

tool 25 Advantages and Disadvantages of Participating in the MRM through Networks

Factsheet

NGO networks are often established to work on topics that require sustained advocacy or a wide range of skills and expertise. Networks can take different shapes: some are a continuous collaboration between a selected number of organizations on a specific issue of common interest. These networks typically have their own operating budget and a permanent secretariat or coordinator hosted by one of the members. Others are ad-hoc collaborations limited to a particular initiative or campaign.

Advantages of engaging in the MRM through a network:

- More anonymity and protection for individual member organizations.
- Maximizing existing expertise and capacity.
- Ability to cover more areas and more issues.
- Avoiding duplication of efforts through closer coordination.
- May facilitate referrals and case follow-up (if the network includes organizations providing services to victims).
- May help fundraising efforts (network action is often prioritized by donors).

Challenges:

- Member organizations may not have equivalent levels of capacity and expertise, which may affect the internal balance and division of labor of the network.
- Need to harmonize approaches to security, advocacy and external communication, which in some cases may be fundamentally different from one another.
- Internal communication, decision-making and approval processes may be lengthy and complex.
- Potential competition for funds between the network itself and individual members or between individual members (in particular if members have overlapping expertise).

Checklist for a successful network:

- Members know each other well (institutionally and if possible personally).
- Members have a clear common goal.
- Members clearly define their level of commitment and the resources they can contribute.
- Each member brings its own expertise or added value to the group, there are no overlaps.
- Members have equivalent capacity levels in their respective areas of expertise or a commitment is made by some members to reinforce the capacity of other members.
- Roles, responsibilities, decision-making and approval process, as well as division of labor and internal communication are clear and agreed to by all, if necessary in a written document (MoU, ToR).
- Members commit funds for network-related activities and agree on a common or joint fundraising strategy, if necessary.
- Members allocate a focal point for network-related issues and, for long-term collaborations, a permanent secretariat or coordinator is hired.