Viva's Programme Managers & Network Development Team

Over 20 years, Viva has pioneered and refined our approach of building locally-led networks of churches and organisations that deliver collective-action programmes designed to tackle the root causes of problems affecting children. This joined-up model employed across 37 networks in 22 countries, delivers a level of scale and reach that would not be possible for a single organisation to achieve. Viva's Network Development Team provide support, expertise and share knowledge to networks every step of the way.

Each network has a designated Viva Network Development Team Member who keeps regular contact through skype calls, email, phone and face-to-face meetings with coordinators and Steering Groups to build strong relationships and enable **coaching and mentoring** through challenges and growth in line with partner networks' own capacity, vision, skills and track record.

Network Consultants are supported by the Viva International Centre in a similar way and work together to strategically support the networks to grow and develop their effectiveness and ultimately to change the situation for children in their cities.

Connecting

The Network Development Team's role changes as networks progress. Initially, it is greatly involved in **locating and envisioning** potential network members and encouraging them to join together. Part of this process includes identifying key leaders in the community and initial coordinators to manage the network locally and working with these people to agree the formation of a steering group as advisory support to the coordinator.

Early on, we encourage **situational mapping** to identify which churches and organisations are working for children in what ways, where the gaps are, and how Viva can best support these organisations through the network. Mapping is also used to clarify the most pressing needs of and threats to children in the city. Findings are summarised in a report, which is used to inform the programme direction for the network. Viva has a wealth of knowledge on different approaches and resources needed and can advise based on capacity and experience.

Central to the effectiveness of the model is the understanding that by joining the collective group, members become part of something bigger, enabling them to realise the potential of achieving far more for children than they could on their own, with a sense of acceleration towards achieving a larger goal. Annual regional network meetings and our monthly family email help the networks to position themselves as part of a **wider movement working globally for children**. This sense of family or connectedness is important for sharing expertise, experience, challenges and successes. Bringing people together in these forums are catalysts for shared vision and increased commitment, as networks learn from and motivate each other.

The Viva Network Development Team keeps members engaged by supporting networks to continue on a path of progress – the **phased growth** defined in a variety of training materials and documentation. The team helps to facilitate strategy development, articulation of vision, function and mission of the network. Each year, we run our **Network Health Check (NHC)** to monitor the development and strength of networks and identify key areas for improvement. Findings are published and recommendations given to coordinators to help them prioritise action to reach their potential.

Capacity Building

Our Network Development Team works closely with the network coordinators to support capacity development of the network and its members. Viva has **developed training programmes** that have been trialed, tested and refined in different countries and across continents. They are adaptable to different contexts and situations.

To give an example, Celebrating Children training programme, which trains christians working with children on holistic child development to encourage better care and help them to comply with best practice. The need for a resource with a theology underpinning holistic child care came out of one of Viva's international Cutting Edge conferences and was developed into a training course first piloted in Cambodia. From this learning, a training resource was developed consisting of 8 modules which are relevant worldwide and have been adapted and used across our networks in Asia, Africa and is now being used in Latin America. Whilst the core content is transferable, context-specific examples are used, and methods for teaching the content have varied depending on the capacity and needs of the network. With the knowledge of the programmes working in other networks, and understanding the capacity of networks, Viva's Network Development Team are on hand to offer **technical advice** for the establishment and running of capacity building programmes such as this.

Due to the Viva Network Development Team's **intimate knowledge of the networks** they oversee, we are well-placed to suggest the training programmes that would be most beneficial to network members, and can advise on how best to run them. In some cases, Viva will assist with the training of network members or provide the training for those planning to facilitate the course.

We are currently driving for all networks and their members to have up-to date child protection policies or codes of conduct that are visible and well-implemented. To support this, Viva has developed training resources and a child protection framework to help ensure that policies include all the necessary content, whilst flexible to the specific situation of each organisation.

Viva also provides technical expertise and ensures that networks have the necessary training and systems in place to comply with **international standards** in areas such as organisation management and financial accountability (with Mango financial training and health checks). This is to ensure that children are safeguarded in all areas where networks are active and that the network as a whole is sustainable. Our Quality Improvement System (QIS) was specifically designed to help network members achieve this. Changes made through the completion of the course have wide implications. Apart from enabling organisations to provide better care for children, successful QIS completion can open the organisation up to greater funding opportunities and collaboration with larger corporations or government bodies that have more stringent requirements.

To build on the capacity of the network coordination team, our **Network Training Course** works with coordination staff of a network to help them understand how to make the network more efficient and effective.

Much of the work networks carry out requires funding and dissemination of information more widely than the people they are directly working with. Our Network Development Team provide **expertise in proposal and report writing** as well as media training**, defining wide scale change, design of monitoring and evaluation steps, collecting demonstrable impact stories, and measurement of success** both quantitatively and qualitatively. This helps to ensure that the network's capacity is increasing and they are able to **access support from a wider range of sources**. Developing local fundraising capacity for in-country funding is a vital step in sustainability.

Collective Action

Through positive experiences of working together for children through joint actions, network participants increase in their desire to work together in unity and shared vision to improve situations that children face in their city.

During the early network stages, we suggest 'quick-win' programmes such as our Christmas Parties, which will help participants to see the benefits of collaborating with each other. As commitment and capacity increases, Viva's Network Development Team supports the implementation of more complex programmes, sharing programme models that have been developed elsewhere and offering technical advice to **tailor the programmes to the specific context**. For example,

Viva's birth registration programme, 'I Exist' was trialed in Dominican Republic and then replicated in places such as Guatemala, Honduras and Uganda. The Network Development Team's knowledge of programme use elsewhere and the need in the local context enables them to be a valuable advisor.

As network members are living and working in the area and most aware of the needs of the children they are working with, and those they have yet to reach, it is important that they determine the focus and approach they need to take to tackle the most pressing needs of children. We support the development of **issue-based action groups** to involve all members in at least one collective action. Once a focus has been agreed, Viva offers a range of **programme models** that can employed and adapted. In cases where none of the programmes fit the need, we can support the piloting of new ideas.

Larger programmes have involved **Viva fundraising** and acting as the intermediary to help reduce administrative burden on the networks themselves. In such instances, Viva's Network Development team are much more instrumental in conducting monitoring and evaluation, as well as feeding back to donors. Viva's **technical programme support** is instrumental in ensuring good project management of effective delivery associated with all grants and investments.

As networks begin to work on larger programmes, it can become difficult to maintain a good balance between collective action and network development. Viva's Network Development Team continues to coach coordinators and work with Steering Groups to help them to **keep the wider network focused** and engaged, whilst always trying to attract new members.

Ultimately, in order to change the situation for children across the cities, we help envision the networks toward larger **'solution' programmes**, which require collaboration beyond the immediate network to work with civil society and city authorities and engage with government initiatives seeking funding to secure long-term sustainable outcomes.

City Influence

The network model is inherently outward looking, and we are constantly looking for ways to **engage with community beyond the network**'s current reach. We have developed a number of programmes to help the networks engage with previously unreached people. We encourage them to implement the World Weekend of Prayer, the Good Treatment Campaign and Christmas Parties annually.

Reaching more people does not solely enable more people to benefit from the programmes offered by the network, but can also be instrumental in achieving the aim of changing the situation for children. Events can be used as a tool to influence mindsets, attitudes and understanding of people within these communities. The Good Treatment Campaign is an **advocacy tool** developed initially to raise awareness of the problems of domestic violence across Latin America. More recently, the Network Development Team suggested that it could be tailored to the different issues faced by networks. We have subsequently supported the India team to tailor this tool to be used to promote equality of girls enabling it to be rolled out across 6 networks this coming year.

As the networks are made up of churches and christian organisations, the first target group for reaching wider influence is larger city churches and main stream denomination leaders. Often these have their own agendas and are resistant to collaboration unless relationships are intentionally developed over time.

On a similar basis, the networks must begin to collaborate with local and government authorities to achieve more sustainable change across the cities. Viva supports the development of written **MOUs and agreements** leading to higher level relationships with greater influence and potential for partnership.

When the network has developed a good programme track record, strong capacity and relationships with city authorities, we support them into developing their 'solution' approach to their programmes to begin wider collaboration maybe in the form of a **consortium** of organisations and key players across the city who could work together to change the situation for children. Viva Network Development Team helps to identify key players to engage, and advises on boundaries and sustainable development of consortium approaches, going beyond the network to work on the solution strategy at a city level.