

# AIDES



## Increase the political clout of activists by merging NGOs

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### Issue

Since the discovery of HIV/AIDS, many NGOs have been set up. As funding becomes more and more scarce and administrative red tape more complex, the leaders of NGOs may aim to group together in order to assert themselves as front runners, to increase their weight as activists, to develop new resources and to professionalize their facilities.

### Description

Since it was set up in 1984, the largest French AIDS NGO, AIDES, has made several changes in its legal organisation both vertically and horizontally. The initial independent committees, became independent legal entities within a national federation then to legally merger into a single association. Several mergers with other NGOs working on the same issues have also taken place.

### Lessons learned

The motives for these mergers are a product of various political and economic factors: lack of members, financial weakness, wish to give a legal expression to existing cooperation, to have more political power, and to acquire more resources, etc. This decision to expand, enables the making of economies of scale on the organisation's expenditure, and increases negotiating capacities with suppliers. Taking into account the changes in the legislation on responsibility, it is becoming more and more difficult to find administrators. The grouping together of organisations reduces the number of administrators needed. NGOs defending the same ideas can group together so that their political and lobbying clout and communication policies have a wider reach and impact.

### Next Steps

By merging its committees, AIDES has put an end to its financial weakness. It has eased the strain on field workers, by centralising the administrative management, thus enabling them to concentrate more wholly on their actions. It has also reinforced the trading of know-how by bringing together people and resources. Lastly, it has produced a uniform set of tools and more importantly increased lobbying strength.



### AIDES, a French NGO

Set up in 1984, AIDES is the largest HIV/AIDS community-based organisation in France, with centres in over 70 cities. We support partner organisations in Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Our main goals:

- To inform vulnerable people about HIV/AIDS prevention and testing
- To support PLWHAs, (social & professional integration, therapeutic education)
- To advocate for the rights of PLWHAs.

