

Network Training Course - Unit 3: Network Platform

Key Scriptures

Please refer to Network Development Reflections:

Network Leadership Day 20 – 25 p.66-82

Sustainable Leadership: Exodus 18:13-27

Strong Communication Underpins Strong Networks: Numbers 32:1-32

Why Monitoring Matters: Revelation 2:1-3 & 22, Revelation 3:19-21

Faith vs. Fear: 1 Samuel 17:20-54; Hebrews 24-25

Balancing Act: Genesis 19: 12-29

Network Systems (day 26-29) p87 -97

The Value of Systems: Deuteronomy 4:1-14

People and Systems Need Each Other: 2 Kings 22 & 23:1-25; Joshua 24:14-15

Priorities Begin with Consecration: Psalm 90:1-17; Acts 1:4-8

Systems Facilitate Accountability: Acts 5:1-11

Local Fundraising p. 109 Day 32

Local Fundraising for your Network: Esther 4:1-17; Acts 2:33-36

Main themes

In order to grow the impact of the church and serve children well, each network needs a strong and sustainable platform. A network platform is made up of the people involved in the network and the policies and systems that guide the functioning of the network.

In this unit we will look at how the network puts a strong and sustainable network platform in place. We will cover the following 5 areas

- Leadership and staffing of a network
- Accountability Policies and systems to guide the network
- Strong membership of the network
- Network Local Fundraising
- Balancing Network programmes and network development

3.1 Leadership & Staffing

Network Co-ordination team

Every network needs a **Network Co-ordinator** who oversees the work of the network and helps to facilitate the networks growth and continual improvement. Good network leaders need to have a clear sense of calling and the ability to work collaboratively, involving others in responding to the needs of children. He or she should keep the network focussed on the network vision.

Each member of the Network Co-ordination team needs a job description. See Viva's sample JD's and Structure template

The network should find funding for the coordinator to work full-time for the network either through regular funding or in-kind gifts (such as somebody who can work voluntarily).

The Network Coordinator should be supported by at least two extra people to form a **co-ordination team**. These people should bring a balance of skills to ensure that leadership is effective, supportive and forward thinking. The co-ordination team should not be hierarchical. Its role is to serve all members of the network equally, based on mutual trust, love and commitment.

As networks grow, they may need to change leadership to adapt to changing needs of the network. At the same time, the co-ordination team should grow as volunteers bring in complementary skills and experience and share the work load

The co-ordination team can take the lead in designing network programmes and developing funding applications. Where possible they should work with Action Group leaders, so that Action groups can deliver the programme.

Action Groups

All members of the network should be encouraged by the network co-ordination team to be a part of at least one Action Group/Working group. These smaller groups are where members with similar interests can work more closely to develop activities to help children, which they can do together at little or no cost.

Effective co-ordination of Action Group leads to active network membership. New network participants should be directed towards an Action Group that most relates to the focus of their current work. This means that they can share their common experience, and contribute to the network in a practical and immediate way. Action groups can take the lead in running network programmes and reduce the load on the coordination team.

Steering Group

A Steering Group is a council of advisors to help support and guide the network. It should be made up of individuals with a range of skills and experience. Together, they support the Network Co-ordination team and ensure that the network is fulfilling its vision and mission. Their role is also to make sure that there are high standards of professionalism and accountability as well providing contacts of people who may be able to provide financial or human resource for the network.

Members of the Steering Group should be

- Excited by the vision of network and able to communicate it
- Respected for their own work and the manner they conduct themselves
- Able to advise and mentor
- Able to deliver on plans through contracts
- Experienced of managing large numbers of staff
- Experienced in financial and legal accountability
- Knowledgeable on how to engage with key people outside the network including city, national government or church representatives

A Steering Group should never see themselves as a Board of Governance that sits with power and authority over the network controlling its affairs (even if that is defined in the standard wording of the constitution). Instead, it should include people who can promote the network, support in fundraising and make sure the network is progressing. Different members should be appointed to oversee and support specific areas such as fundraising, finance, safeguarding and child protection.

The Steering Group and the Network Co-ordination team should meet on a regular basis at least quarterly to discuss plans and future network developments. A steering Group member (and where they are termed Board members) should be only appointed for a specific fixed term and have a specific role description. Meetings should also include a review of which skill sets are needed in the Steering Group for particular phases in the development of the network. A critical part of the role is their support of the network coordinator. This may involve approaching new people to join the group and allowing others to step back from the group. Reappointment of a Group/Board member should only happen if both the rest of the Steering group and the Coordination Team are unanimous in the decision.

Leadership & Staffing Checklist:

- A coordination team that includes a full-time coordinator with a defined job description and documented relationship with the network (plus at least two other members may be volunteers)
- Functional Action Groups with leaders that are an extension of the coordination team with clear goals and aspirations
- A Steering Group, with defined terms of office, that mobilises resources and contacts in addition to fiscal and pastoral care with members who have clear roles supporting the Coordination Team.
- A structure plan or chart that is periodically reviewed to adapt to changing needs of the network

3.2 Accountability, Policies and Systems

As we are representing the Christian response, we must uphold high standards and be a good example to others. The network must be accountable to the laws of the country in which it is based, and to the children they serve.

Accountability is about building trust and commitment within the network and with organisations outside the network. Network accountability centres on financial reporting and transparent accountability. Good accountability means that donors and supporters can trust that money given is tracked and used for the purpose it was given.

See Viva's Network Financial Transparency Training Guide and example

To prove that your network is accountable with your finances, we ask all partner networks to

- **Run MANGO Health Checks every three years:** This is an internationally recognised assessment to ensure systems are in place for good financial accountability. Viva will support you to obtain a good score on this assessment.
- **Register as an organisation (where possible) and abide by compliance rules set by the state.** This enables the network to work with government institutions and other national groups to increase the impact and reach of the network.
- **Have audited accounts:** This is often a requirement of Government registration.
- **Provide records of activities and the impact of those activities** We will look at this in more detail in Unit 6 Measurement and Impact

Policies are written rules, procedures and guidelines on different issues. They describe what actions need to be taken and what is and is not acceptable. They help to ensure that you are carrying out good practice and preventing risk to children, adults or your network as a whole. People interested in joining or supporting the network may ask to see some of your policies.

The policies that the network needs to have in place are

- **Child Protection Policy**
- **Financial Transparency Policy**
- **Governance Policy**

Viva Network Consultants will be able to advise you on how to write your policies and will approve them once they have been written.

See Viva's

- Network Child Protection template
- Financial Transparency Guidance
- Constitution writing - Governance Policy

Alongside your Child Protection, Governance and Finance policies are a range of other supporting policies for example

- Safeguarding policy for adults and children (including code of conduct)
- Network Staff policy (Anti bullying and harassment, equal opportunities, recruitment etc)
- Network membership policy
- Fundraising policy

Viva consultants are able to provide advice and examples of all these policies but it is essential that each network adapts and revises them to fit their agreed needs, approaches and methods of working

Systems provide ways to repeat processes efficiently and reliably. They enable us to measure needs, provision, people, activities, impacts, and budgets. They can be used to store documents and report progress and make the work easier, better and simpler to understand. A network cannot function without clearly defined systems to say how often something needs to be reviewed, who is responsible for monitoring certain policies or activities and storing records to ensure they can be easily accessed.

Systems are most effective when ‘under shared ownership’. We need to be building in robust systems from the start that give confidence to members and potential supporters.

Accountability, Policies and Systems

- Child Protection policy verified by Viva with identified responsible people
- Financial transparency policy and procedures with Mango Health Check and a score of over 200
- Legal registration of the network with associated Governance policy
- System for storing key documents and reporting progress

3.3. Strong Membership

For networks to be successful in their goals, they must build their membership and keep members actively engaged in the network. Without its members, a network is at risk of becoming an ordinary NGO and loses the benefits of bringing together those already actively working for children and embedded in their communities.

Building a strong membership takes constant time and attention. Here are some things a network can do to ensure they have strong network membership.

Membership criteria: It is important to know who network members are and that they are committed to the work of the network. To help with commitment:

- Members should pay a membership fee and/or sign a commitment agreement.
- Define other membership criteria for example that members need to agree to be trained by the network in child protection, or they have to attend capacity building or contribute to a collective action programme.
- Make sure members understand the aims of the network, their reason for joining and their responsibilities, during an induction to the network

Having membership criteria also helps a network to have guidelines on whether a member should no longer be a network member when values are breached or if they are no longer engaging.

Regular meetings strengthen membership by

- Updating members on plans, successes, impact and ways to contribute.
- Giving members opportunities to share their views and prayerfully consider plans to reach consensus and ensure that members are taking ownership of the work.
- Building relationship between network members to strengthen bonds and commitment to the group.
- Having agendas to keep the meetings focussed and fruitful and recording minutes to update those who couldn't attend so members feel ownership

As well as regular meetings, the network should aim to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year to present achievements of the network and update on any changes.

Regular communication strengthens membership by

- Ensuring that members know what the network is working towards, what achievements are being made and how they can contribute.

- Promoting activities that that members benefit from by being part of the network.

Newsletters, Annual Reports and social media posts should be used to share real stories of change and impact of the network.

A Network database should record each church and organisation that is a member of the network and register: each event they attend; training they receive; collective action they contribute to; working/action group they are part of; and city-wide influence campaign they are involved in. This strengthens membership by

- Allowing you to see which members are getting involved with network activities and which members need more encouragement.
- Helping to plan how to engage those who are not committed and reward those who are

See Viva's Membership tracking spreadsheet template

A Training Plan strengthens membership by:

- Helping the network to space out training, so members know what is coming up and can commit
- Making sure that network members are developing their capacity and credibility by becoming better at what they do through training. This strengthens the network as a whole
- Keeping members engaged as they see how training benefits them in their work
- Including opportunities for refresher training and increasing depth of training on topics such as child protection.

Essential training for all members will cover the following areas:

- Child protection
- Child development and Celebrating Children
- Children in Families toolkit
- Understanding Gods Heart for children
- Child Friendly Church
- Financial Accountability
- QIS

Strong Membership Checklist:

- Annual General Meeting
- Database of members trained and participating in network events and attention including visits to those not engaged.
- Directory of Members with description of the work and focus of each of the members of the network with a view to encourage mutual exchange and reference
- Training plan for network members using programmes with plan for all members to be trained on CP, Financial accountability and plans for training using other Viva programmes including: QIS for churches, Celebrating Children, Understanding God's Heart For Children, Child Friendly Church, Family Tool Kit.

3.4 Network Local Fundraising

Networks have to raise funds locally if they are to survive and cannot become dependent on international funding. Every network must be able to raise basic running costs to cover the cost of office space, staff salaries and travel and communication costs so that, if all external funding run out, the network would not be forced to stop operating.

As international funding becomes less available, looking for local financial support needs to be an essential part of the work of a network. A network should aim to raise at least 10% of its funding from within its

country. Viva's Network Consultants will help you with detailed training, ongoing support, monitoring and evaluation of local fundraising

Local Fundraising does not need to be daunting, The following steps can help:

- **Appoint Fundraising Leaders;** at least one person in the steering group and one in the coordination team
- **Recognise 'in kind support'**. This is support that churches, organisations and individuals locally donate to the network for example free use of venues, volunteers, gifts etc. This 'in kind support' should be given a monetary value and recorded in an 'In kind register' When you add it up, this in kind support is likely to be more than your total income
- **Create a Fundraising database of gifts and communications:** This should record current supporters and those who the network should target to ask for support. This database should be updated each time you have contact with the supporter and record the type of communication you have had
- **Develop a Fundraising Strategy:** This should identify potential investors and should outline how you will maintain support and engage new supporters.
- **Fundraising plan:** This is the step-by-step plan of how many people you will contact each month, how you will follow up, any fundraising campaigns you might run to achieve your strategy. This can also include funding proposals to governments or businesses.
- **Communications plan:** This is the plan of communications such as newsletters, annual reports and social media to keep supporters up to date and engage new supporters.

With all fundraising, you must remain accountable to the donors. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress is essential so you can report back to supporters on what their donations have helped to achieve. This will also motivate them to keep giving, or even to increase the amount they give.

See Viva's

- In kind register
- Fundraising Position Paper
- Writing a Fundraising Strategy
- Communication template

Viva is committed to supporting growth in local fundraising and providing training to help you with this. We have produced a **fundraising position paper template** as a starting point and we are on hand to offer support and advise.

Network Local Fundraising Checklist:

- Fundraising position paper
- In kind funding > monetary funding
- In-country funding > 10% of network funds
- Fundraising spreadsheet or database of gifts, existing donors, potential donors and asks made
- Further developed strategy and/or Fundraising plan with focus on raising 'in-country' funds – such that necessary running costs coordinator salary, office rent, travel and communications costs are covered through regular local funding.
- Monitoring and Evaluation plan with timely reports to donors

3.5. Balance of Network Development and Programme

When a network runs programmes with children and supports its member churches and organisations, it can often prioritise the programmes with children. This is especially true if donors are funding those programmes and requesting detailed reporting which can be time-consuming. Yet, for the network to have an impact across the city, it must continue to engage its members and spend time growing the network, as well as delivering programmes. Getting the balance right between network development and programmes falls to the network coordination team.

As programmes grow and require more funding there is greater accountability needed. It is important that the capacity of the network and the coordination team, in particular, is built to cope with growth in reporting requirements and to deliver the programme effectively. This may involve the recruitment of competent staff, even if for just a contract period, managed by the network co-ordination team to manage and monitor the delivery of the collaborative programme. At the same time these staff must continue to work with and engage network members to ensure the programme remains collaborative and that impact can last beyond the programme period.

Ensuring that each programme is linked to an Action/Working Group can help to keep a good balance and ensure that network members are collaborating to plan and run programmes.

As success is communicated, network membership is likely to increase. The network needs to develop to accommodate larger or additional Action Groups and ensure good member care. Regular member meetings and prayer are increasingly important to ensure good member care and successful collaborative programmes.

The Viva Network Health Check is a self-assessment tool that helps networks to assess and evaluate the network from two different perspectives. The first perspective is the general capacity of the network to deliver the collaborations and services required of it. The second perspective is to look through the lens of network programmes. Using this tool, you can see the strength of your network platform and also the range of programmes you are running. You can then consider where you may need extra attention to keep a healthy balance across a range of different programmes according to the 4 drivers of network development.

Network Platform and the Viability and Sustainability Benchmark

Benchmark Criteria 5: Clear Leadership and Staff Structures

- Full-time network coordinator
- Job descriptions for all network coordination team members and a clear structure
- Functioning network Steering Group
- Members committed to action/working groups

Benchmark Criteria 6: Good Governance and Accountability

- Child Protection Policy reviewed in the last three years
- Finance Policy
- MANGO Health Check completed in the last 5 years
- Legal registration (where possible) and Governance Policy

Benchmark Criteria 7: Strong Membership

- Directory of network members
- Network member tracking spreadsheet - attendance at events, trainings and participating in programmes

Benchmark Criteria 10: Active Fundraising

- Funding from in-country greater than or equal to 10% total monetary income (or over \$25,000)
- In-kind income greater than monetary income or over \$25,000
- Fundraising Position Paper – Strategy and/or Fundraising Year Plan

Reflective Questions

1. What qualities/skills do you think are needed in a network co-ordination team? Do these need to change as the network grows and develops? How?
2. How could you use Action Groups / Working Groups better to help grow network engagement and ownership as well as contribution to network leadership?
3. How are you strengthening the membership of the network at the moment. What more do to help members 'feel' more welcome, included and involved?
4. People are saying that local fundraising (not international funding) will be the key to future growth and sustainability – what do you feel and believe about that?
5. What percentage of your time is concerned with the development of the network and what percentage is spent on programmes? How do you make sure that you keep the balance right?

Action Plan

- What actions do you need to put into place as a result of this unit, particularly to achieve the required benchmark criteria?