around their purpose for partnering.

- **Clarity of purpose.** All partners to alliances must be clear about why they are entering into partnerships. NGOs and CBOs because of the nature of their social goodness can be lax in setting clear objectives and measurable outcomes that define the essence of their alliance. Be clear of purpose and intended results of collaboration.

- **Congruency of mission, strategy, and values.** Partnering organisations need to be aware of these crucial components and to identify areas of alignment between their missions, strategies, and values. The closer the alignment, the greater potential that will exist for all parties to gain from the relationship. Total congruency is, however, not a realistic goal among partners, otherwise, why partner? What is sought is a good, comfortable fit between them.

- **Creation of value.** Value goes far beyond money. Austin is talking about mobilising and combining multiple resources and capabilities to generate benefits for all partners and social value for society.

- **Communication between partners.** Good communication is essential to building trust, and trust is the intangible glue that holds coalitions together.

- **Continual learning.** Partnerships need to be dynamic opportunities for personal and institutional growth and development at all levels of interaction.

- **Commitment to the partnership.** A strategic alliance should be seen as a deep relationship, not a one-time affair. Partners need to be committed to a long and sustainable relationship with mutual expectations and accountability.

These two sets of partnering criteria cross over on some points and diverge on others. When they are combined, they represent a valuable roadmap for guiding NGOs and CBOs that may be thinking about engaging in strategic alliances with each other, with local governments, or with private enterprise. As we pointed out in the beginning of this discussion about collaboration, the twenty-first century will be the *age of alliances.*

Travel Advisory! As Kanter reminds us, "the best inter-organisational relationships are frequently messy and emotional, involving feelings like chemistry and trust. And they should not be entered into lightly. Only relationships with full commitment on all sides endure long enough to create value for the partners". [9]

Key Points

- The art of developing strategic alliances by NGOs and CBOs is a combination of effective communication processes and expansion of their influence beyond their organisational boundaries.

- Developing alliances with other NGOs and CBOs as well as organisations from other sectors of society can result in cost savings, economies of scale, synergy of efforts, and even increased revenue generation potential.

- Private sector corporations and businesses are increasingly interested in forming community-based alliances for the following reasons. They benefit their strategic planning efforts, increase human resource management options, help in building a positive organisation culture, and increase business opportunities.

- Alliances fall into several categories of collaboration, i.e., mandated, self-initiated, common concern oriented, and even ventures that happen by chance.

- The act of entering into alliances should be preceded by in-depth dialogue among all the potential partners.

- Successful alliances should be based on the following criteria: individual excellence, importance, interdependence, mutual investment in other partners, information, integration, institutionalisation and integrity as well as personal connection, clarity of purpose, mission and strategy congruency, creation of value, communication, continual learning, and commitment.

- We are entering the *age of alliances*. This can be either good news for NGOs and CBOs, or possibly bad news if the alliances go sour.

Endnotes

(1) Some, Malidoma Patrice. *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community.* Portland: Swan-Rave Publishing, 1993.

(2) Hesselbein, Frances. "The Circular Organisation". In Frances Hesselbein and others (eds.), *The Organisation of the Future*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997. p. 83.

(3) Austin, James E. *The Collaboration Challenge.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000. p.1.

(4) Ibid. pp. 8-14.

(5) Hargrove, Robert. *Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration.* New York: Business Week Books, 1998, p.129.

(6) Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. *Frontiers of Management.* Cambridge: Harvard Business Review, 1997. P. 226.

(7) This process is explained in a clear and unambiguous way in Daniel Tobin's book, *Transformational learning: Renewing Your Company Through Knowledge and Skills.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996.

(8) Kanter, p.246.

(9) Kanter, p. 245.

CHAPTER FOUR
INFLUENCING STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

The fragrance of a flower spreads in the neighbourhood; the essence of a person reaches beyond the hills
Nepalese proverb

Increasing the influence of locally oriented NGOs or CBOs is an important issue and concern. Most local NGOs and CBOs have no <u>official</u> political base nor can they expect to become rich and to have influence based on the accumulation of tangible resources. And yet, many NGOs and CBOs have significant *political influence* and *represent valuable resources*. Their political base is partly in their constituent base, partly in their expertise and connections-yes, their network of contacts - and much more. Their resources are not usually monetary but, nevertheless, substantial in terms of being able to *influence* others. Wealth comes in many forms.

The Nakuru discussion gave considerable weight to several strategies they said are important to become more *influential* as organisations. These included: policy analysis and formulation; the skills to lobby political bodies; and the processes of visioning and strategic thinking as they might relate to having more influence. Of all their discussions about what was needed to gain more influence as NGOs and CBOs, the policy debate was the most vigorous. The discussion gave the impression that public policies, or the lack of public policies, are major frustrations to many NGO/CBO leaders. As one participant said, "What is a policy? When does a policy become law? And, who is the custodian of a policy when it happens?" They were rhetorical questions that suggested the entire public policy process is confusing to many and less than transparent.

In the next few pages, we will try to take some of the mystery out of the policy process and relate how NGOs and CBOs can have more influence in this realm of community decision making. We will also go beyond the narrow band of influencing strategies outlined by the participants in the Nakuru assessment dialogue. To expand the discussion and the influencing options available to NGOs and CBOs, we need to demystify this thing called *influence* and discuss it in relation to another term that is frequently used in the same breath, **POWER!**

The word *power* was rarely, if at all, used in the discussion of *influence* in the Nakuru workshop. Nevertheless, it's difficult to talk about one without the other. There are, theoretically, some differences between the two concepts although they are often used interchangeably. Since *influence*, as a strategy or skill, has an ambiguous and somewhat mushy ring to it when contrasted with *power,* it is important to clarify what we are talking about before moving on.

Power <u>and</u> influence

Power is often associated with *authority*, a mandated or legislated process to get things done. As one author states, "Authority gives someone the power to command behaviour. Managers wield it to get people to take action. Without authority, managers feel powerless and frustrated. *Influence*, on the other hand, involves the indirect or less tangible means to prompt thought and opinion, as well as behaviour. Leaders apply influence rather than authority to get people to take action. One is forceful and direct; the other is more subtle and indirect." [(1)] The linkage between authority and power may be one of the reasons why the Nakuru NGO and CBO leaders shied away from the use of the word *power* during their deliberations. Most NGOs and CBOs and their leaders have little formal authority beyond their own organisation's boundary. Nevertheless, they have other kinds of power, which potentially give them tremendous opportunities to influence. Before we discuss various power options as means of influencing, consider the following fable.

A hen had lost her sight, and was accustomed to scratching up the earth in search of food,
although blind, still continued to scratch away most diligently. Of what use was it to the industrious fool?
Another sharp-sighted hen who spared her tender feet never moved from her side,
and enjoyed, without scratching, the fruits of the other's labour.
For as often as the blind hen scratched up a barleycorn,
her watchful companion devoured it.
Fables, Gotthold Lessing, 1729-1781

Power options

To appreciate the potential for NGOs and CBOs to build outreach capacity through influencing, we need to understand the diversity of options that lead to increased power, either as an individual or an institution. Following is the generally accepted way to look at the differences between various power sources. (Don't miss the opportunity to check out your own power ratings by taking *Tool # 8 in Part Two* in hand.)

- **Reward power:** As a manager of an NGO or CBO, you can provide rewards for your employees or constituents, i.e., promotions, favours, recognition, or access to materials or opportunities.

- **Coercive power:** In that same position, you have the ability to punish, i.e., to inflict pain, to demote employees, even to fire them, and, in the case of your constituents, to take away privileges or access to goods and services.

- **Legitimate power:** This is based on your position as a leader in an organisation that gives you the right to exert power over others, either employees or constituents.

These three power bases are the ones we usually associate with *mandated authority* of one kind or another. They represent the ability to influence the behaviour of others despite potential resistance from those affected by their uses.

Travel Advisory! The ability of NGOs and CBOs to influence others through authority-type power sources is obviously very limited. Even if these power options, i.e., *reward, coercive and legitimate*, are available, their use would be suspect given the symbiotic relationship most NGO/CBOs have with their employees and constituents.

Fortunately, there are other options to increase one's influence through the use of power, all much more attractive than the three just described. Let's consider them.

- **Referent power:** These are the personal and institutional traits that one associates with respect and allegiance. Most NGOs and CBOs have the potential to garner this kind of power base, and it comes through the credibility of the leaders within the community and the institution's ability to deliver services. In other words, referent power must be earned. We will come back to some of the ways NGO/CBOs can "earn" referent power later. Before moving on, it is important to point out that many NGOs and CBOs acquire referent power because of their earned reputation as valuable community resources as well as the arena of endeavours they represent.

In terms of outreach capacity, this source of power is important. The major international development agencies, i.e., the World Bank, UNCHS (Habitat) have certainly been enamoured by the potential that NGO/CBOs bring to the fulfilment of their own missions. However, the motives of these donors, at times, need to be put into perspective. Their willingness to seek alliances with NGOs and CBOs is often borne more out of frustration with traditional allies. The old adage, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, is one to keep in your top desk drawer as a reminder that referent power must be earned and earned and earned. This is never clearer than when an NGO or CBO ties its future to an international source of funding.

- **Expert power:** This is one of the major sources of influence for NGOs and CBOs represented by your special knowledge, skills, and experience. The more this source of potential influence is understood and optimised, the greater the influence it can wield.

- **Information power:** This is another important source of influence for NGO/CBOs. You often have information or access to information about the community and specific groups within the community that is important to others. Information is a potential source of influence that can often be strengthened by forming alliances with other organisations that may have a piece of information that you don't have which is needed to fill in the blanks. It is important to recognise this potential influencing source before the information is needed so there is a systematic process for collecting and organising the data and information.

- **Connection power:** Influence is often about whom you know as much as what you know. NGOs and CBOs are often in a position to be connected to influential and important individuals and organisations. Remember our discussion about networking? Networking is not just access to people; it's potential access to increased influence.

- **Catalytic power**: This is the talent for combining two or more sources of influence, each of which may not have the clout to be influential on their own. Sounds like building strategic alliances, doesn't it? Alliances are important components in your ability to have influence at different levels of societal interaction. Alliances are created for many reasons. Increased influence is one of them.

Reflection

Take a moment and review the various kinds of power sources just listed that can increase your ability to have influence in the community or beyond the community.

Which of these sources, if mobilised or increased, could increase your organisational outreach capacity?

For each one you listed, jot down one or more ways you might increase this source of influence.

Only he deserves power who everyday justifies it
Dag Hammarskjold

A systems approach to influence

It seems obvious from the discussion of power, and the numerous ways that personal and organisational power can be mobilised that influence flows in large measure from these power sources. Even the ability to influence the public policy-making process is tied to one or more NGO/CBO power sources. In terms of building organisational outreach, it is important to think of the influencing component from a systems perspective. The ability of NGOs and CBOs to influence begins with the competencies of the organisation's leadership and staff, quickly spreads to the individual organisation's competencies and track record, and finally involves the network of NGO/CBO institutions that can be mobilised to influence community or region wide issues and concerns.

Individual competencies and influence

For many local NGOs and CBOs the ability to influence is tied directly to the key person(s) in the organisation. In *Building Bridges through Participatory Planning*, we discuss at some length the need for shared leadership and collaboration. We have also touched on the need to build alliances earlier in this discussion. Sharing leadership roles and responsibilities and building coalitions through various kinds of organisational alliances requires a different type of managerial approach and style. A recent management book, *Power Up*, has tied the concepts of power and influence together and makes the point that mutual influence creates more total power. Since the authors are talking about an approach that mirrors many of the messages in this series of manuals and the companion *Building Bridges* series, let's take a look at what they have to say.

A central theme in *Power Up* focuses on the role the authors call "post-heroic" leadership. To understand this approach to leadership, one needs to know their description of the *heroic leader.* The heroic leader:

- knows more about what's going on in the organisation than any other person;
- has greater technical expertise than any subordinate;
- is able to solve problems faster than anyone else; and
- takes primary responsibility for everything that happens in the organisation. [(2)]

This is, of course, an exaggerated view of a leadership style. Nevertheless, there are still leaders around who think of themselves in this way even in today's global approach to management. It is a management style based on the use of centralised power to accomplish the organisation's mission. Post-heroic leaders, by contrast, rely on shared leadership and *influence* "to get others, below, above, and laterally, to respond in desired ways without coercion." [(3)] Moreover, post-heroic leaders and those they work with both inside and outside the organisation engage in mutual influence.

To master the challenge of mutual influence, one must accept the notion that influence flows in all directions, not just from the top down within organisations or from the "most powerful" within the larger community of institutions involved in creating mutual influence. At the heart of mutual influence is the assumption that *increasing the influence of others increases one's own influence.*

Your organisation's influence will depend first of all on the competencies of your leaders and staff. This component is covered, in part, in the manual on *Managing and Developing Human Resources*. Leadership and staff competencies are also covered in the Building Bridges companion series that stress the NGO/CBO roles in participatory planning and managing conflict and differences. We view these two skills as important to just about everything that most NGOs and CBOs do. They should be part of your organisation's human resource development program and linked directly to your organisation's strategy for building its outreach capacity. The quality of your organisation's outreach capacity, and therefore your ability to influence, begins with leadership and the ability of your staff to carry out your mission.

Organisational competencies and influence
The next inter-linking component of your ability to have influence is in the strength of your organisation and its capacity to function effectively and efficiently. *Effectiveness is doing the right things*. This means your vision, mission statement, operational goals, and objectives – all of which are, or should be, linked to the needs and aspirations of your constituents and clients. Some of the tools needed to improve the effectiveness of your organisation *doing the right things* can be found in the *Participatory Planning* manual in the *Building Bridges* companion series. Specifically, you will find concepts and tools associated with the visioning process, strategic planning, and developing client-oriented goals and objectives.

Efficiency is doing things right. This is how well you manage your total portfolio of resources in relation to your mission, goals, and objectives. These are human resources, financial resources, time, physical plant, processing systems, internal policies, tools, tactics, and strategies - all the resources you have at your disposal to carry out your mission.

The tools in the other manuals of this series are designed to help you improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your organisation. If you operate a constituent-centred, demand-driven, well-managed organisation, you will have influence in the community.

Local NGOs and CBOs that demonstrate individual and organisational competencies and sustain them over time will be regarded as an integral part of the community's social capital. With such recognition, come respect, trust, and influence.

Influence is neither good nor bad in an absolute manner, but only in relation to the one who experiences it
Andre Gide, Pretexts 1903

Extra-organisational strategies and influence
We have already discussed a number of the influencing strategies and tools included in these series that are designed for use beyond the immediate boundaries of the organisation, i.e., conflict management and participatory planning processes, networking and the broad range of communication skills. We will conclude this discussion on influencing by returning to the Nakuru needs assessment. What remains to be covered are the many questions raised about the policy process and the role of lobbying.

Policies: from vision to impact
On the surface, policies are formal statements adopted by governing bodies to guide future actions. In reality, the world of policies and policy making is much messier. For purposes of this discussion, we will assume the concerns of NGOs and CBOs regarding the policy process are associated with actions taken by public governing bodies that directly affect their missions and operations. Given this assumption, the NGO/CBO outreach capacity-building issues are:

1. how to influence the creation and adoption of enlightened policies by public governing bodies that support NGO/CBO institutions and their missions, and

2. how to minimise or eliminate the adverse affects of current policies in relation to NGO/CBO institutions and their operations.

Before we get into the "how to" stage of influencing those who adopt and implement public policies, it might be helpful to clear away some of the underbrush that clutters the policy landscape. (See *Tool # 9: Part Two* for more assistance in the policy arena.)

The policy thicket

George Sand, a pseudonym for a well-known female French writer in the early 1800s, said in a letter to a friend *the truth is too simple: one must always get there by a complicated route.* It may have been her best defence when confronted with allegations that she was trying to be someone she wasn't. Policies also have many pseudonyms and are pursued by many complicated routes. The term *policy* is used to express a range of diverse activities. For example, policy in the mind of the person using the term may reflect.

- strategic plans and future directions
- a definition of current actions, i. e., "That's our policy"
- a way of announcing a public decision whether or not it is a formally
- adopted stand of the governing body
- a negotiated position between two or more parties
- a statement of intent, or
- an unintended, unannounced, concrete reality that has never been decided by anyone including those who are considered to have the "policy making" role.

While this venture into the rhetorical policy thicket may seem frivolous, it is important to understand that "policies" abound and can be found in the strangest places. If your NGO or CBO is going to have *influence* in getting new policies adopted or old ones changed or abandoned, then you need to know them by their pseudonyms as well. While most public policies result from a very deliberate process of decision making by elected policy bodies based on systematic analysis and deliberation, policies also happen otherwise. Here are some of the unconventional ways that policies are made.

- Through negotiations: For example, the local government is negotiating with a major international donor for funds to build a new water treatment plant. The donor insists on certain *conditions precedent* before the funds are finally committed, meaning no money until the local government agrees to meet certain conditions. These *conditions precedent* may have serious consequences on some NGOs or CBOs and their constituents.
- Policies made and affirmed through annual budget deliberations: The city council cuts funding for a new program that provides street children with alternative educational opportunities. What was seen as a recent policy victory by concerned CBOs at a previous council meeting is gutted by a need to "save money" for other "more important" priorities.
- By administrative fiat: The police department decides to curtail its neighbourhood patrol program even though the city council passed a "policy" establishing certain security standards that mandated the patrol program. Since the council hasn't bothered to monitor the implementation of their "policy" on providing safety at the neighbourhood level and since there have been few formal complaints, the police department has established its own policy about neighbourhood patrols by default.
- Through individual action: In spite of the city council's policy on including NGOs and CBOs on bidding lists for the purchase of goods and services, the purchasing agent often ignores the policy.

As you can see, policy making and policy implementation are processes that often reflect different realities from those we might have expected, based on some idealised image of policy making as solely a responsibility of elected officials. Many times public policies are *statements of intent* by policy makers that never get translated into actions. On other occasions, policies are *statements of fact* based on actions never authorised by official policy makers. To further complicate the discussion, policies are made by default. Public managers and organisations often make policies by either ignoring the policies resulting from elected deliberation and decision making or by establishing their own ground rules that become accepted "public policy" over time.

Oh what tangled webs we weave when first we practice to believe
Saint Augustine

What to do?

Based on this rather confused picture of the policy making implementation continuum, and on occasion discontinuum, what can NGOs and CBOs do to use their influence to affect policies and their implementation? It really depends on what you want to accomplish. If you want a new policy formulated and implemented, then certain actions may be required. If you want to implement a policy that has been adopted by a local council but never enacted according to the council's intentions, it may require a different set of actions. If you want the implementation of a current policy altered or the intent of the policy amended, it may require another strategy.

Since the opportunities to have *influence* in the public policy arena may be different from one country to another, it is difficult to prescribe actions that would either be effective or appropriate in all settings. Based on this assumption, here are a few guidelines that should fit most situations.

- **Understand the policy process in your community**. How are policies normally introduced in the political process? Who is responsible for conducting research for the policy-making body prior to their adoption of new policies? What kinds of public deliberation and disclosure processes are in place to assure that proposed policies get aired publicly? Who is the best person or office to contact for information on policy-related issues? Who will be responsible for drafting implementing guidelines and actually managing the implementation process? How does the policy body monitor current policy implementation and what might this say about the monitoring of future legislative actions? These questions and many more will need to be answered about how the policy process works in your community if you want to have influence in policy decisions.

- **Form alliances with like-minded institutions.** Recognise that the ability to influence policies and the policy process is heightened significantly by joining others in the process. Don't assume that your organisation and the people you represent are the only ones concerned with affecting certain policy issues. *Think outside the box* about where additional support and influence might come from including organisations and individuals that represent different sectors of the community. For example, a socially conscious corporation might have a keen interest is supporting new environmental legislation even though they may have to make additional investments to meet new standards. (See the last chapter for guidance on forming strategic alliances.)

- **Be pro-active on public policies that are important to you and your constituents.** Do you have a person or committee that keeps track of the policy issues that concern your organisation? If not, think about delegating this responsibility. It's a good way to use volunteers, particularly those who know the policy process and know who to contact on certain issues. Don't wait until the policy is adopted before getting involved. Often this is too late to have any *influence.* Anticipate your policy needs and do the necessary research needed to be able to present a creditable case to the right people. Contact other agencies that will benefit from the policy you are advocating and get their assistance. Use your network of contacts to see what other regions or countries are doing on the same issue or concern.

- **Be prepared to respond to the needs of the policy makers in whatever way is appropriate and within your capability.** Public policy bodies also need help when they are considering new legislation or are confronted with inefficiencies in implementing existing policies. You and your organisation might serve on a committee, provide expert testimony about the need and implementation requirements of pending legislation, or circulate petitions among your constituents to demonstrate grassroots support for policy changes. If you haven't done so already, inform those who are responsible for guiding the policy process of your willingness and availability to get involved.

- **Don't stop being involved after the adoption of new policies**. Normally, administrative guidelines are developed after the policy makers have done their legislative duty by making policy decisions. How new policies get implemented is as important as the drafting and creation of the policy in question. If possible, get involved in helping draft the implementing guidelines if the policy is going to affect your operation or your constituents.

- **Monitor, if possible, the implementation of policies that directly affect your organisation and constituents.** Are the policies being implemented? If not, why not? Is implementation being carried out in a fair and equitable fashion? What are the social, economic, and environmental consequences of current policies on the community?

Travel Advisory! Getting involved in the policy making process can be addictive, particularly for those who are outside the formal responsibilities of making policy for the community. If you manage, direct or represent a small NGO or CBO, you may not have time to get involved in a process that will take you away from your primary mission or duties for very long. Given these time constraints, pick your policy battles carefully, and don't take on the burden alone.

Lobbying

You can't hang everything on one nail
Russian proverb

Lobbying is those activities aimed at influencing public officials and especially members of a legislative body to promote or secure the passage of legislation, i.e., policies. While much of what has just been said about influencing the policy process applies to lobbying, it is unique enough to warrant a separate discussion. (You can also get help in increasing your lobbying skills by checking out Tool # 10 in Part Two.)

Lobbying at the local level is often a very different process from lobbying at the provincial or national levels of governance. What we have just related about influencing policy making is more applicable at the local level where the process is more personal, the persons to be influenced are more "available", and the number of legislative proposals being considered are more manageable. Lobbying your local government representative is easy compared to what it takes to penetrate the policy-making process in higher levels of government.

In one of the smaller states in the United States, over 5,000 proposed pieces of legislation are typically filed at the beginning of each legislative session and another 2,500 submitted during the legislators' deliberations. Given the complexity of dealing with this many pieces of potential legislation, the challenge and task of "influencing" the legislative process takes a quantum leap. The engagement of alliances and networks in lobbying higher levels of government is imperative unless you represent a major national or international NGO.

In case you and your colleagues decide to join a consortium of NGOs and CBOs to engage in more formal lobbying activities, here are some thoughts about the process.

- In a number of countries, NGOs and CBOs are restricted from engaging in partisan politics. They can neither endorse political candidates nor mobilise constituents to support or defeat candidates. Nor can they legally make financial contributions to political candidates.

- When NGOs and CBOs lobby, they speak to the issues. They rely on the merits of causes they represent rather than on political persuasion. Their positions must be credible.

- Influencing public decisions that serve the interests of individual citizens who lack access to the political process or the expertise to represent their own interests are one of the major reasons most NGOs and CBOs are created. Lobbying is one important way to respond to this fundamental responsibility.

- Effective lobbying is backed by analyses of needs, alternative proposals, likely results of alternative policy proposals, and the consequences of a policy vacuum in relation to the policies being considered.

- To be an effective lobbyist, you, your staff, and members of your constituency need to know how government works. In particular, you need to know how the legislative machinery develops policies and laws from the raw materials of data, ideas, options, and acts of persuasion and turns them into policies and programs that can either serve your needs or not serve them.

- The legislative process can be mysterious to all but those who are directly involved. It can also differ from one country to another so don't rely on how-to-do-it books from other places to guide you in the process.

- Don't spend too much time congratulating yourself on being the consummate lobbyist when your proposals become law. Quickly figure out how to turn the new policies and laws into concrete benefits for your constituents.

- Don't hesitate to use volunteers to help lobby for your causes. They are often more convincing.

- Effective lobbying includes such activities as:
  - organising your constituents to write to their representatives about those issues that are important
  - meeting with legislators and their staff members
  - mobilising all your networks through phone calls and e-mails to, in turn, contact their legislators just before they are ready to vote

- ➢ being present when they vote and being sure they know you and your representatives are present
- ➢ making sure they receive a written thank you that reminds them that you care and will be ready to solicit their support the next time around, and
- ➢ continuing to be persistent and consistent in your efforts to get legislation adopted that is in your best interest.

- Provide training in the fine art of lobbying for those who get involved. It should include written materials they will need to be effective, i.e., copies of proposed legislation, a list of legislators and others to contact with phone numbers and other pertinent information, and a chart of how a pending piece of legislation wends its way through the morass.

- Also, provide skill training on making phone calls, setting up meetings, and writing persuasive letters that are accurate, brief, clear, and timely.

- If you are working as part of a coalition of NGO/CBOs, which is critical when lobbying at the national level
  - ➢ build trust and maintain it
  - ➢ revere open and honest communication
  - ➢ agree on one organisation to serve as the clearing house, or there may be chaos
  - ➢ keep all members informed equally
  - ➢ pass on the results of their efforts so they will be willing to be involved the next time around, and
  - ➢ celebrate success and get ready for the next legislative session to convene. [(4)]

Judith Meredith, who wrote a book about lobbying on a shoestring, says there are only two rules that form the foundation for a citizen-network lobbying initiative.

Rule # 1: Elected and appointed officials make different decisions when watched by the affected constituents.

Rule # 2: Lobbying is simply getting the right information to the right people at the right time. [(5)]

Persons who love the law or good sausage should not watch either one being made
Bismarck

Ten reasons to lobby for your cause

The *Independent Sector* is a national leadership forum in the United States that works to encourage NGO and CBO initiatives, volunteering, and citizen action. Among its publications is a one-page flyer entitled *Ten Reasons to Lobby for Your Cause* which makes it ten good reasons to share it with you.

1. You can make a difference.

2. People working together can make a difference.

3. People can change laws.

4. Lobbying is a democratic tradition.

5. Lobbying helps find real solutions.

6. Lobbying is easy.

7. Policy makers need your expertise.

8. Lobbying helps people.

9. The views of local NGOs and CBOs are important.

10. Lobbying advances your cause and builds public trust.

Travel Advisory! Lobbying is an important part of building organisational outreach capacity. Lobbying is also an important and necessary function within the democratic process, but it doesn't work if your legislators don't know what NGOs and CBOs need from them. They are elected to represent you, not to read your mind. Lobbying is influence in action. Lobby.

Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up
Oliver Wendell Holmes

As we bring this discussion of influencing to a close, we realise it is a topic of many dimensions. We have talked about *power* and the various kinds of potential power sources that NGOs and CBOs and their leaders have available to them to increase their influence within the community. Often NGOs and CBOs believe they are powerless, particularly the smaller ones. Hopefully, the discussion of power will provide insights and reassurances to those who feel powerless within their communities.

We've looked at ways to increase our influence potential at different levels of interaction. Influence is based on individual, organisation and extra-organisational competencies and strategies. NGOs and CBOs are most effective when they mobilise their influencing resources at all three levels of engagement.

Hopefully, the policy thicket is a bit easier to understand as a result of our discussions. While it is officially a legislative act, it is important to remember that policies are made "on the street" in many other less formal ways. NGOs and CBOs need to be vigilant to assure that their beneficiaries and constituents are not being victimized by policy making actions that skirt the official process. And finally, we provided some tips on how to lobby your legislature. This approach to influencing is one that will be more country and culture specific than most so each of you will need to do your "homework" to assure that your legislative needs and wants are fully understood and represented.

Finally, we want to remind you of how important and how interlinked the other two strategies of organisational outreach, communications and building strategic alliances, are in every influencing effort you decide to undertake. The effective organisation outreach strategy will involve all three of these tools. Like ingredients in a cake, they work best when used together.

Key points

- Influencing is the third strategy and skill of consequence in building the outreach capacity of NGOs and CBOs and works best when combined with the other two.

- At the heart of influence is power, and power comes in many varieties, not just the use of raw power to subdue the opposition.

- The more important sources of power for NGOs and CBOs are referent, expert, information, connection, and catalytic powers.

- Think of your influence as embodied within a system of interlocking components. They include your individual competencies; those of your organisation, the staff and its constituents; and those alliances you have forged beyond the borders of your NGO or CBO.

- Influencing for NGOs and CBOs will ultimately involve engaging the policy makers who create the legislative frameworks that either support your efforts or constrain them.

- Public policies are the prerogative of elected officials but get their teeth from those who are charged with administering them.

- Many activities go around disguised as policies, and many non-policy makers make public policies.

- To be successful in having influence in the policy arena, understand the process, form alliances of like-minded institutions, be proactive, and be prepared to get involved.

- Lobbying is one of your best influencing tools, and it will require the best of your networking and alliance-building skills to put it to use.

- There are many good reasons why NGOs and CBOs should lobby. Influence is only one of them.

Endnotes

(1) Hickman, Craig. *Mind of the Manager, Soul of a Leader.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1992. p. 99.

(2) Bradford, David and Allan Cohen. *Power Up: Transforming Organisations Through Shared Leadership,* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998. P. xvi.

(3) Ibid, p. 184.

(4) Many of these ideas were garnered from the wisdom and foresight of Judith Meredith, so thanks wherever you might be.

(5) Meredith, Judith. *Lobbying on a Shoestring.* Boston: Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education, 1989. Pp. 2-4.