GUIDE TO COALITION BUILDING

This 'Guide to Coalition building' is designed for advocates to navigate through the complex journey of building and sustaining a coalition. It shares approaches and learnings gathered since the start of the project in 2012 with insights from the **E4A-MamaYe** teams in Nigeria and Kenya. It also provides links to existing methods and tools which have been developed by our project for coalitions to use independently.

We hope this resource helps coalitions in different countries and contexts achieve their goals.

WHY FORM A COALITION

Coalitions are a group of stakeholders who work together to explore an issue and form a plan to address it.

The term 'coalition' may be used to describe different types of partnerships. On **E4A-MamaYe**, we work with coalitions with diverse membership (e.g., civil society, government, health providers, media) who come together to achieve a joint advocacy goal.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE DOCUMENT

The document describes the 4 key steps in the coalition building process: **Purpose, membership and governance; Planning; Taking action; Assessing and adapting**. These steps are often not followed in a sequential order. For example, while 'taking action' to achieve change through advocacy, you may find that you need to go back to adjust some strategies to achieve that goal.

You can click on each section on the map to go straight to that step. If you wish to come back to this map, simply click on the map icon you will find on the top right corner of each page.

At the end of the document, you will find a list of links to all the **resources** referenced throughout this guide.

ASSESSING AND ADAPTING

TAKING ACTION

PLANNING

PURPOSE, MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

PURPOSE, MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

WHEN TO TAKE THIS STEP IN THE COALITION BUILDING PROCESS?

- You have just formed an advocacy coalition and need to agree on its purpose how you will work together, who can join as a member.
- Your coalition's membership or governance structures need to adjust to a shift in the environment you operate in.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR MEMBERS WHILE FORMING A COALITION?

It is important for all members in the coalition to agree why they need to work together, who should be a member and how they will work to achieve common goals. At this stage you may want to think through:

- **Purpose:** What is the reason for the coalition's existence? How do members see the coalition evolving within its environment?
- **Membership:** Who can join the coalition? Who is affected by the problem? How do new members join and are there different types of membership? How do you make sure that women and minorities are represented? Who should you reach out to as partners or allies?
- **Governance:** How are decisions taken and how do you resolve conflicts? How are those with less power given a voice in the decision-making process? What are the different roles and responsibilities within the coalition?

HOW TO AGREE ON YOUR COALITION'S PURPOSE, MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES?

1. Identify the problem that the coalition will be addressing with a **problem tree analysis**.
2. **Analyse your context**: who are the key players and what are the key opportunities?
3. Discuss the core values of your coalition.
4. Choose the coalition's model: will you need to legally register, or would you operate as an informal body? If you want, you could define a **terms of reference** for the coalition's governance.

TO READ FURTHER ON THIS TOPIC

- Blog: **The importance of a partnership built on collaboration, trust and responsibility**
- Learning brief: **State-Led Accountability Mechanisms (SLAMS): Trust and multi-sectoral action**

WHAT WE LEARNED ON E4A-MAMAYE

- There is no right or wrong way to build a coalition. Each coalition is different depending on its objective.
- Transparency and open communication are key. Each member should make clear what they expect to achieve in the coalition and how they can contribute.
- Having members from multiple sectors that influence the problem can be useful. However, this brings also complexity in managing power dynamics, especially if membership includes government representatives, or individuals with significant financial or political power.
- It is important to understand who has the power to make decisions at the very beginning. Including powerful decision-makers as part of the coalitions can create an understanding of the problem and will have them participate in identifying solutions from the start. Including media can help bring attention to the issues and promoting what people can do to help make change happen.
- Coalitions should think about the best way to introduce the coalition to decision makers and who in the coalition is best positioned to build relationships with them.
- While women and young people are often most affected by health service problems, they are often underrepresented in advocacy coalitions and the least involved in decision-making. It is important to include members of the population directly affected by the issues.
- Depending on the objective of the coalition and how members want to operate, coalitions might decide to formally register as a legal entity. This, however, is not essential. Members should weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of formal registration before pursuing this step.

PLANNING

WHEN TO TAKE THIS STEP IN THE COALITION BUILDING PROCESS?

- You have defined your coalition's purpose and now need to agree on and coordinate concrete actions that will help you to achieve this.
- You are starting a new initiative to achieve your advocacy goal.
- You need to agree on what resources are required to achieve your objectives.
- You need to adapt existing strategies or actions following an evaluation of your progress or after you have learned something new.

WHAT ELEMENTS ARE PART OF THIS STEP?

During the planning stage, coalition members agree on how to achieve the change that they would like to see:

- What is the objective the coalition is planning for?
- What are the approaches, methods, and tactics the coalition needs to adopt to achieve this objective?
- What time, money, people, data and technical skills does the coalition need to achieve the objectives?
- Who in the coalition should take on what role to achieve the objective most effectively?

HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE PLAN?

1. When planning your advocacy, you can design your strategy by drawing or listing each step that is needed to achieve your goal. This will ensure everyone in your coalition has a shared understanding of the vision and how to get there.

2. Translate this map into an **activity plan** to lists each action, including the timelines, budgets and resources needed as well as responsibilities for coalition members.

3. Once the coalitions' objectives are clear, you could assess the resources and skills you have amongst your members to understand how you can leverage on these. The **Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT)** is an excellent tool that can support you in this.

4. Do you know what resources you need and how to mobilise these? If you do not yet have sufficient resources, you may have to review your activity plan to take into consideration what you can and can't yet do as a coalition.

5. The coalition should also identify the **risks** in its plan, agree on what actions can mitigate these and factor these actions back into the workplan

6. Once activities are planned for, a coalition should develop and **Advocacy Communications plan**. By making it clear to all members what needs to be communicated by whom and through what channels.

WHAT WE LEARNED ON E4A-MAMAYE

- It is important that the Steps to Change map is reviewed on a regular basis with all coalition members to assess progress, discuss lessons on what has (not) worked, and make any revisions in response to these lessons and environmental changes.

- It can be helpful to establish sub-committees that focus on delivering specific objectives under your advocacy strategy.

- Risk management is an important, but often overlooked, part of planning. Brainstorm what challenges you may encounter during each step in your advocacy plan and prepare mitigation strategies. This will enable the coalition to respond quickly to challenges without losing momentum.

TAKING ACTION

WHEN TO TAKE THIS STEP IN THE COALITION BUILDING PROCESS?

- The coalition has listed its objectives, activities and resources needed in a plan.
- Your coalition has identified key decision makers to target your advocacy to and established a communications plan.
- Your coalition wants to see tangible actions in response to the priority problems identified.

WHAT ELEMENTS ARE PART OF THIS STEP?

This is where the coalition takes concrete steps towards its objectives. **E4A-MamaYe** uses three intertwined approaches: **Packaging** complex data into **Evidence** to support **Influencing** for positive change through greater transparency and increased **Resources for Health**.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SCORECARDS

Some coalitions use **scorecards** as a powerful tool to visualise progress. **E4A-MamaYe** is currently developing an **app to support you in developing and disseminating scorecards**. Please visit this page for updates.

HOW TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION TO ACHIEVE YOUR ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

Packaging evidence means translating complicated data into compelling, accessible and understandable messages, tailored to influence powerful decision makers to take action.

- Understanding your audience is key. What will make them likely to respond? What are they motivated by? What persuades them?
- Ask yourself at what point in time decision-makers are most likely to listen to your request for action and through what channels (e.g., face-to-face meetings or through media).
- All messages should include a clear call to action and all data should be based on approved sources that are trusted by decision-makers.
- Alternatively, you can tell the stories of those affected by the issue: this can be a powerful way to influence decision makers.
- Visualise your evidence in a compelling way using **E4A-MamaYe** guidance on **using briefs to package evidence**.

Budget Advocacy - E4A-Mamaye has developed a detailed **health budget advocacy toolbox** on how to understand complex data and track budget spending, for greater transparency and increased funding, including:

- **How to establish the health financing context** who is paying for health, and how are governments moving towards Universal Health Coverage?
- **How to map the budget cycle** when and by whom are decisions made and how can you influence them?
- **How to plan health budget advocacy** for strategic and timely efforts.
- **How to engage in public participation** to make sure your priorities are heard.
- **How to establish the funding flow**: how does money flow through the health system and what are the bottlenecks to funding reaching health facilities.
- **How to analyse budget performance**: how much money was committed and spent on the things you care about?
- **How to develop a health budget advocacy brief**: how to visualise complex health and budget information.

Influencing is a complex process which depends on many factors, often out of the control of the coalition. **E4A-MamaYe** has developed an advocacy handbook which goes through six key steps in advocacy:

- **Defining the problem** to understand the root causes of the problem and what means you have to address them.
- **Thinking and working politically** by understanding who has the power to support or challenge change.
- **Finding the information needed** and packaging it into evidence.
- **Coming up with SMART** solutions to agree on realistic and clear actions to take.
- **Taking action** by approaching decision-makers in the right forum, at the right time, with the right information.
- **Tracking the results** to understand whether impact has been achieved or not and to learn from the ongoing efforts. In addition to putting pressure, make sure you celebrate and let the public know when policy makers respond to your asks and take positive action.

ASSESSING AND ADAPTING

WHEN TO TAKE THIS STEP IN THE COALITION BUILDING PROCESS?

- Your coalition is implementing its advocacy plan and is monitoring progress.

- There is a major change in your environment that requires you to reassess and change your plan, for example: a new law, a political shift, members leaving or joining the coalition.

- You have reached an important milestone in your advocacy, for example: you achieved an objective or reached the end of an activity or campaign.

- You want to engage in a new initiative and are looking to learn from your previous experiences.

WHAT ELEMENTS ARE PART OF THIS STEP?
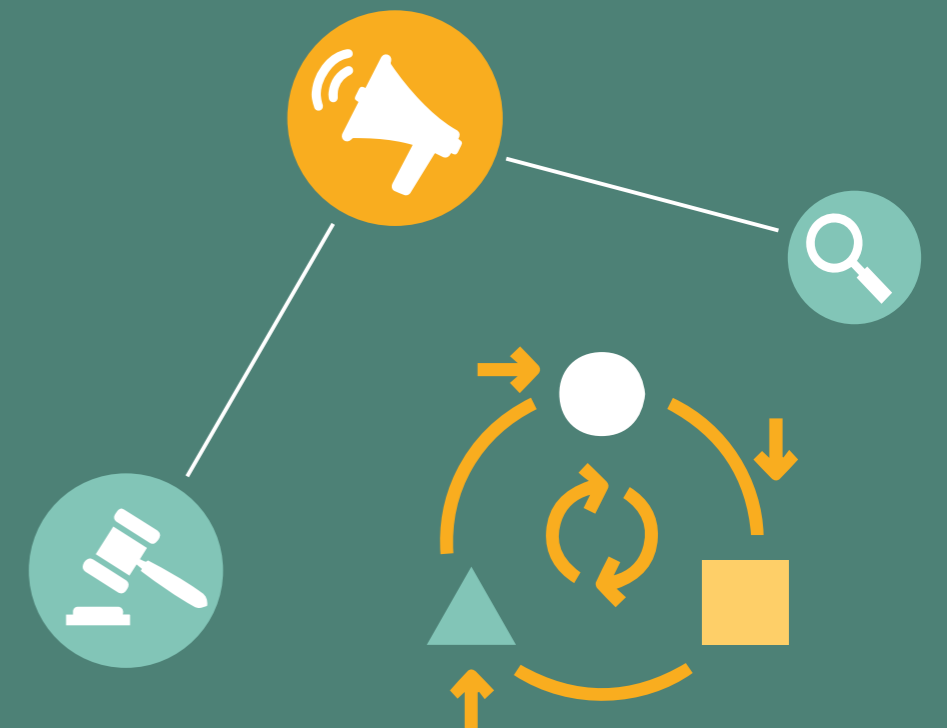
In this step, the coalition:

- Monitors and reviews whether it is getting closer to achieving its changes and objectives.

- Sits together to reflect on and evaluate progress made, what went well and could be done better.

- Keep records of lessons, including both actions that were particularly successful, or challenges that hindered progress.

- Agree how to strategically achieve objectives more effectively or efficiently.

HOW DO YOU ASSESS PROGRESS AND ADAPT YOUR PLAN WHEN OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED?

1. You first need to decide what success looks like for your coalition and define indicators to describe what 'changes' you expect to see. It is important to review the 'SMART' indicators (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) you have defined at the beginning you your journey.

2. Agree who will keep track of the progress, how they will be doing this, how often, how they will be sharing this information. Analyse what reasons drive the results.

3. Having a plan that lists indicators for your progress, timelines, roles and responsibilities can help you track progress and lessons while still driving advocacy.

4. Based on learnings, you may want to go back to earlier steps in this guide to coalition building and alter governance and membership structure or make changes to your objectives or plan.

WHAT E4A-MAMAYE HAS LEARNED

- Monitoring is a very important and continuous process. It is important to factor time in to look at whether you are operating in the most efficient and effective way.

- As the coalition's environment will inevitably change, the originally agreed objective should not be seen as set in stone but kept flexible.

- Strategic workshops are a good opportunity to discuss whether current membership structures and ways of working are still fit for purpose.

- It is important to keep track of the coalition's membership, to ensure it is representative of those affected by the issues and if there is equitable socio-economic representation, including membership of women, youth, people with disabilities and from different geographies.

RESOURCES TABLE

	THEME	RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	URL
1	Accountability	Tools	Accountability Framework Tool	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/using-accountability-framework-tool
2	Accountability	Training/Slides	Accountability Training	https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/docs/6.%20Accountability%20-%20Training.pptx
3	Accountability	Readings	Using Advocacy and Data to strengthen Accountability	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/using-advocacy-and-data-strengthen-political-accountability-africa
4	Accountability	Readings	Learning brief: State-Led Accountability Mechanisms (SLAMS): Trust and multi-sectoral action	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/state-let-accountability-mechanisms-slams-trust-and-multi-sectoral-action
5	Advocacy	Training/Slides	Why advocacy matters	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/why-advocacy-matters
6	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 1: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%201.pdf
7	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 2: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%202.pdf
8	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 3: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%203.pdf
9	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 4: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%204.pdf
10	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 5: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%205.pdf
11	Advocacy	Tools	Advocacy Handbook	Step 6: https://mamaye.org/sites/default/files/gpg/Advocacy%20Handbook_E4A-MamaYe%20Step%206.pdf
12	Advocacy	Training/Slides	Advocacy Handbook - Full version	Step 6: https://mamaye.org/index.php/gpg/e4a-mamaye-advocacy-handbook
13	Coalition Building	Training/Slides	Guiding Principles of Coalition Building	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/guiding-principles-coalition-building
14	Coalition Building	Readings	Blog: The importance of a partnership built on collaboration, trust and responsibility	https://options.co.uk/news/enhancing-social-accountability-collaboration-trust-responsibility
15	Coalition Building	Tools	Coalitions Terms of Reference	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/developing-terms-reference-coalitions
16	Coalition Operations	Tools	Coalitions Operational Tracking Tolo (COTT)	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/coalition-operations-tracking-tool
17	Communications	Training/Slides	Advocacy Communications	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/planning-your-advocacy-communication
18	Health Budget	Training/Slides	Health Budget	https://mamaye.org/index.php/gpg/health-budget-advocacy-toolbox
19	Monitoring & Evaluation	Training/Slides	Basic principles of Monitoring & Evaluation	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/basic-principles-monitoring-evaluation
20	OCAT/SWAT analysis	Training/Slides	OCAT	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/organisational-capacity-assessment-tool
21	Scorecards	Tools	Electronic Options Scorecard App	https://mamaye.org/approaches/new-digital-solution-support-accountability-electronic-options-scorecard-app-eos
22	Scorecards	Training/Slides	How to Guide: Step to step to Scorecard	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/how-develop-scorecard
23	Scorecards	Readings	Using Advocacy briefs to Package Evidence	https://mamaye.org/resources/toolkits/using-advocacy-briefs-package-evidence

E4A-MAMAYE GUIDE TO COALITION BUILDING

Evidence for Action (E4A) - MamaYe is a programme led by African experts in Kenya and Nigeria to improve the maternal and newborn health. It is managed by **Options Consultancy Services Ltd** with funding from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**.

The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**.

FURTHER INFORMATION

E4A-MamaYe produced this guidance document to help CSOs and our partners to build strong coalitions. If you have any questions or would like assistance with this document, please get in touch with us using the below contact details. We welcome collaboration and look forward to hearing from you.

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