– CIRW 2024 –

Weaving knowledge for collective learning

Continuous Learning and Adaptation of ISP–led
Networks in the HIV Response Globally

Partnership Prompt Cards

Strengthening partnerships
and collaborations
for collective impact

ROBERT CARR FUND *For civil society networks*

Perspectivity

Strengthening partnerships and collaborations for collective impact

The following **partnership prompt cards** have been created to support the network in strengthening partnerships and collaborations for collective impact. The cards can be seen as ingredients to foster partnership building, but are by no means exclusive. **How to use them?** Each card speaks about a different "partnership ingredient" and includes some questions. The cards might help you and the partners to reflect on how the partnership is going, what is needed to build or strengthen one, or to guide you lightly on certain aspects within the partnership.

The prompts are informed by lived experiences of grantees. Prior to the Collective Impact Reflection Workshop (CIRW) in 2024 grantees shared significant stories. These have been analyzed and key challenges and good examples, especially from stories related to outcome 1 (creating stronger networks), have been used as input for this source. Conversations during the CIRW World Cafe, especially from the partnerships table, have been taken along as well. RCF together with Perspectivity further developed certain collaboration challenges into the card set below. It is inspired by Perspectivity's Complexity Navigator [1].

COMMUNITY–INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION

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COMMUNITY– INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION

Sustainable and impactful change happens when we involve diverse voices in the process. It is easier to include the usual suspects and those that have some form of authority and resources already, such as larger organizations with good budgets. It is more difficult to include minority voices and communities that are harder to reach. However, without such voices you will miss certain information and expertise. All these different voices sometimes bring conflicting perspectives, however they also provide valuable insights to make more sound decisions. Creating an inclusive environment and fostering inclusive decision–making helps to create collective ownership and enhance overall community engagement.

Who are the usual and unusual suspects we need to reach out to?

How do we embrace conflicting perspectives and odd voices?

How do we maintain collective alignment?

"Community mobilization and empowerment should always be the first step in conducting any advocacy activities. We need to invest in ensuring all the needed technical assistance to community activities so that they can meaningfully participate in processes at their countries' level." – Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons (EMHRP)

BUILDING ON OPPORTUNITIES FROM A SHARED URGENCY

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BUILDING ON OPPORTUNITIES FROM A SHARED URGENCY

If there is an urgency for change felt among different stake-holders, such as to work on tackling decriminalization, there is also an opportunity. Feeling a sense of urgency among all potential partners is important, as this is a key driver for working together and moving things forward.

Is there collective urgency in the first place?
If so, what is the urgency?

And what kind of opportunities for collaboration does that bring? What binds us together?

"The Sahel region is facing a troubling spike in violence, displacing people across the region. This escalating violence led to the closure of community health centers, placing additional pressure on fragile health systems. The withdrawal of French funding and increasing repression of LGBTI communities only made things worse. Therefore, the Coalition PLUS united in solidarity with Sahelian partners to explore alternative funding strategies, protection mechanisms, enhance intervention coordination and strengthen collaboration with other civil society partners. Successfully this led to better joint coordination, ensuring additional funding, safety protocols and better advocacy strategies, ensuring the continuity of essential health services for vulnerable populations." – Coalition PLUS

INVOLVING THE "WHOLE SYSTEM"

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INVOLVING THE "WHOLE SYSTEM"

There might be (potential) partners or networks that are obvious to work with, but it is only by including diverse perspectives from the 'whole system' that one can have a good understanding of the complexity, as well as, find the complementary to address it. Each stakeholder has an important role to play to successfully address the collective issue.

So who (else) is part of the "system"?

And what are their stakes?

Do we have a collective understanding of the issue, context and wider system?

"The African Network of People who Use Drugs (AfricaNPUD) has facilitated collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including member states, UN Agencies, NGOs, and international organizations, to create a united front in addressing the challenges faced by people who use drugs. By engaging all these different stakeholders, finding synergy from a wider angle, regional collaboration was strengthened." — AfricaNPUD

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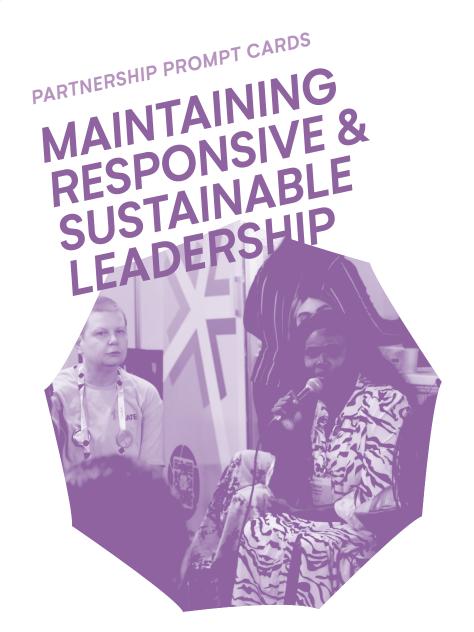
HAVING A SHARED VISION FOR CHANGE

To be able to achieve collective impact – such as strengthening joint advocacy and movement building – despite the differences that might exist between organizations and networks, you need a common vision of change. This can include having a joint understanding of the challenge ahead, a joint approach to solving it and a common agenda guiding all your actions.

What is your common dream for the future?

How can you embrace differences to collaborate in a complementary way?

How can we translate the common vision to inspired collective action mutually reinforcing each other?

"All 5 networks have their own ways of working. This makes it complicated to do advocacy by a united front. Still we were able to develop a common position of the Rise & Decriminalize Movement. Working within the consortium has demonstrated the power of collective action: bringing diverse networks together that represent different marginalized groups, amplifying our voices and advocating on a global level. It allowed us to share resources, expertise, and strategies, to tackle complex issues that no single network could address alone. It also highlighted the need for clear communication and shared goals to navigate the different approaches each network brings to the table." – The Rise & Decriminalize Movement

MAINTAINING RESPONSIVE & SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

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MAINTAINING RESPONSIVE & SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Even though everyone is involved in the process, it is helpful to have someone or multiple people to drive the process of change. Being a responsive leader means you can observe and listen deeply to different perspectives, be inclusive, as well as adaptive to respond to changing situations. All while maintaining a sense of direction. It will ask a lot from people to be in such positions, so it can help to implement a self–care practice to maintain your energy.

Who are the potential and/or influential champion(s)?

What leadership style and interventions are useful at this moment?

How can we be kind and caring towards ourselves and others to be able to flourish?

"Importance of inclusive leadership: having various ISPs in leadership positions brings diverse perspectives that enrich decision–making processes and lead to more comprehensive and effective policies. Female leaders serve as role models, inspiring other women within the network to take on leadership roles and actively participate." – Southern Africa Network of Prisons (SANOP)

STRENGTHENING VITAL CONNECTIONS

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STRENGTHENING VITAL CONNECTIONS

To be able to create collective impact and commit to shared visions and actions, it is vital that there is trust in the relationship. Having different work styles, work cultures, timezones, languages, interests, can all contribute to a challenging collaboration and coordination. Therefore, by fostering transparent and regular communication, taking time to know each other, and creating common understanding, concerns can be addressed. Maintaining vital connections is key for durable partnerships. The external environment is constantly changing, which also affects organizations, so by maintaining healthy connections on a timely basis, suiting the needs of all partners, resilience and trust can be built.

How do we collectively cultivate constructive relationships and trust in the system or partnership?

How does everyone want to and is able to be connected to the process and each other?

"Coordination challenges include people working differently, having different working styles and cultures. It helps to have regular check–ins, sharing documentation, making sure everyone is aligned". – CRIW, partnership table