

Principles of Coalition Building

1) Mission and Goals

It is necessary to clearly define the mission and goals of the coalition. The goals should incorporate the self-interests of the various constituencies of the coalition.

The Namibian Women's Manifesto Network (WMN) was able to produce a "comprehensive, straightforward, and accessible document that was "widely acclaimed" by workshop participants and the public for as a result of the process they used to establish their mission. First, they were able to choose goals based upon those already endorsed by the Namibian government, as the Namibian government was a signatory to three documents concerning women's participation in the political process: the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Southern Africa Development Community's Declaration on Gender and Development. By basing their goals on those already established, WMN was able to bring more legitimacy to its goals. Second, WMN was careful to take into account the views of its constituents. WMN did this by preparing three drafts of the document and then sending it to over 200 members of a broad range of organizations including NGOs, political parties, parliament and all levels of government, and individual women's activists. This action allowed the group to incorporate the self-interests of its constituents.

2) Inclusive Membership/Winning Ad Hoc Support

Coalitions must be inclusive by allowing all who endorse their mission to join. Coalitions must actively recruit both the most powerful and least powerful in the community.

While the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network initially comprised of over 30 civil society organizations that were concerned with WMN's support of women's issues, they were also able to draw in support of other organizations that supported facets of their mission. For example, in response to demanding that the Ministry of Justice finalize and table the Domestic Violence Bill and that Parliament pass the Child Care and Protection and Child Maintenance Bills, WMN was able to gain the support of two groups with different missions: the Multi-Media Campaign on Violence Against Women and Children and the Khomas Steering Committee of Men Against Violence Against Women. This partnership allowed WMN to reach a larger audience for their cause.

3) Organizational Competence

In order to perform tasks effectively, coalitions must have a clear organizational functioning and structure. This consists of six parts:

- a. effective leadership
- b. democratic decision making process
- c. experienced staff
- d. developed system of planning
- e. communication (both within and outside coalition)
- f. effective use of resources

One important aspect of organizational competence is the ability of the coalition to make itself accessible to its constituents. This is evident in the case of helping NGOs and other citizen groups move from their former role as service providing intermediaries between the people and the government, to serving as a vehicle for citizen political involvement. NDI was essential in this process in Indonesia as a result of its help of Kelola. NDI conducted cooperative planning sessions and training workshops on advocacy and NGO management in order to make Kelola more efficient in its new role and responsive to its constituents. Specifically, Kelola revised its management structure and gave clearer authority to its executive director based on a newly developed job description. Kelola also examined the role of constituents in organizational decision making and activities. As a result of these changes, Kelola was able to get the Indonesian government to regulate illegal fishing practices that destroy the environment and threaten the economic security of Kelola constituents.

4) Action and Advocacy

- a) start small: search for small projects that offer the greatest potential impact
- b) look for the early win: focus on projects with maximum visibility and minimum investment risk
- c) be careful not to over promise: have little steps prepared that contribute to the big picture

The WMN's campaign also serves as an example of this principle. In response to its series of advocacy activities that took place around International Women's Day, the WMN was able to gain coverage of its goals at both the regional and national level. In an attempt to promote its goals, WMN declared March as Gender Awareness Month. During Gender Awareness Month WMN sponsored many small events that reached out to different facets of their organization. They organized events ranging from informational meetings for girls, to cultural celebrations.