

How to Build an **act:onaid** Local Group



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Purpose:

This guide has been created for activists looking to build a new ActionAid group in their community. It will look at starting from zero, where no group exists, to building a sustainable and thriving group. This guide can also be used by existing activists as a resource to help guide them to grow their group.

Key takeaways:

By the end of this guide you should:

1. Understand the skills and effort required to start a new group.
2. Understand how to promote a new group and attract group members.
3. Be equipped to run your first group meeting with frameworks to set your group up for success.
4. Understand how to have a one on one conversation to get to know your group members.
5. Be equipped to plan and execute your first event as a group.
6. Understand how to create a structure that suits the needs of your group.
7. Understand how to retain group members for the long-term to sustain your group into the future.

What it takes to build a new group

Think you might want to start a group? Stepping up into the role of a Group Coordinator can be really exciting opportunity to learn new skills and take on a new challenge. Have a read through what's entailed to get a better sense of what's in store.

Roles and responsibilities of Group Coordinators:

- Identifying and recruiting activists within your local community to join your local group.
- Inspiring and coordinating group members to organise campaign activities and events.
- Setting regular meetings with your local ActionAid group including organising a venue, time and agenda for the meeting.
- Identifying people's skills and providing opportunities for others to lead.
- Working with your local ActionAid group to create shared plans and priorities, as well as conducting ongoing evaluations.
- Reporting to your local State Coordinator on how the group is tracking.
- Leading in the planning, coordination and execution of events and campaign activities.
- Attending online trainings and campaign briefings with the national activist network.

As a Group Coordinator you will have:

- The chance to connect with ActionAid supporters and staff all across Australia.
- Connection with an international movement of supporters who believe in women's rights and social justice.
- Connection with likeminded people who care about the same issues as you.
- The chance to contribute to the national strategy of how we continue to build our movement.
- Access to ongoing training opportunities in community organising and campaigning.

Important steps before starting a group

If this sounds like the role for you! These are the steps you can take to start your new group:

1. The first step in setting up an ActionAid group is to call the ActionAid office and set up an introductory phone call. Check out the contacts page to find out who to get in touch with. This will help us talk you through the process and support you.
2. If you haven't already read through the Activist Induction Toolkit, to understand the ActionAid Activist Network and how it works. You can find this document on the activist toolkit.
3. Make sure you are well-versed in ActionAid's current campaign before starting your own local group. To assists in this step we recommend you begin with reading an activist briefing or watching a webinar on our current campaign. You can find this information and more on the activist toolkit.
4. Attending a local training is another helpful way to get up to speed and get some new skills. Reach out to an ActionAid organiser (see contacts page for more info) to find out if there are upcoming trainings you can attend.



Promoting your group

Once you've decided to start an ActionAid local group, this first thing you need is for people to know that they can join the group! This involves tapping into your own networks and reaching out to new networks who you think might be interested in order to start finding people that can help you form a core group.



Put your group on the map

It's good to start off by creating a private Facebook group where you can add people who have expressed interest in joining your group. Setting up a Facebook group is a great tool to communicate with your group, share information and provide details on upcoming events.

Make sure you are part of the [ActionAid Activist group](#) to get inspiration for what to post.

When you set up a new Facebook group you should have the ActionAid house rules prominent on the page in the description and follow these rules:

Rule #1 We will only approve entry to the group to people who we know are ActionAid activists or interested volunteers.

Rule #2 We will only post content relevant to ActionAid, for example, events, trainings, campaign tactics, stories and interesting articles. We will remove random or irrelevant content such as spam, advertising or promotions.

Rule #3 Moderators and admins will delete any unwanted or inflammatory content or comments at their own discretion.

Rule #4 We will conduct a member vetting process every 6 months to ensure all members are still actively engaged through offline or online activism.

You can copy and paste the above rules into the page description so all members can see them.

Finding people who are interested

Now that you have a place to direct people to, it's time to reach out to people who could be interested in joining the group. You are offering them an opportunity to align their values with the opportunity to take action, become empowered, and create change. You can recruit new activists to your group by:

- Advertising on volunteering websites - Volunteering Australia has links to each state's key body
- Talking to friends, family and neighbours to see if they would be interested in getting involved
- Post flyers and posters in local cafes and businesses (make sure you get sign off on these materials)
- Post about your group in other relevant groups on Facebook
- Invite people from local community groups e.g. churches, schools
- Holding local market stalls to gain local interest
- Contact the activist support team as they can also assist you in recruiting members from your local area - volunteering.au@actionaid.org

To help you map out your own networks, you can watch this [online community mapping training](#) which will help you work out who you are connected to who could be interested in joining your group.

Case study on recruiting group members

Q&A with QLD State Coordinator Jude on starting a University of Queensland (UQ) Campus Group

What are some of the ways you recruited people to your group?

We held events at UQ's Volunteer Expo on campus and Market Day. We also reached out to the broader community including: other organisations, the UQ Union and other clubs on campus. This gave us a chance to have one on one conversations with students and staff from the broader UQ and local community, to showcase who we are and to recruit a large number of people.

When we had our first event, we made sure to invite all the people we had reached through these activities including: the sign-ups we got from the Volunteer Expo, the groups and organisations we had formed connections with, as well as others we hadn't yet had a chance to connect with.





What did you find worked well?

What was very effective was contacting new members within a few days of them joining the group and inviting them to an event. For example, we pre-planned a Feminist Welcome Picnic and advertised it at Market Day. Three days after Market Day, we contacted all new sign-ups and confirmed the details for the picnic. This helped people to stay engaged and become active members of the group.

When people attended our event, we made sure that the event was welcoming and interactive. This encouraged people to return to future events and raise awareness of our group through positive word of mouth.

Are there any tips you would give a new ActionAid activist looking to build a local group?

- Have a strong understanding of what ActionAid is, what makes it unique and why joining your group will be a positive experience for members.
- Create a positive culture within the group and become known for having a safe, inclusive and welcoming space where everyone can contribute, have fun and make friends.
- Don't be disheartened if the group takes a little while to find its groove; it is a learning curve and it will come together with a little time, planning and perseverance.
- Reach out to the Activist Network when you need help, support and encouragement

Laying the groundwork of a successful group

At this point you should have 3-5 people who have signed up to help you in start a group. So you are ready to hold your first group meeting together.

Before diving straight into planning your activities, it's important to set your group up for success and build a solid foundation.

With a new group it's really important to establish group norms, expectations and ways of working, as well as defining what your group vision is and what you will collectively work towards.

Most importantly, new groups should focus on getting to know each other, building relationships built on common interests and shared goals.

Establishing group norms and expectations

Group norms and expectations are incredibly important to make sure your team is on the same page when working together.

This means setting some standards for communication and interacting that creates a safe space for everyone to participate and ensures the effectiveness and efficiency of the group.

Importantly, if someone is behaving in an unacceptable manner, this means you have a list of norms and expectations that can help you hold them accountable and support them to communicate and act in line with your group's values.

To set norms and expectations, ask your group the following questions and use the responses to form your groups' norms and expectations:

1. **What will help us work well together?**
2. **What can we each do to make this a safe and productive space?**
3. **Is there anything you would like to ask of each other?**



See below an example of finalised group norms and expectations.

Example of norms and expectations

1. We will treat each other with dignity and respect.
2. We will uncover and challenge any forms of discrimination in our group.
3. We will all be aware of our own privilege.
4. We will create ways for everyone to be equally heard.
5. We will practice being open-minded.
6. We will speak honestly and with consideration and respect of others and their efforts.
7. We will listen to each other and not interrupt.
8. Our meetings will start and end on time and we will be punctual to all events and actions.
9. We will make other team members aware in advance if we can't make a meeting.
10. We will come prepared to meetings and events.
11. We will be responsive to messages, emails and other forms of communication to respect the time and convenience of others and to promote that progress of the group.
12. We will present problems in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.
13. We will share the work load amongst team members and will not allow one person to carry the team.
14. We will delegate our work and speak up when we are overwhelmed.
15. We will celebrate our accomplishments.

Decision-making processes

Decision-making processes are important when establishing a new group. Groups will need to make many decisions together, from when and where to meet to what campaign tactic to do.

It's important when making these decisions that you have a process that allows for all voices to be heard and allows for consultation to find the best solutions.

Every group is different, and it's up to you and your group to determine what decision-making process will work for you. However we do encourage consensus decision-making as your main decision-making process.

Use the examples below to guide a conversation with your group around what process works best for them.

Type of decision-making:

1. **Unanimous:** Unanimous decisions take place when all agree without reservation. Many simple decisions your group makes will be unanimous.
2. **Consensus:** In a consensus, each person consents to supporting the decision, although all may not agree. Consensus involves altering proposals to arrive at a point where everyone can live with the decision, even if there are differing perspectives. Consensus is the process most likely to ensure that everyone's input is valued, heard and considered. This process is good for situations that require the entire group's participation and agreement to move forward.
3. **Majority Rule:** Majority rule uses voting as a key decision making process, and decisions are made when more than half the group votes in favour of a proposal. Majority decisions risk that you won't have full support and that those not in agreement with the majority may do something less than helpful later.
4. **Delegated:** In this scenario, the group delegates decision-making responsibility to an expert or small subgroup/working group. This process is good for situations that do not require the entire group's participation.
5. **Executive:** In an executive decision, the leader makes the call. Ideally, executive decisions involve lots of participation from other team members, even if the ultimate decision is made by someone in an assigned leadership role.

Source: Adapted from GetUp's decision-making guide

We encourage groups to where possible strive for unanimous and consensus decision making, coupled with delegated decision making when the group grows and has a larger amount of work. You should speak to your group about how this works and come up with a process.

Decision-making process example:

We will aim to reach unanimous agreement or consensus on all the decisions we make. We will consult with all team members when making these decisions, to make sure everyone has the information needed to make the decision.

However, when we go through periods of growth and busy times we will use delegated decision-making to ensure we are being efficient and effective.



Communicating within the group

One more step is required before you start planning events and actions, and that's establishing how your group communicates.

There are many possible methods of communication including:

- Email
- Text message
- WhatsApp group
- Private Facebook group
- Private Facebook chat
- Google drive

Have a conversation with your group to determine the following:

1. What platform will you use to communicate with one another?
2. How will you share documents?
3. What form of communication will be frequently checked by members?
4. How often should the group communicate with one another?



Holding your first meeting

The best way to get your group to lay these strong foundations for success is to speak through it in a meeting. It's good to try and cover some of this in your first meeting, However for some groups this can be done over a few meetings.

Here are some key things to keep in mind when planning your first meeting.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have an agenda for your meeting• Make sure someone is taking minutes of your meeting• Set a location and time for your meeting that will suite the majority of your group• Bring relevant ActionAid material such as reports, flyers, petitions• Incorporate some social aspect to your meeting for example an icebreaker or energiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let one or two people dominate the meeting. Allow all members of the group to lead discussions and ensure everyone's voices are heard• Let the meeting wander way off track. Make sure you stick to the agenda and relevant topics so that you keep everyone focused and interested

Agenda Example

See below an example of a 2-hour kick-off meeting for a new group. Alter this to what best suits your facilitation style and the people in your group. You can pick and choose from this agenda, and can spread out these elements over a few meetings. First meetings should be about relationship building so don't feel you need to make things overly formal.

When	What	Why
6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening• Welcome• Acknowledgement of country• For example: I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place, the [name of clan or group] people and pay my respect to their Elders, past and present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show gratitude to members for coming along.• Pay respects to traditional owners.
6.05pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Icebreaker• Head, Heart and Hands: go around the circle and get everyone to say one things for each:• Head = things they know a lot about e.g. art history or growing vegetables.• Heart = things they are passionate about e.g. social justice or women's rights.• Hands = things they are good at doing e.g. cooking or being organised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow people to get to know each other• Start building a sense of team and shared community

6.20pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set group norms and expectations • Ask the group: • What will help us work well together? • What can we each do to make this a safe and productive space? • Is there anything you would like to ask of each other? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a list of norms and expectations that your group can uphold moving forward.
6.35pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and interests: • In pairs get the group to discuss and then report back on the following: • What aspects of ActionAid's work they are passionate about? Or what brought them here today? • Any skills they can bring to the group e.g. events organising or graphic design. • Their availability e.g. they work full time so evenings are best, or they have kids so evening are tricky. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the skills and motivations of group members. • To gauge the capacity of group members moving forward.
6.50pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ActionAid's current campaign • Circulate most recent activist briefing. This can be found on the activist toolkit. • Spell out key actions to take on the campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help members understand what ActionAid is currently working on and how they can be a part of it.
7.10pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan first campaign action or event • Brainstorm ideas for first campaign action as a group. One way to do this is to break everyone up into pairs, give them post-it notes and ask them to write their ideas down on post it notes. Then share all ideas in the broader group. • Read on for event planning ideas and template. • See how far you get to in this process, potentially you will need another meeting to flesh this out. • Decide on action or event. • Assign tasks (can use event planning template below). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin brainstorming actions for the campaign.

7.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up decision-making process • Reflect on decision-making process used in the planning of the campaign action. • Read through types of decision-making processes and ask which would work best for the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine group decision-making processes moving forward.
7.40pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish communication processes • Speak through all possible ways for people to communicate. • Ask each group member to reflect on what would work best for them. • Through either voting or discussion elect your preferred communication method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine a communication system moving forward.
7.50pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up • Set date for next meeting. • Review action points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine a solid plan moving forward.

Minutes Example

Always make sure someone in the group is taking minutes, you can use the below template to collect minutes from your meetings.

Date of Meeting and Time	Friday 3rd May
Attendees at Meeting	Sarjana, Monique, Khadija, Lauren and Sarah
Apologies (People that could not attend the meeting)	Amy and Emma
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarjana to fill out event proposal form and send to organising team. • Sarah to apply for a market stall at Glebe markets. • Monique to create volunteer roster for markets stall. • Khadija to print materials to be displayed at market stall. • Lauren to source marquee and banner. • Sarjana to bring snacks on the day.
Next Steps	Next meeting to take place on the 13th May.
Other notes	<p>If Glebe markets are full we will explore Marrickville markets.</p> <p>Khadija can't make the next meeting so will read the minutes instead.</p>

Planning your first event

With a new group it's important to work towards holding your first event or action. This will help the group feel a sense of momentum and progress. When you start planning an event it's always good to come in with an idea of what's possible.

The following events are examples of the types of events your group may choose to run and how they help your group.



Market Stalls

Good for making your group visible, building a list of people and inviting people to events.



Activism over dinner

Good for building relationships and moving people towards action/deeper involvement.



Petitioning

Good for giving people an easy first action to take, building a list of people, and for following up by inviting people to events.



Feminist discussion groups

Good for getting people thinking more critically, building relationships, and moving people towards action/deeper involvement.

Film screening

Good for explaining a campaign in detail and moving people to action.



Training

Good for stepping people up to take more responsibility and strengthening the capacity of your group, as well as recruiting new members.

Criteria for events

To help you choose an event that's right for your group it's good to think through what you are hoping to achieve by hosting

1. **Outreach to the community:** Does your event/action build awareness of ActionAid in your community? Does it build relationships with people or groups in your community?
2. **Group building:** Does your event deepen people's engagement with ActionAid? Does your event bring new people into your group in a meaningful way?
3. **Campaign impact:** Does your event/action allow you to mobilise people around a campaign? Does your event/action influence decision-makers?

your event. We've developed some criteria for our events to ensure that they are always helping us to reach our goals. When planning for an event, aim for at least two out of three:

SMART Goals

Another framework to always keep in mind are the SMART goals. When planning your event, set some objectives for your group and run through this framework to make sure your group is being strategic.

- **Specific** – Is the objective clearly stated? Is there any chance it could be misinterpreted?
- **Measurable** – What criteria will be used to measure the success of the objective?
- **Achievable** – Is the objective achievable or not? Also, is the objective actually possible? – is it achievable in terms of resources, knowledge, experience and time?
- **Relevant** – Is the objective relevant to ActionAid's campaigns?
- **Time-based** – Have you stated a time period and deadline for completion of the objective?

Event Plan

Use this template below to create a plan for your first event as a group:

1. **Create a checklist of everything that needs to be done for the event to happen.**
2. **Assign roles within the group of who will do what.**

Some sections you might like to include in your plan:

- **Promotion**
- **Logistics**
- **On the day**
- **Follow up**

Task	By when	By who

Don't forget with any of the actions you can call of the Events and Outreach team for support, just email Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org

Event proposal form:

The first step to creating an event with your group is to fill out the event proposal form, which can be found on [the activist toolkit](#) and send it to the organising team. This will help us support you with your event and will help guide your group through what might be needed to make this event successful.

Promoting your event using social media

Social media can be incredibly useful to promote your event. A great way you can use social media is by creating a public Facebook event from the ActionAid Australia account. To do this, you will need to fill out the Facebook event template that can be found on [the activist toolkit](#). Anything written with intent of communicating with the general public needs to be approved by the communications team. This rule is the same for volunteers and staff, and ensures that there is consistency in the ActionAid brand and voice, and also ensures that we have good quality content that is free from any grammar or spelling mistakes.

Keep in mind it will take roughly three days for our communications team to approve your Facebook event copy. And that the earlier you can write and send it to them, the better.

For other ways to use social media to promote your event check out our [online training on how you how to convert more people from online to offline activism.](#)

Successful events case study: Clothes swap for women's rights by the Wollongong group

In April 2019, the ActionAid Wollongong group teamed up with Fashion Revolution

to hold a clothes swap for women's rights event during Fashion Revolution Week. They encouraged people to ask #whomademyclothes and promote ActionAid's Transform Trade for Women campaign.

In the lead up to the event, the group used social media for promotion. They shared the Facebook event with local community groups, looked for community notice boards, and also pages with similar interests, such as women's community groups or environmental sustainability groups. In addition, they shared the event on local buy and sell pages, student and university groups, as well as from their own personal Facebook pages.

As a result, dozens of people attended the event, and the community had a really positive response. They started the event with a presentation on the impact of trade agreements on women's rights, using the garment industry as a case study. They gained lots of petition signatures and met many people interested in getting more involved in the local Wollongong group.

The group sent out a media release to local media outlets, and were thrilled to be interviewed by ABC Illawarra, WIN News and the University of Wollongong Student Magazine, the Tertangala.



Retaining Group members

Once your group has had its first meeting and run one or even two successful events, it's important to continue to build the capacity and engagement of the people in your group. This will help to retain group members and ensure your group is sustained long into the future.

There are many ways that you can retain group members, but ultimately it's all about building connections and relationships with your group members as well as building their capacity and commitment.

One on one conversations

When starting off a new group, having one on one conversations is the best way to get to know new group members and to get them more involved. One on one conversations are face-to-face meetings, often at a cafe over coffee between an existing activist and a new or potential group member.

Relationships built as a result of a one on one conversation create the foundation of local groups, and they are rooted in commitments people make to each other, not simply commitment to an idea, task, or issue.

When having a one on one conversation like this, you can use the below structure and template as a way to guide your conversation and document key points:

One on one conversation structure:

Establish a connection

After you've greeted each other, it's great to establish an initial connection. This shouldn't be anything too formal, just a way to break the ice and make you both feel more comfortable in each other's presence. Start by finding something you have in common and build from there. The questions you could ask can range from general questions to questions on a certain topic, for example:

- **How has your day/week been?**
- **What do you do for work?**
- **What do you think about X happening in the community?**
- **What did you think of X in the news yesterday?**

Discover interests

Now that you have broken the ice and are starting to feel more settled you can dive a bit deeper. If you feel that the person is still hesitant to open up, offer up some information about yourself – for example, tell your story of how you got involved and why.

In this section it's key to ask open-ended questions. You should be actively listening, and doing little speaking. This is about getting to know the other person, what motivates them and how they want to make change in the community. Start by asking:

- **What issues are you passionate about?**
- **When did you become passionate about women's rights?**
- **What women's rights issues do you care most about?**
- **Have you been an activist in the past?**
- **What type of action have you taken in the past for women's rights?**

Exchange opportunities

Now that you have a better sense of what motivates them, you can start to explore how that person can play a role in your group. You can ask:

- **What skills do you have?**
- **What skills do you hope to build?**
- **How would you like to help?**
- **Is there any role in the group that interests you?**

Get a commitment

A successful one on one meeting ends with a commitment, ideally to join the group or to come to an event/next group meeting. To do this you can ask:

- **We're starting a local group for women's rights, would you like to be involved?**
- **What is your capacity at the moment? How much time could you commit?**
- **Your skills in X would really help our group progress, would you be interested in contributing those skills to the group?**
- **Can you come to our next group meeting/event?**

Reiterate the commitments that have been made and mention when you will follow-up with them to see how they are going.

Template for recording details:

As a group coordinator you will hopefully have many one on one conversations, and it's important to note down any key information that comes out of them so that you have something to come back to and can think through key areas. You can use the below template to do this:

Name:	
Motivation: - Why are they interested in being involved? - What does this person need to get out of their involvement in order to stay involved?	
Skills: - What existing skills does this person have to contribute to the group?	
Growth: - What skills is this person helping to build? - What are some obstacles that this person might face	
Leadership development: - What are some other things you can ask this person to do to build his or her leadership? - What kind of support or training will this person need?	

Circles of commitment

Within every group and the broader movement, there are people who express various levels of commitment.

Community: This represents all the people the campaign is trying to reach.

Crowd: the crowd circle represents the community members in contact with the campaign, those who've taken a flyer or signed a petition or joined our email list, and so on.

Contributor: the next level of engagement are those who contribute to the campaign perhaps by donating or by volunteering.

These are the people who might not have the capacity or interest to come to weekly strategy meetings, but help out with small tasks.

Committed: Committed volunteers are those who can organise others. For example they can train volunteers at a stall or organise the stall itself.

Core: the committed people without whom the campaign would fall apart.

It's important to think about how you can scale people up through these circles. Use the worksheet below to guide you in thinking through how you can increase the engagement of people in your group.



Source adapted from the Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren.

COMMUNITY	(the people we're trying to engage!)
What community are you engaging/organising? (e.g., 'voters in Deakin', 'residents of Darebin', 'rooftop solar owners in Australia', etc)	
CROWD	(have opted-in to be contactable)
How will you make face-to-face contact with people in the community you are trying to organise?	
How will you get people's contact details? (e.g. sign a petition at a stall, sign up online, etc)	
How will you make online contact with people in the community you are trying to organise?	
How will you engage with your new supporters?	
CONTRIBUTOR	(take action)
How will you invite people connected to your group to take some kind of action, if they're supported to do so? E.g. helping out on a stall or at an event etc.	
What kinds of things will you ask people to do?	
What distinguishes contributors from ordinary crowd list members? Is signing a petition enough? An offline action?	
COMMITTED	(take responsibility)
How will people in your group take responsibility for actions? How will people support others to take action? E.g. training new volunteers, running events, etc.	
How do people typically arrive at this level of engagement in your group?	
Do you have ways to transition people from the Engaged level to committed level?	
CORE	(where the buck stops)
How do people typically arrive at this level of engagement with your group? Do they start by taking this level of responsibility?	
How can we transition people from the committed level of engagement to core level?	

Structuring groups for success

Community organising takes time, and groups don't appear overnight. They take nurturing, similar to plants, which is why we've used the metaphor of growing a plant like growing a group. It's important to note what phase your group is in and how you can best structure your group for success.

BLOOMING

SPROUTING

SEEDING



Group phase	Key characteristics	Recommendations for structure
Seeding	<p>Seeding groups are often smaller groups generally with less than five members who have recently agreed to work together, for example after having met at an ActionAid training or event.</p> <p>It's likely this group will be establishing processes and systems such as ways of working together, how often to meet and communicate, and establishing processes on how to make decisions.</p> <p>These groups are working towards their first or second event or action.</p> <p>These groups need keen individuals to help step up and take ownership of building the group in its earliest phase.</p>	<p>Groups in the seeding phase will likely not have a decisive structure in place, and this is a good thing.</p> <p>Structures take time to evolve and imposing a structure so early on can be detrimental to the group.</p> <p>Instead follow the tips in this guide to establish ways of working and building relationships, so you can gauge where your group members might fit into a future structure.</p>

Sprouting	<p>Sprouting groups have around 5-10 active members. These members will regularly attend meetings and carry out tasks assigned to them. By this stage, sprouting groups have generally put on two to three successful events.</p> <p>Group members share responsibilities and take ownership over key areas. Sprouting groups generally have more members who are able to share the responsibilities for their group and members take on various roles in the group. For example, one member could manage event logistics and book venues and create run sheets.</p> <p>These groups have a sense of community, they've developed relationships with each other and feel a sense of shared values and vision.</p>	<p>Sprouting groups find that adding more structure to their group can be helpful to manage their growth.</p> <p>These groups often create specific roles for groups to manage workload which can increase as the group gets bigger and starts to plan more events.</p> <p>Creating specific roles for people that match their skills can be really helpful not only for managing workload but also for helping to create a sense of ownership and personal responsibility for the tasks that they are given. It can encourage people to share any previous experience or skills they have and allow others to build skills in different areas.</p> <p>One on one conversations can help your understand your group members and what role might work for them, for example if someone has a passion for graphic design, perhaps they could design promotional posters to be displayed around your community.</p> <p>To move towards any new structure, make sure to consult with your group around structure and create some potential options. You can always get in touch with other ActionAid groups for some inspiration.</p>
Blooming	<p>Blooming groups are generally quite structured, with a core 'leadership' team of group members assigned certain roles who help to maintain the group and support its growth. Blooming groups also seek to create leadership opportunities for new group members, by identifying and encouraging people in the group who seem motivated to step up.</p>	<p>Blooming groups often have a lot of members creating the potential to divide the group into smaller working groups that focus on a specific part of group activities for example you could consider putting in place:</p> <p>A volunteer support working group: Responsible for recruiting new members, building relationship with members and connecting with other community groups.</p> <p>A campaigns working group: Responsible for brainstorming and carrying out tactics, as well as coordinating MP engagement.</p> <p>An events working group: Responsible for planning and executing events to grow the group and raise awareness around the campaign.</p> <p>There is the possibility that when the group grows so large, that it might be worth considering whether there is capacity to create a new group. For example, if some group members are also university students, consider whether those members could use their skills and experience to build an on-campus group.</p>

Celebrating your wins and building comradery!

The last thing to remember that will help you retain group members is to always celebrate your wins! When group members feel their contributions are valued and they are connected with the team, they are more likely to stick around.

Here are some exercises that will help you celebrate your wins and value your team members' contributions:

1. **'Three prouds' exercise:** At the start of every team meeting come up with three things you are proud of as a team. It can even be as simple as 'we all managed to show up to the meeting'. This will help the group reflect on the things they've done well, and will create a positive atmosphere for the meeting moving forward.
2. **Share successes:** When the group holds a meeting or event, it's a good idea to take a photo and share within your Facebook group with a post about what you've achieved. This will help create a sense of shared success and team work.
3. **Recognise the contributions of group members:** Whether within Facebook posts or in person, make sure you recognise when people step up and do things well, and recognise their efforts within the group. You can tag them when you share successes on Facebook or give them a shout out within team meetings.
4. **Take every opportunity to say thank you:** The simplest way to make you team members for valued is by personally thanking them for their contributions. You can do this ad hoc when the opportunity arises, or you can organise a big thank you on days like International Volunteer Day to do something special to show your gratitude to your group members.

Here are some ways that you can build comradery in your team and ensure people remain connected to one another:

1. **General check-ins at every meeting:** Before launching into your team meeting, it's always good to do a personal check in. You can ask questions like: What's going on in everyone's lives? What's been one highlight from the week? What's something funny that's happened in the past week?
2. **Icebreakers:** On top of check-ins, icebreakers are a great way to learn something new about your group members and continue to build connections. This also helps new group members to feel welcomed. A quick google will bring up hundreds of different types of icebreakers. Some of our favourites are:
 - a. **Two truths and a lie:** ask everyone to state three things: two being true and one a lie, and get the other group members to pick the lie.
 - b. **If I were a food what would I be?:** get group members to say a food that describes the way they are feeling e.g. I feel like a bowl of soup, because I feel warm and cosy.
 - c. **Find five things in common:** divide group members up into pairs with people they don't know very well and get them to find five things that they have in common.

Who to go to for support

Community Organisers

Siri Andersen (Campaigns and Organising Officer)

Siri.andersen@actionaid.org

Activist Support Team

Volunteering.au@actionaid.org

Events and Outreach Team

Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org

National Leadership Team and State Coordinators

Email the organising team to find out who your relevant State Coordinator is.