APPROACHES TO PARTNERSHIP

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of research was to gather and synthesise sector best practice, regarding the conduct of "partner relations" by UK NGOs in international development, with a view to incorporating the learning into the Bond Effectiveness Programme emergent framework.

22 development agencies, with a range of between 10 and 1,500 partners, participated in the research and were able to share information on their approach. Of these 11 were contacted and asked more specifically:

- What makes for partnership success?
- What elements would you change in your current practice to improve your partnerships (learning)?
- How do you know your partnerships are working well? What demonstrable evidence do you have?

Given the time limitations only International NGOs based in the north were consulted and therefore no southern partners were asked for their views.

The report examines some of the research on partnerships and outlines some of the changes in last 10 years as well as looking at the different levels of engagement and types of partnership and the reasons why agencies work with partners.

The report next looks at elements that make for partnership success. These include having clear partnership principles, a clear selection/ assessment process, defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, a capacity building component as well as conducting partner reviews. The report goes on to identify some common practices, any differences, assesses the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches and identifies some good practice.

In terms of evaluating and measuring the partner relationship few agencies were confident that they had adequate processes or systems to gather relevant management information about the quality of partner relationships, but a number of agencies recognised that this is an issue for them and wanted to improve their approach.

The report also touches on whether partnerships are really equal relationships and the fact that agencies are in the driving seat and setting the agenda. There are some examples of how agencies have tried to shift the balance to mutual accountability in this regard by involving partners in the organisation's strategic planning and introducing partner panel to represent the partner perspective.

Emerging trends and learning include some evidence of increased engagement with partners, the development of resources and tools to support the partner relationship and some learning around partner to partner capacity building, reliable feedback from partners, and developing partnership skills.

Recommendations include the need:

- to measure the quality of the partner relationship systematically
- for greater clarity about roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- for better definition and measurement of capacity building
- to develop partnership skills

2. Purpose and Method

The purpose of the research was to gather and synthesise sector best practice, such as is available, regarding the conduct of "partner relations" by UK NGOs in international development, with a view to incorporating the learning into the Bond Effectiveness Programme emergent framework.

a) To determine as comprehensive a list as possible of those organisations that have, in the last 3 years or so, conducted systematic internal assessments/ evaluations/ surveys of the quality of their partnerships with southern organisations – and who have documented the resulting knowledge/ learning.

b) To select from the list as diverse and representative sample as possible of (around 10) organisations, representing the highest quality of thinking and process, and to examine in more depth their documentation and experience to draw together the common learnings and significant variations amongst them.

c) From b), to build a robust analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs work and relationships with partners and to create a digest of the recurrent lessons regarding their partnerships.

d) Furthermore, where organisations have gone beyond this learning and reflection to develop their own "Partnership Policy" or "Partnership Guidelines" etc to apply their knowledge and upgrade/ standardise their practice, the consultant will compare and contrast these for their shared features and innovations, and to present an annotated draft composite for discussion by BEP NGOs.

22 development agencies participated in the research and were able to share information on their approach. Of these 11 were asked more specifically:

- What makes for partnership success?
- What elements would you change in your current practice to improve your partnerships (learning)?
- How do you know your partnerships are working well? What demonstrable evidence do you have?

A list of participating agencies can be found in Appendix 1 and had a range of between 10 to 1,500 partner relationships at any one time.

For the purposes of this research partnership is about relationships with external organisations where there are shared goals and objectives and not, for example, relationships with affiliates/associates of the participating agency or loose networks which are formed for joint benefit. In this report the term "partner" is used to describe organisations based in the south and the term "agency" to describe a northern NGO/donor. Given the time limitations only INGOs based in the north were contacted and therefore no southern partners were asked for their views.

3. What has changed over last 10 years?

Research from INTRAC[1], almost 10 years' ago, concluded that northern NGOs needed to develop close, mutual relationships and "to develop greater clarity in terms of the purpose and nature of individual partnerships and of their overall approach to partnerships in practice". INTRAC recognised that this was easiest to achieve where minimal funding is involved.

In the same vein, Wallace and Chapman, in their research into downward accountability [2] observe that the sector has suffered from "donor-led managerial approaches, the dominance of upward accountability to northern agencies and poor relationships". They recommend a move away from managerial approaches (linear planning, measuring and reporting) towards innovation, learning and reflective action.

Research as recent as 2004 [3]suggests that European NGOs see "clarity about the purpose of the relationship and the quality of the work carried out as effective partnership, whereas southern partners place a higher value on personal contact and the quality of the relationship with the agency".

Bond's report "Approach to Quality[4] recognises that "the quality of an NGO's work is primarily determined by the quality of its relationships with its intended beneficiaries (through its partners). If an NGO maintains a respectful dialogue with its intended partners, recognising their priorities from their points of view, and they shape operational decisions, then this creates a framework within which an NGO's analysis, response and evaluation are likely to be of high quality."

In this report Bond members highlighted the practical and conceptual shortcomings of 'impact' as the driver of performance management, noting that no satisfactory method has been developed to measure impact consistently, or to attribute social benefits to specific NGO interventions. The implication is that NGOs and donors need reliable mechanisms for managing and monitoring the quality of their relationships with partners. When Bond members said that relationships have to come first, they also said that they have to be the priority in drawing up organisational systems.

One agency in a review of its accountability system (2007) emphasised that the "central idea is not bureaucracy, but the practice of accountability and transparency with partners and communities. There is far to go on addressing power imbalances in our partnerships and alliances".

Over the last decades the nature of NGOs working in partnership has changed. A number of agencies who have always seen themselves as partners with the organisations they work with have seen their role move from being project focused to partner focused. There is some evidence from current partnership policies that agencies want to have partner relationships on an equal footing. However, while there is some evidence of changes in the nature of working in partnership, the challenge remains how to maintain a balance of power

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[1] NGOs and Partnership, NGO Policy Briefing Paper No 4, April 2001, Vicky Mancuso, Brehm
[2] An Investigation into the Reality Behind NGO Rhetoric of Downward Accountability, Tina Wallace & Jennifer Chapman, 2004
[3] Autonony or Dependence, North-South NGO Partnerships
[4] A Bond Approach to Quality in Non-Governmental Organisations: Putting Beneficiaries First, Bond and Keystone Accountability, August 2006

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and to promote empowerment while at the same time managing the tight results-based requirements and the increasing demands made by funding donors.

4. What is a Partnership?

There is no universal standard definition of partnership within the development world [5] and the concept of partnership has become so pervasive, and means so many different things to different people and in different contexts, that it is losing its identity.[6]

HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) defines a humanitarian partnership as *"a relationship of mutual respect between autonomous organisations that is founded upon a common purpose with defined expectations and responsibilities. Partnerships can be established with or without formal contractual agreements. Partners can be small, community based organisations or large national or international institutions. A humanitarian partnership is one in which two or more bodies agree to combine their resources to provide essential goods or services for disaster survivors".*

A number of agencies have defined what they mean by partnership and some examples can be found in Appendix 2. There are some common elements in each of the definitions:

- ❖ relationship
- ❖ purpose - common goals and objectives
- ❖ mutual trust and respect
- ❖ accountability

Almost without exception most agencies talk about equality in the partner relationship. The difficulty is that where resources or finances are concerned "*the hand that gives is higher than the hand that takes*". This was recognised in one agency's policy where they stated that sometimes "*the term partnership is inappropriate for a relationship that involves the transfer of resources (financial) as the term implies equality yet is used to mask imbalances of power between funder and recipient*".

The word "partner" has become devalued to mean anything from an organisation in the south implementing projects on behalf on the donor with little say through to networks of loosely associated organisations with some common interest. The sector tends to refer to a "partner" meaning organisations based in the south and "agency" as referring to a northern NGO/ donor. Ideally both parties should be called partners and act on an equal footing if it is to be truly a partnership.

5. Types of Partnership

Agencies enter into a range of different partnerships and for different reasons relating to their philosophy/ vision and values as well as operational reasons. They also have differing levels of engagement with their partners. Diagram 1 below shows the different levels of engagement agencies might have with their partners. The same agency, particularly if larger, is likely to have a differing level of engagement with different partners.

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[5] Reflections on Relationships; the nature of partnership according to five NGOs in southern Mexico, Miguel Pickard, Oxfam 2007
[6] Solidarity in Partnership: Approaches for managing effective long-distance partnerships between civil society organisations, Crewe/Gomez, Child Hope May 2008

LEVELS OF PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT - DIAGRAM 1 [7]

**INCREASED
LEVELS OF TRUST**

HANDING OVER/ EXITING

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

ACTING TOGETHER

DECIDING TOGETHER

SHARING INFORMATION

PARTNER IMPLEMENTATION

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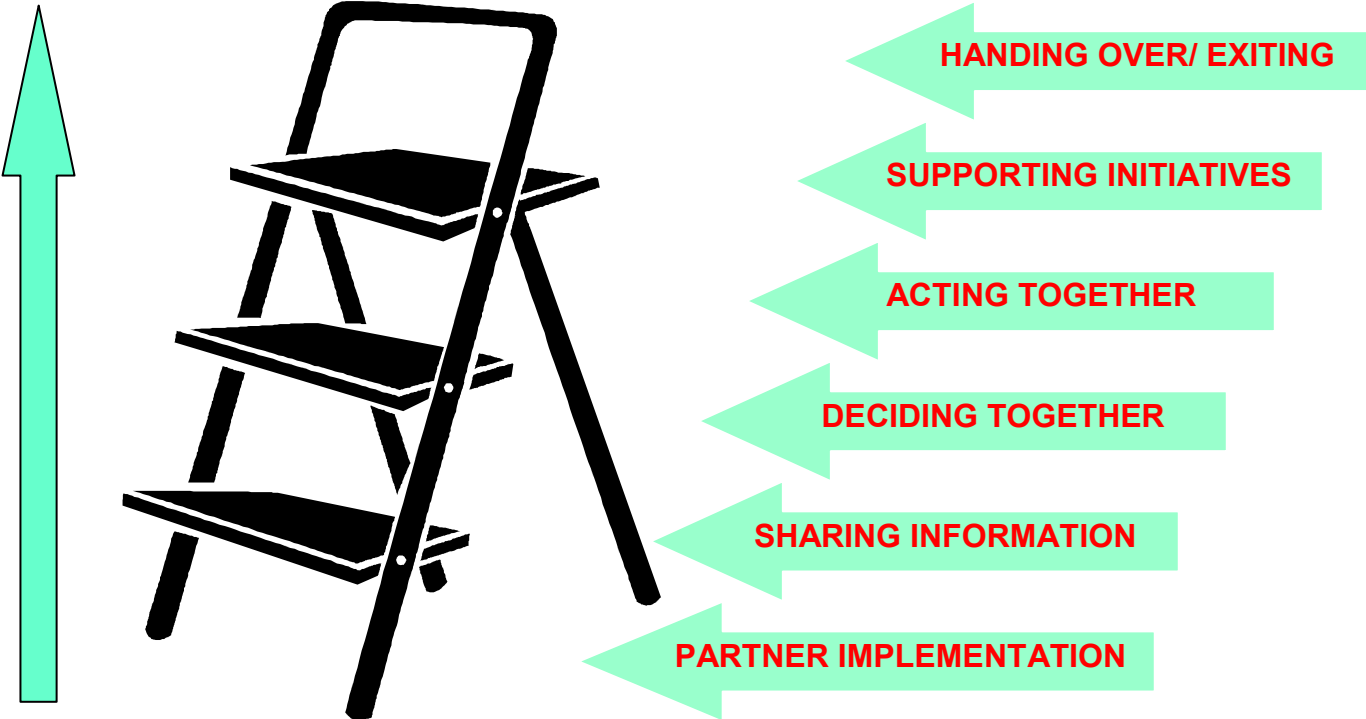
[7] This model has been adapted from a model of participation -Wilcox 2000

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LEVELS OF PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT – TABLE 1

HANDING OVER/ EXITING	Partner Control	Partner has financial and reporting responsibility. Resources are handed over
SUPPORTING PARTNER INITIATIVES	Devolved power and resources	Agency helps Partner achieve their goals within a framework of grants, advice and support
ACTNG TOGETHER	Shared joint initiatives where each party takes ownership of and implements work	Agency and Partner have equal say and influence over decisions and outcomes. Both Agency and Partner act and review/ monitor together
DECIDING TOGETHER	Shared agenda	Agency and Partner decide course of action together. The Partner acts and the Agency monitors
SHARING INFORMATION	Sharing information and ideas	Agency listens to suggestions and ideas but retrains control of how work is delivered
PARTNER IMPLEMENTATION (SERVICE DELIVERY)	Agency Control	Agency sets the agenda and imposes how the work should be delivered within strict confines and the partner delivers

The above model may not take all types of partnership into account. For example, some agencies have strategic partnerships which do not necessarily involve funding. These might exist to collaborate on research, campaigning or advocacy or simply to develop local capacity. It's important also to recognise that over time a partner relationship may change from a pure implementation role to planning and implementing their own initiatives.

One agency has recognised the real power associated with funding and says it "will remain sensitive to its impact on relationship with the partners and said they will proactively seek to counter this by:

- Being transparent and open and holding itself open to question by partners on all funding decisions.
- Abiding by the values and principles of mutual respect, mutual accountability and humility in our conduct with partners, in line with attitudes and behaviours outlined in their accountability system.
- Ensuring that teams and staff who work with partners and manage partnership are inducted, trained and briefed to be aware of the power they have, respect the partners

and avoid any patronising/domineering attitudes and behaviours, disrespect, disregard or inefficiency."

6. Why Partnership?

As mentioned earlier the research showed that agencies enter into partnerships for different reasons and lengths of time. Most agencies state how they can achieve more by working with partners rather than on their own despite any differences in activities or beliefs. Several agencies talked about their philosophy around their theory of social change being core to their belief in working in partnership.

One organisation emphasised the importance of sustainability of outcomes rather than the sustainability of partner organisations with which they work. Just one agency mentioned that for them working in partnership "has the potential to achieve great cost-effectiveness by sharing resources and avoiding duplication of efforts".

Most agencies who participated in the research have set out the rationale for working in partnership and below set out the main reasons given across the board.

Reasons for working with partners:

- greater impact through working with others in similar field/ vision
- complementarity
- unite efforts, resources and advocate to influence policies and exchange information
- promotes ownership and responsibility
- reduces risk of dependency
- builds capacity
- ensure mutual knowledge transfer and learning
- move towards sustainability (ability to adapt to changing conditions)
- greater potential to improve reach, scope and accessibility of services

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Faith based agencies tended to have examples of "covenant" agreements. These imply a greater commitment over a longer-term period of up to 5 or 6 years.

One or two agencies talked about working "through partners" rather than with which implies a more top down approach to using partners as a vehicle to implement projects. A number of agencies emphasised how partnership supported their "theory of change" and that "complementarity" was central to their view of partnership.

7. Defining the Partnership Relationship

A number of agencies have defined their partner relationships and their differing roles with the agency. One agency defined their partners as:

- implementing partners (service delivery)
- planning partners (voice of the community or data/ information management)
- policy partners (research and evidence based research)

Another agency, in their policy, talks about "not all relationships between two organisations or entities can be described as such even though they may progressively become one. On

the continuum of relationships that lead to a partnership, their range varies from contractor-ship, collaboration to networking relationships".

There were two useful examples where agencies had defined the type of organisations they wanted to engage with and the level of engagement and commitments for their different partnerships. Please refer to Appendix 3 for these examples in full.

8. What elements make for partnership success?

When asked agencies gave differing responses as to what characterised partnership success. There were, however, some common themes around trust, the length of the partnership with no expectation of immediate return, mutual and shared commitments, transparency coupled with good communication, and clear objectives for the partnership. Equality of the relationship was also mentioned – both sides bringing something to the table as well as involving partners at concept, planning and strategy setting stages as well as strong leadership and management practices.

Ros Tennyson, has helpfully set out the phases in the partnering process from scoping to sustaining or terminating. A copy can be found in Appendix 4. This is a useful model for identifying the different stages of a partnership, but for the purposes of this report the research focussed on the following areas of management practice and covered the characteristics of partner success mentioned by the participating agencies:

> ❖ partnership principles
> ❖ selection process
> ❖ defining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
> ❖ capacity building
> ❖ partnership review

In each section there is some analysis of common practices, differences, an outline of the strengths and weaknesses and in some cases examples of innovation and good practice.

8.1 Partnership Principles

8.1.1 Areas of common practice
Most agencies have clearly stated principles about how they wish to work in partnership with other organisations. Here are some of the typical principles set out in the range of policies reviewed:

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Typical principles around partnership

- compatibility around shared vision and values
- respect and trust
- clarity about roles, responsibilities and decision making including representation from both sides
- commitment to capacity building and learning
- transparency and accountability
- understanding and commitment from both sides to the partnership
- good communication, responsiveness and openness
- balance of power

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In developing a consolidated policy on partnership a couple of agencies pointed out the need for flexibility and therefore a strong relationship and good communication to be able to achieve this. This also came out in one agency's organisation-wide strategic partnership review which emphasised high quality relationships and trust as pillars of good communication for successful partnership.

8.1.2 Differences in Practice
There were examples of one or two agencies who had unique principles. For example, a couple of agencies had "**interdependence**" as a principle which one defined as meaning "achievements can be much greater through sharing and valuing strengths, capacities and resources and gains made through risk and experimentation; failure has to be shared in risk-taking". The other agency used the term "interdependence" to mean "each contributing something that the other depends on".

Another agency stressed the need for commitment to a **long-term relationship** and one or two agencies had commitment to **mutual transparency** through frequent and open communication and **mutual accountability** in financial and managerial matters. Another agency aimed to map the areas of overlap between their own and the partner's strategic aims and identify some **shared partnership objectives** as well as be respectful of the partner's rights by promoting the use of participatory processes to build trust and understanding.

Another difference in approach is the effort made for the agency and partner to consult and jointly agree the partnership principles. Some agencies stated in their policy that they had worked with their partners to achieve this.

8.1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of approach
It is important to set out good guiding principles at the start and the fact that a few agencies emphasised the need for balance of power and mutual accountability is a move away for the top down approach of the past. However, the downside is to accept these well meaning principles at face value without any evidence of the reality on the ground. There is a better chance of ownership on both sides if the partnership principles have been jointly agreed.

In reality there will always be a tension between empowerment and the need for financial control. This is likely to be more prevalent in a funding relationship, but can also be present in a partnership where capacity development is the key aim. One agency, has tried to overcome this issue by separating out the two aspects; one process to look at the financial planning and reporting (non negotiable and stringent compliance) and the other to look more in depth at the partnership relationship. It's important that both the agency and the partner understand that both their reputations are at stake if either or both parties fail to meet their obligations with a funding donor.

8.1.4 Innovation and good practice
Two agencies have attempted to set out their principles more explicitly; one giving examples expressed as "partnership in action" and the other setting out some indicators. These examples can be found in Appendix 5. However, the example of mutual accountability does not truly show accountability from the agency perspective and the indicators identified in the other example are not expressed in a way that could be readily measured.

8.2 Selection Process

8.2.1 Areas of common practice

Most agencies had clearly set out criteria for selecting partners in their partnership policies as well as guidance about how the selection and assessment process should be managed.

Here is a typical list of areas covered in a pre-assessment:

Typical areas covered by the pre-assessment for selection

- alignment with mission and values of agency
- management practices
- governance and legal requirements
- adherence to certain policies; security, child protection, health and safety
- financial practices (some require audit if funding over certain amount)
- capacity
- sustainability *

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* Agencies have defined sustainability in different ways; i.e. sustainability of the organisation, project, project results, partnership or funding

The participating agencies appeared to use two broad methods of selection:

1. **systematic assessment** (review of hard facts around project reviews, references, governance set up, financial information)

2. **dialogue** (structured conversation around getting to understand both parties including values, expectations, organisational fit, processes/procedures and ways of working

Most agencies had a combination of the two methods, but with emphasis on one approach or the other. One organisation had a choice of a gaided self-assessment process which could take between three months up to one year to complete or an organisational scan in the form of a half day workshop with the two parties. Both processes lead to consensus with the partner organisation about its strengths and areas for improvement.

Many of the agencies provided tools to guide the process and discussion and in some cases allowed staff and partner to make a judgement based on answers to the questions before referring to a higher body or panel to review the decision. In some cases a representative is selected from both the agency and the partner organisation or in some cases two or three people are involved in the process from each side, bringing different organisational perspectives.

A couple of grant making agencies had a two stage process: the first online through their website and the latter stage via a partner visit. One agency's approach was very much agency led while the other incorporated a partner visit which was set as a two-way dialogue.

One agency has set out both hard and soft indicators for its selection/ assessment process and how that evidence should be gathered. For example:

Area for Assessment	Hard indicator	Soft Indicator	Gathering evidence from Stakeholders
Type of Organisation	Registration Paper Statutes/By-Laws Mission Statement	Who has been benefiting from their activities?	Info from organisation; stated target group; Local authorities

A couple of agencies had **no standard methodology for the assessment process** but set out broad guidance for staff and partners to follow coupled with a "dialogue" approach. Several agencies had an option in their policy to enter into a partnership for **purely functional reasons** which they recognised was not ideal, but that it would work effectively if both parties were fully aware that that it was for a short duration. The full "dialogue" process would necessarily be used in this situation.

Only two or three agencies required **references** for their partners (from previous funders) and another advocated **getting local information** from the community, government officials and donors but warning that if presented with negative feedback it would need to be verified through several sources.

One agency stated in their guidance how **information collection should be done as efficiently and thoroughly as possible** and that contact with the partner should be done only to supplement existing information and to get information on areas which directories and public-domain information sources lacked.

An added due diligence aspect which affects mainly the Islamic faith-based organisations more acutely is being able to ensure that funds are not be diverted to **terrorist activities**. These agencies aimed to address this aspect in their pre-assessment process. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation faced this issue in the light of the Canadian government's hastily devised security agenda. In their Code of Ethics[8] on Partnership they stated that their members wished to support the continued pursuit of equitable partnerships, while responding to the challenges associated with the new security concerns in Canada. It was an effort to reinforce the commitment to southern partners as legitimate civil society organisations, and to treat them with respect so to avoid having them automatically viewed as potential terrorists.

There were also a couple of examples of agencies addressing the **exiting strategy** and setting expectations at the beginning of the partnership agreement.

8.2.3 Strengths and weaknesses of approach
There are strengths in both the "systematic assessment" and "dialogue" approach. The former is essentially a one-way process where the agency has control and deciding power whereas the dialogue approach gives better opportunity for the relationship to be on an equal footing. Gathering the hard evidence as part of a "dialogue" process and recording it in some written form is possible and recommended. Having several people from both parties involved in and deciding the outcome of an assessment so that different perspectives are considered also strengthens the process.

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[8] Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Code of Ethics, 2008

The strength of the "dialogue" process is clearly that it promotes the equality of the relationship from the outset. However, the judgement, and decision is often left to the Programme Officer which relies on good understanding, training and induction in partnership principles and practice in this role. A few agencies ensured that two or three people from both parties were involved in the recommendation to a higher authority in the organisation.

Taking up references and relying on local information with the partner's knowledge can add value provided it supplements the "dialogue" process. One agency warned in its guidance on the assessment process that getting several sources of information was advisable so that any unreliable sources could be meted.

Having an exit strategy and adherence to key policies and ways of working clearly spelled out at the beginning is positive. Again these processes seem mostly to have been devised by the agency itself with little consultation with partners. The more joint work on these aspects the better the likely outcome.

<u>8.2.4 Innovation and good practice</u>

One agency has set out its selection process as having a "good partner conversation" under three headings which gives a more flexible, yet thorough approach if done well.

> o What we need to **know and understand** about each other and how we will get that awareness.
> o The **attitudes and behaviours** we expect and how we will help each other to practise these.
> o The **processes and procedures** we will put in place to hold each other accountable for practising the principles and increasing trust in the partnership.

8.3 Defining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

The majority of the participating agencies had clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities set out in the partnership agreement or a similar document. In the box below are some of the typical areas covered by such agreements/contracts.

> **Typical areas covered partnership agreement**
>
> - purpose of partnership
> - objectives
> - roles and responsibilities
> - financial set up/arrangements
> - legal and statutory requirements
> - child protection
> - health, safety and security
> - financial procedures
> - misuse of funds
> - handling a dispute
> - access to complaints and response mechanism
> - phase out

<u>8.3.1 Areas of common practice</u>

In most cases agencies use the partnership or contract agreement for setting out the accountabilities in the relationship that followed clearly from the selection process. These

included adherence to the agencies' values and mission, adherence to procedures and policies, how disputes and complaints will be handled and some sort of financial audit or check.

Most organisations had more requirements and responsibilities for their partners than they were prepared to give themselves! There was, for example, one agency who had clearly set out ten accountabilities, but only one was related to their obligation towards the partner. In some cases the accountability was set out fairly equally for both sides.

8.3.2 Differences in practice
Some agencies had spelled out more clearly how situations of conflict such as fraud, dissonance with vision, mission and values would be handled as well as having a robust complaints and response mechanism.   Two agencies mentioned how they had strengthened these processes as a result of having relied on trust too much in the past.

Another agency mentioned the importance of getting the right balance of driving the strategy as on past occasions partners had been allowed to do what they wanted with no questions asked. The agency wished to consider where the added value is for the agency in the partnership in working more jointly.

In terms of roles and responsibilities there were two aspects worth exploring further:

The role of project/ programme officer and partner: feedback from several agencies highlighted the need for **partnership skills and capabilities** for both the project officer and partner. For the project officer role these skills are essential because in some agency contexts they often act as organisational development consultants and advisors, help facilitate, coach and problem-solve with partners. These skills include active listening and observing so as to not to make assumptions, genuinely asking questions in order to learn, and behaving with respect towards people.

Several agencies had identified the issue of **staff continuity** and the potential **inconsistency** with new staff taking over without adequate induction into the agencies' partnership approach. Partners from one agency expressed their frustration about the impact of frequent staff changes and the lack of continuity and asked for longer-term contracts and longer hand-over periods to overcome this.

Communication/Shared Learning: Agencies reviewed recognised the need for good two-way communication and had set this out in their accountabilities in some cases. Some had examples of e-bulletins and newsletter with partners. Feedback from partners to one agency emphasised the need for stronger internal communications particularly where the agency changed its mind over direction /policy.

8.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses in approach
The more clearly the accountabilities and responsibilities are set out at the beginning (preferably designed and jointly set with a partner group) the easier it will be for both parties to raise questions if parts of the agreement are not being met.

Structures and mechanisms such as a complaints procedure or partnership principles are of course important for accountability, but a partnership is also relational. The attitudes and behaviours of staff from both parties are therefore key. Unless staff see the inherent value of being responsive and open to partners, they will not have the desired effect.

Making sure that there are plans to manage continuity and adequate handover so that there is consistency in the partner relationship is important.

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8.3.4 Innovation and good practice
There are two examples in Appendix 6 of approaches to defining commitments and accountabilities. In both these examples the agency had as many requirements and accountabilities as the partner.

One agency, following a strategic partner review, recognised the need to ensure a mediation option to solve issues in the partner relationship before they escalate to be handled under their complaints mechanism.

8.4 Capacity Building
8.4.1 Areas of common practice
Most agencies had some component of capacity building or development to a larger or lesser degree for their partnerships set out in their agreements and were explicit about how this fitted with their "theory of social change". Some had ensured that it was a two-way dialogue and process so that there were clear plans and strategies and that capacity building wasn't just being "done" to the partner.

There is no one definition of capacity building or view about where the responsibility sits. Here are two examples of how the participating agencies define capacity building/ development.

Example One:
"A process of equipping an individual, community, organization or institution to undertake the necessary functions to realize their job or mandate. An ongoing process by which people and systems, operating in dynamic contexts, enhance their ability to meet their objectives for improved performance (United Nations Development Program). Capacity building of individuals is often referred to as —human resource development, while that of institutions and organizations is commonly known as —organisational development."

Example Two:
"Assessing capacity development both **systematically** *and* **holistically**; *'systematic' meaning a structured process of reflection and inquiry that leads to the capacity development priorities being understood and shared in the partner organisation through a guided self assessment or organisational scan or 'holistic' meaning that the partner looks at themselves from five different angles:*

- *How much they collaborate with other stakeholders*
- *How well connected they are to their beneficiaries*
- *How strong are the internal systems of the organisation*
- *How effective are the programmes, services and advocacy campaigns of the organisation*
- *How much impact is their work having on the lives and experiences of beneficiaries"*

8.4.2 Differences in practice
However, one smaller agency, stated explicitly that they don't capacity build as in their view partners have already got capacity and go on to say that "like us they are weak in some areas, strong in others, and it is up to them to develop it further". They saw themselves as facilitating or providing training, offering ideas in response to requests, asking challenging questions and making connections between partners to enable learning on specific areas of interest and concern. In their view the "time has past for the patronising assumption that the northern agency are developing their capacity".

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<u>8.4.3 Strengths and weaknesses in approach</u>
It's a strength that almost all agencies have included capacity building as a component in their partner relationship. A joint approach to preparing plans is preferable and leads to joint ownership of capacity development and moves away from the notion that "capacity building" is a one way process

Some agencies had clearer definitions which makes the measuring of capacity building much easier. However, there was little evidence of measuring the impact of capacity building initiatives.

<u>8.4.4 Innovation and good practice</u>
An example of key questions to assess a partner's capacity development can be found be Appendix 7.

There was also an example of one agency who had set out their critical factors to successful capacity development:

- **Leadership**: the leadership of the partner organisation is committed to the capacity development process and takes ownership.
- **Organisation-wide and participative**: the process of organisational analysis / capacity assessment is highly consultative with meaningful involvement of all impacted stakeholders.
- **Open and transparent**: the process is open with no hidden agendas, decision making is transparent.
- **Awareness and understanding**: all impacted stakeholders are informed and understand the reasons for the capacity development initiative.
- **Clear set of objectives, priorities and responsibilities**: capacity development plans become part of Agency supported 3-5 year planning of the organisation, responsibilities are distributed, resources are made available and the workload is appropriate in relation to the available human resources.
- **Sufficient time and resources**: the partner organisation and Agency commit financial, information and human resources to plan, develop and implement capacity building initiatives. Agency supports the formulation of capacity development plans with teams of competencies which have the required expertise to contribute meaningfully.

8.5 Partnership Review
In looking through the documentation and talking to a number of agencies they all have some mechanism for reviewing their partnerships. Overall agencies seemed to focus their reviews around the outputs and achievement of objectives against strategy (including impact of work on beneficiaries and financial and capacity elements including risk assessment). A number were clear about how the review would feed into decisions about the partnership i.e. whether to continue the partnership, close the partnership or agree remedial action. In only a few cases was the quality of the partnership included as part of the review.

The approach to partner review seemed to fall into three board categories: self assessment, joint approach, or carried out by internal or external individual or team.

8.5.1 Areas of common practice
The broad areas typically covered by the partner reviews/ assessments:

> **Areas covered by partner reviews**:
> - outcomes and impact on beneficiaries and on organisation's mission
> - financial management and performance of the partner
> - increase capacity – increased skills and knowledge
> - progress towards shared values and commitments
> - quality and risk issues

1. Self assessment
Three of the agencies in the study use a guided self assessment with an internal process/ committee to oversee it. One agency permitted self assessment to be done remotely provided it was a "low intensity" partnership i.e. under a certain financial figure. In some cases a simple SWOT analysis was done separately and then jointly.

2. Joint Approach
The majority of agencies who had developed a reflection process recommend a face-to-face meeting. A number of agencies were explicit about the nature of the reviews being participatory and were mainly through a joint meeting. One agency mandated that monitoring reviews be undertaken by every programme. These are annual meetings where partners, staff and beneficiaries come together to reflect on the programme's performance and the extent to which the agency partnership principles are being put into practice.

Likewise, another agency requires annual discussions between partners and staff to reflect on the quality of the partnership. These discussions are based on partnership principles that are developed by the agency and the partner at the beginning of a relationship. A couple of other agencies had clearly set out annual partnership review and partnership review cycles and some guidance on the quality of dialogue. See example in Appendix 8.

3. Carried out by internal staff member or independent external reviewer
There was only one agency where a staff member (programme officer) carries out the review. Several agencies ask for independent external reviews of the partner relationship.

The frequency of the partner reviews ranged enormously from every 6 months (sending in a report) to every 5 years, however, the norm tends to be every two years. Those carrying out more frequent reviews focused on the programme work itself rather than the partner relationship. Where a project report was sent in every 6 months reviews were usually part of the ongoing project cycle and would only be used in part to assess the health of the partnership.

8.5.2 Differences in practice
The approaches of several agencies focussed almost solely on the partner with just a couple of elements relating to the agency. A couple of agencies are using 360 degree feedback on staff from partners feeding into their performance review.

8.5.3 Strengths and weaknesses in approach
The first approach doesn't allow for feedback to the agency and while it appears to be partner-led the agency still makes a judgement and there is little dialogue in this approach.

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Looking at the second option, there are clearly strengths in having face-to-face conversations and dialogue with partners as part of the review process. The downside is that partners may not be willing to share their views openly or conversely if the assessment is jointly carried out, and they may have undue influence in scoring the outcome. By having two or three people involved in the review from each party can bring about a more balanced view.

Having an external or individual carry out the review, no matter how objective, has the disadvantage of partners feeling that the review is being "done to them". Clearly this doesn't demonstrate partnership on an equal footing

Feedback from one agency showed that partners valued face-to-face reflection and dialogue rather than written processes and reducing burden of accountability.

<u>8.5.4 Innovation and good practice</u>
One smaller agency has devised a range of ways for their partners to evaluate the training and services provided by their agency through regular feedback and dialogue, but also anonymously. They have also commissioned an external body to visit a sample of their partners.

In order to get around the issue of compliance and due diligence required for donors, an agency has devised a process of separating out the financial/ compliance process from the partner relationship review. This means one process to plan agreed funding from donors (i.e. non negotiable and stringent compliance) and another process to review the relationship with the agency. They have talked through with partners that both the agency's and the partner's reputation is at stake if the donor demands are not met, particularly if the partner may wish to apply for funding directly themselves in future.

One larger agency has involved donors in their review and reflection process. They quote an example where they achieved success in changing the mind of humanitarian donors by inviting them to participate in their reflection process where funding was dependent on a major EU grant based on a complex logical framework. When challenged, the donor accepted the way the partner had conceived of it.

9. Evaluating and Measuring Partnership Quality
In reviewing the policies and documentation as well as those agencies spoken to as part of the research, only a couple of agencies were confident that they had **adequate processes or systems to gather relevant management information** about the quality of partner relationships. Conversely a number of agencies mentioned that they wanted to improve this area and be able to have a "higher level" view about the quality of their partnerships and indicated that a management information process/ system was on its way, but not yet functional.

There were very few examples of measuring quality of the partner relationship and only one agency having an organisational indicator specifically around effective partnerships (see under Innovation and Good Practice). A couple of agencies mentioned how they use their monitoring plans to collect outcomes/ impact, but without exception these focussed on partner outputs and financial, legal and capacity issues. One agency had identified what information they would gather about partner relationships which included satisfaction surveys, partner complaints mechanisms, trip reports, partner consultations, project and programme evaluations and feedback on partner reports.

Here is just one example of some questions used to reflect partnership quality:

> **Questions used to reflect the partner relationship**
> 1. What should we have achieved by now in the partnership?
> 2. What's working well, and why?
> 3. What are the problems the partnership is facing?
> 4. What have we learnt?
> 5. What are we going to do about the problems we have identified?
> 6. Who will take the action?

Several agencies have carried out major reviews of their partnership relationships in the last three years which have led to changes in their practice. One agency who had spent a lot of effort embedding the policy and tools with staff and partners said they now recognise that they needed **to "refresh" their policy** ensuring that **all parts of the organisation** that didn't benefit from the first round of implementation are included.

Other methods of getting information to evaluate the partner relationship included regular feedback through partner visits and preparing case studies. A couple of smaller agencies were concerned about the honesty of the feedback and only a few agencies ask for anonymous feedback.

9.1 Innovation and good practice

There was only one example of an agency who had explicitly developed an organisational indicator at the strategic level relating to effective partnership:

Strategic Objective	Develop effective partnerships
Lag Indicator 1	% of programme partnerships demonstrating increased Partner Review Tool scores
Lag Indicator 2	% of programme partners demonstrating increased Capacity Assessment Tool scores
Lead Indicator	% of programme partners using Capacity Assessment Tool and Partner Review Tools

10. What are the emerging trends and learning?

10.1 Changing levels of engagement with partners

There is some evidence that agencies are changing their approach and seeking more engagement and input from their partners. One agency's accountability system mandates stakeholder engagement, including partner consultation, in the development of country, regional, thematic and international strategies.

Another agency stipulates in its contract with partners that it will "consult partners at an early stage in key decision making processes including five year strategic planning and programme reviews…and… will share the resulting policy with the partner community and invite and respond to their comments." Both are designed to realise consistency in partner's engagement in strategic planning and provide them with a basis to hold the organisation to account.

One larger agency has received feedback from its partners about skewed decision-making processes and the agency's level of dominance. As a result the agency has identified several changes to help equalise power:

<u>10.2 Development of guidance, toolkits and resources for better working in partnership</u>
A number of the larger agencies have developed reflective and participatory approaches as well as have provided extensive toolkits including CDs or DVDs to support both their staff and partners to set up and manage a partner relationship. There is a distinct different between the larger and smaller agencies in this regard. Smaller agencies, because they have few relationships to manage, tend to be more flexible in their approach to how the relationship is managed.

<u>10.3 Other Key Learning</u>

Partner to partner capacity building: A number of agencies mentioned aiming to do more to capitalise on partners' technical skills and to build capacity of other partners. Tools to enable this to happen included partner website, sharing case studies more widely, regular newsletters and e-bulletins. One agency mentioned enabling partners to become more reliant on raising local funds and sharing their learning with other partners in this regard.

Feedback from partners: A number of the smaller agencies who already get feedback recognised they needed to strengthen these processes. A couple of agencies mentioned that they carry out reviews each year and make regular visits but would like more intervention/ co-operation with other donors and another mentioned ideally measuring the impact of a partnership at least two years after exit. One agency plans to introduce a confidential questionnaire for partners to ensure more accurate feedback.

Developing partnership skills: A number of agencies recognised the need to develop partnership skills among staff and partners. These included core skills to facilitate, problem-solve, communicate (listening and observing well so as to not to make assumptions) as well as behaving with respect.

11. Partnership – a relationship of two equals?
As mentioned in the section "What is Partnership" (page 4) there is an inherent inequality in the relationship, particularly where finance and resources are concerned.

Who's in the driving seat?
Some of the larger agencies are waking up to the need to soften the **dominant cultures and attitudes**, and not insist on conforming to the agency's working style. One agency, in a recent review, stated "there is little excuse for being defeatist over the power inequality issue and working in a joint way is as much an attitude and choice as it is about balance of resources."

Another medium sized agency recognised that "while partners are engaged in project level decisions, their **involvement in strategic discussions is ad hoc.** Similarly, there is a lack of consistency in what information is made available to them and no structured approach for partners to discuss the quality of the relationship". To overcome this one agency had introduced a **partner panel** to advise the organisation on its international strategy and specifically in relation to its approach to partnerships.

On the other hand two agencies talked about wanting to get the balance right between who drives the strategy in the partnership. In their view their agencies had "let the partners do what they wanted" and therefore wanted to think about the added value in working more jointly.   In one case the agency wanted a stronger and fairer approach to exiting partnerships where there was no longer any commonality with vision/ mission (with joint

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discussion and agreed timeframe), but invest more generously in partners where the relationship benefits both the agency and the partner.

Setting the agenda together
Agencies are recognising from the feedback they are getting that more joint ownership is needed to make it truly an equal relationship and identify the benefits and impact of working in partnership from both parties.

This means the agency and partner need to have joint and open processes from the outset including the selection process, setting out the commitments and accountabilities, sharing the risks and rewards of the partnership and involving partners in the agency's strategic planning process. Finally, but not least, the agency and partner need to have an exit strategy which has been agreed from the start and a plan to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the partnership and to communicate these to the sector and donors when the partnership comes to an end.

12. Conclusions

Every agency has a clear rationale for working in partnership but they seem less able to quantify the added value. They monitor whether the partner has achieved their strategy and planned objectives, but are not so clear as to the quality of the partner relationship.

There continues to be an inherent power imbalance and while there is evidence of a willingness and progress towards greater engagement with partners, with more mutual accountability, transparency and joint working there is still some way to go before agencies and partners are "acting together" or indeed agencies are "supporting partner initiatives" to make the partnership a relationship of equals.

There is good evidence that agencies have developed good guidance and toolkits to support staff and partners in the partner relationship and evidence of increased attention to carrying out surveys and reviews of the partner relationship. Some agencies have carried out strategic reviews and are now acting on the learning from this work.

However, there is little demonstrable and systematic evidence as to whether these partnerships are effective. There is some naivety about how honest partners will be in their feedback if the process is not confidential. Given that capacity building/ development is such an important component in the partnership model for most agencies further work on defining its contribution to change will be worthwhile

13. Recommendations

Measure the quality of the partner relationship systematically
- Agencies and partners jointly agree how the partnership relationship will be measured systematically.

- Agencies to consider how this information is recorded and can be accessed by partners and staff alike so that both small and large agencies are clear about how it is used and acted upon.

- Proactively get regular confidential feedback and recommendations for change from partners and act on them.

- Ensure that partners take opportunity to give 360 degree feedback which feeds into performance reviews and that partnership skills are assessed as part of the performance management process.

Greater clarity about roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Adopt principles which are jointly agreed with partners and reflect joint ownership of transparency, contribution to each other's strategy development and plans and how the relationship will be managed.

- Ensure that accountabilities are jointly agreed and are equally matched for both parties.

- Adopt a joint process for partnership review which gives both time and space for reflection together with robust financial/ funding analysis and progress against strategic objectives.

Better definition and measurement of capacity building
- Develop clear criteria for measuring success in capacity building with partners and measure and record outcomes and impact systematically.

- Work with partners to enable and improve partner to partner capacity building.

Develop Partnership Skills
- Identify the skills that both partner and agency staff (particularly programme officers) need to work in partnership successfully.

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14. Appendices

APPENDIX 1

List of participating agencies:

ActionAid
CAFOD
Care International UK
CBM (Christian Blind Mission)
ChildHope
Christian Aid
Concern Worldwide
CRS (Catholic Relief Services)
International Childcare Trust
International Rescue Committee
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Muslim Aid
Norwegian Church Aid
One World Action
Oxfam
SightSavers
Stars Foundation
Tearfund
VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas)
WaterAid
WomanKind Worldwide
World Vision International

Also consulted with Comic Relief and viewed material from Cordaid

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APPENDIX 2

Examples definitions of partnership:

Agency A
"A partnership is the relationship of equality between partners based on mutual respect, complementarity and accountability where the shared values, purpose, goals and objectives are clear and which recognises autonomy of the partners."

Under their definition a relationship is not a partnership if there are no shared goals or objectives or if the relationship is only focused on an activity that has no project or programme with shared goals and objectives.

Agency B:
"A relationship with clearly defined common goals which contributes to improving the capacity of pro-poor actors and to enhancing links between them and extremely poor people in order to save lives, reduce acute suffering, achieve poverty eradication and realise the rights of extremely vulnerable and poor people. Within the relationship, the principles to be followed and the degree of collaboration will be jointly negotiated".

Agency C
"Partnership is the practical relationship which expresses what solidarity means for a faith community based in the north which is aware of a fundamental call, rooted in Christian faith, to recognise all women and men as part of one interdependent global community and equally called to create and maintain social justice. It is the way in which faith communities in rich countries can make an option for the poor and act to transform the structures and mindsets which keep people poor. It is also a way of making progress towards justice in economic, social and cultural relationships, motivated by a vision of the Kingdom of God. Partnership is a path of witness."

Agency D
Defines partnership as a mutually beneficial and interactive relationship which is agreed for a specific purpose and which works towards a shared goal of positive programme impact. Agency D considers partnerships to be of vital and fundamental importance in the way it works towards achieving its mission. The ultimate purpose of working in partnership is to increase the positive effects for the intended beneficiaries. There are both short and long-term benefits of working in partnership:
• short-term: through combining our resources we work more effectively and together we achieve greater progress than we would if working individually; and
• long-term, assisting partner organisations to develop their capacity and to interact with each other encourages stronger institutions able to work independently of Agency D' support, thereby promoting sustainable development.

Agency E
"Partnership should not be taken to signify a funding relationship and partners can include organisations other than Southern CSOs e.g. research organisations, first world organisations and their representatives (including networks and their members, journalists, consultants and politicians. Consequently, our definitions should involve several categories, for example Southern and Northern partners; eligible for funding/ not eligible."

APPENDIX 3

An example of an agency identifying the type of partner they wish to work with:

Figure 1: Relationships as per Collaboration and Application of Principles
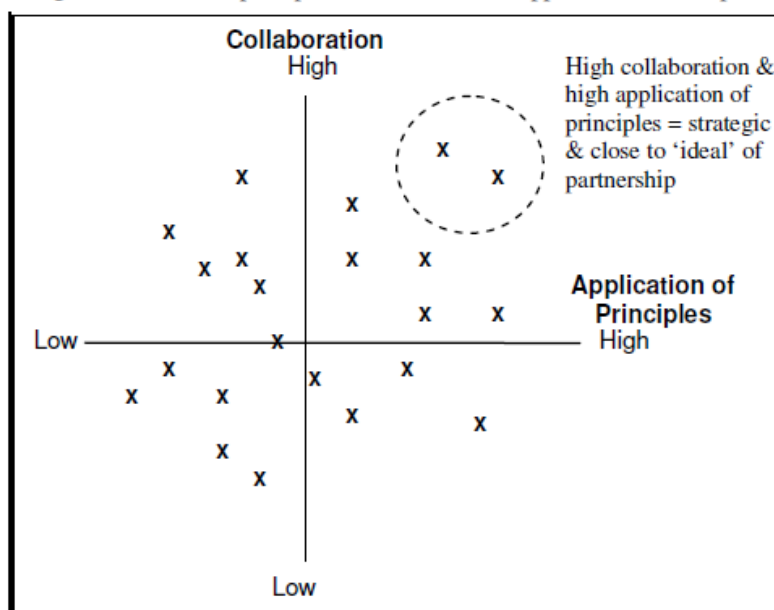
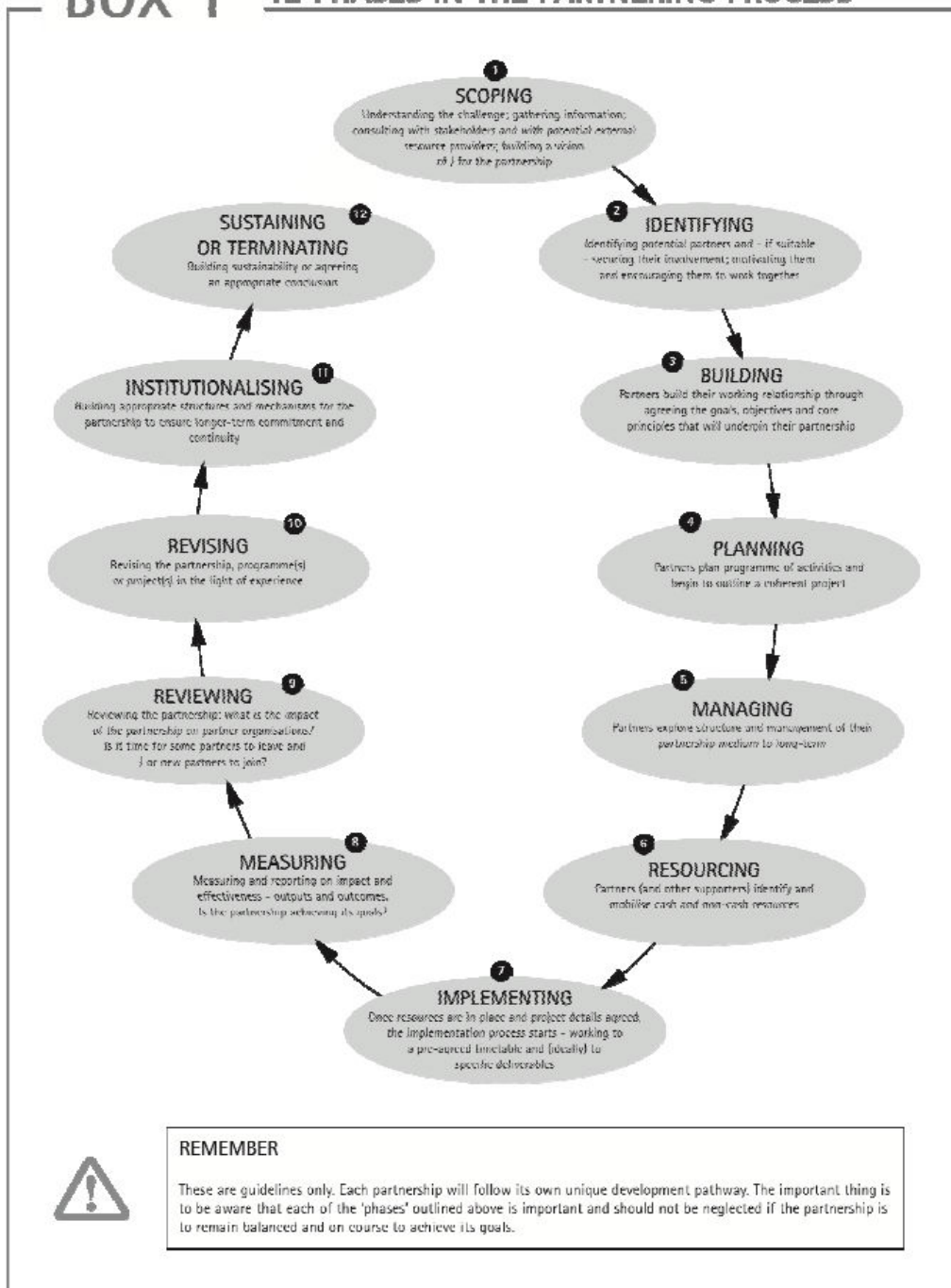

An example of definitions of levels of partnership:

Covenant Partnership	A long-term commitment to agreed objectives based on shared values, strategies and information. Feedback and joint planning, accompaniment, transparency and accountability on both sides is to be expected, as is a genuine openness and sensitivity to the other's needs, feelings, expertise, experience and wisdom. It is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill.
Capacity and organisational building Partnership	The focus is on development effectiveness and organisational strengthening and can include policies, strategies, operations and management. Financial support relates to improving development effectiveness and organisational capacity, and project or programme performance is *not* an essential element in the relationship although it is often present. This type of relationship is common among organisations that have interacted over a long period of time;
Programmatic Partnership	The support concentrates on a particular sector or theme such as livelihoods, well-being, recovery, security or influence. The programme is consistent with the strategic plans of the organisations involved. In addition to financial input, the programme supporter is involved in some, or all, of the following areas: programme design, implementation, technical support, capacity building, and evaluation. The relationship is mid- or long-term (say, 3-5 years+), which allows the partnership to develop on the basis of covenant partnership values and principles.
Project Funding	The initiative to start a project may come from either the funder or the organisation seeking funding. The funder mainly offers financial support, but may also be involved in design, implementation, technical support and evaluation. The funder focuses on the project and the organisations have little or no influence in determining the other organisation's policy, strategy, or organisational behaviour. The project is usually short-term (say, up to 3 years).
Solidarity Support	The support that is provided to demonstrate that we are "standing" with the other organisation / person in a time of need and will usually be related to our Catholic Church associations. It is likely to include small unrestricted money transfers.
Network support	Two or more organisations agree on a development agenda or the objectives they want to pursue together, for example to establish a "network" for specific advocacy, campaigning, and lobbying activities. The relationship usually lasts for a limited period of time. It is not based on money transfers, although modest funding may occur.

APPENDIX 4
The Partnering toolbox

Written by:
Ros Tennyson, Partnership Specialist and Director of Learning Programmes,
International Business Leaders Forum

BOX 1   12 PHASES IN THE PARTNERING PROCESS

① SCOPING
Understanding the challenge; gathering information; consulting with stakeholders and with potential external resource providers; building a vision for the partnership

② IDENTIFYING
Identifying potential partners and - if suitable - securing their involvement; motivating them and encouraging them to work together

③ BUILDING
Partners build their working relationship through agreeing the goals, objectives and core principles that will underpin their partnership

④ PLANNING
Partners plan programme of activities and begin to outline a coherent project

⑤ MANAGING
Partners explore structure and management of their partnership medium to long-term

⑥ RESOURCING
Partners (and other supporters) identify and mobilise cash and non-cash resources

⑦ IMPLEMENTING
Once resources are in place and project details agreed, the implementation process starts - working to a pre-agreed timetable and (ideally) to specific deliverables

⑧ MEASURING
Measuring and reporting on impact and effectiveness - outputs and outcomes. Is the partnership achieving its goals?

⑨ REVIEWING
Reviewing the partnership: what is the impact of the partnership on partner organisations? Is it time for some partners to leave and / or new partners to join?

⑩ REVISING
Revising the partnership, programme(s) or project(s) in the light of experience

⑪ INSTITUTIONALISING
Building appropriate structures and mechanisms for the partnership to ensure longer-term commitment and continuity

⑫ SUSTAINING OR TERMINATING
Building sustainability or agreeing an appropriate conclusion

REMEMBER

These are guidelines only. Each partnership will follow its own unique development pathway. The important thing is to be aware that each of the 'phases' outlined above is important and should not be neglected if the partnership is to remain balanced and on course to achieve its goals.

APPENDIX 5

Example of an agency who has set its principles with examples of how they see it working in practice

PRINCIPLE: BASED ON MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY
VSO is committed to equitable partnerships that empower our partners and are accountable to our target communities and funders. Partnership plans and objectives are agreed and reviewed together and both VSO and the partner organisation are accountable to each other. The partnership agreement sets out what both VSO and the partner organisation are responsible and accountable for. For example, financial systems in both organisations should be transparent. As part of VSO's own accountability to the constituents of a country in which we work, VSO encourages and supports in-country programme offices to establish national boards or advisory groups to increase the local ownership of VSO's work.

PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION:
Yoni Community Bank in Sierra Leone suffered from a lack of accountability and transparency that meant it couldn't function properly. Due to its failure to work effectively as a micro finance provider, it lacked a broad client base. VSO worked with the bank by providing long-term and short-term volunteers. These volunteers ensured that the bank improved its transparency not only with its clients, but with VSO itself. The bank now has an increased client base and functions more effectively as a microfinance institution.

Example of an agency who has identified indicators for partnership principles:

Principles	Indicators to put the theory in practice
Mutual commitment and sharing	• The project is a shared responsibility. All participate in the achievement of the objectives. If one of the organisations fails, all of them fail. • Periodic meetings will be carried out in a decentralised way (every 3 months). One of the first workshops to be carried out is to exchange knowledge. Second workshop will be to share strategies used. • Share contacts and information for advocacy work. • To share among the organisations information which could be useful for the other • To know each other and understand areas of work • Teams need to socialise/ share the project within their organisations so that the organisation feels ownership of the project. • Possibility of explaining the context in which the project is implemented and sharing in the meetings how the project is achieving impact in the community. The reports should be shared if possible with the other organisations and WK prior to the meetings.

APPENDIX 6

ACCOUNTABILITIES FOR both Agency and Partner

The Partners commit:
- To maintain the Christian identity of our organisations including the recruitment and development of Christian personnel in governance and staff positions, wherever possible.
- To uphold standards of good practice, with reference to Agency's Quality Standards, including the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and accountability to beneficiaries, as outlined in the Red Cross Code of Conduct, Sphere Standards and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Standard; and to uphold standards of good personnel management as outlined in the People in Aid Code.
- To obtain the other Partner's permission before using their name in any fundraising, advocacy or publicity activity and to guard against the misuse of data or information held about the organisation.

Agency commits :
- To respond promptly to project funding applications, reports and communications during the duration of the partnership. Agency aims to acknowledge all key communications within two weeks of receipt and give a response to applications and reports within six weeks.
- To make available funding for approved projects according to the schedule given in the grant Payment Letter, subject to satisfactory progress on the project, compliance with reporting requirements and Agency's continued availability of resources.
- Not to interrupt an agreed funding schedule without prior discussion with *[Partner Name]*, except in the case of actual or suspected misuse of funds.
- To notify the *[Partner Name]* of any appropriate opportunities for institutional funding and to seek the consent of *[Partner Name]* before applying for such funding.
- Except in exceptional circumstances, to give prior notification of any intended visits to the project or offices and to negotiate mutually suitable dates.
- To notify *[Partner Name]* of any relevant changes of staff or circumstances at Agency that could have an impact on Agency's support of *[Partner Name]*.
- To maintain information and procedures to facilitate continuity in the relationship between the Partners.

[Partner Name] commits:
- To abide by the terms of the Grant Agreement and any conditions notified in the grant Payment Letter which accompanies a grant approval.   Any foreseen difficulties in complying with any of the requirements should be notified to Agency in advance so that appropriate support can be considered.
- To participate, where practicable, in non-project related initiatives in advocacy, networking, capacity building, and the facilitation of Agency Transform Teams.
- To support Agency in meeting its external accountability and reporting obligations by cooperating with requests for information, reports and evaluations.
- To notify Agency of any incident or concerns arising under the Core Operational Policies noted in section 1.2 of the Grant Agreement.
- To notify Agency of relevant changes in the senior management and board membership of the Partner.
- To notify Agency of any security issues relevant to programme implementation or the safety of personnel.

This is an extract from Agency's agreement setting out accountabilities

Agency is committed to:
- Developing relationships with partner organisations characterised by respect, good communication and honesty.

- Assigning one main member staff as the main contact for this partnership. We will also let you know the name of the main contact's line manager, (e.g., the Head of Partnerships and Programmes or the Executive Director).

- Contributing to organisational and programme budget development for agreed funders, ensuring full transparency in Agency's sections of the budget.

- Maintaining a dialogue on Agency's strategic aims and consulting with INSERT PARTNER NAME HERE when developing, reviewing and modifying Agency's strategic direction if appropriate.

- Regularly reviewing our partnership and this agreement. At the beginning of the final year of any funding relationship (at the latest), initiating a dialogue on future plans for collaboration, if any, and whether or not a funding relationship will be continued.

- where requested, to facilitate access to and provide support in specific technical areas of interest to INSERT PARTNER NAME HERE (e.g., child protection, gender justice and monitoring, evaluation and learning) and responding to INSERT PARTNER NAME HERE's organisational and programme development needs.

- Giving INSERT PARTNER NAME HERE opportunities to evaluate Agency's advice, close accompaniment and training both through its relationships with Agency staff and anonymously where possible.

- Organising visits, and requesting information, in consultation with INSERT PARTNER NAME HERE in ways that take account of their schedules and workloads.

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APPENDIX 7

Checklist for assessing capacity for partnership

An assessment of an organisation's capacity to engage in partnership might include the following kinds of questions (which are applicable to both partners unless otherwise indicated). This assessment might be something that potential partners do separately before engaging in a relationship or it could be done as a joint exercise as part of building a relationship.

Aims and strategy:
- Are the notions of partnership and capacity development reflected in the organisation's core values and mandate?
- How does working through structured partnerships respond to the organisation's strategic objectives?
- What other forms of partnership, such as collaboration on an ad-hoc basis, networking and contracting, can address the organisation's needs?
- Are there any potential clashes between partnership and other operational modalities within the organisation, and can these be adequately reconciled?
- Is the organisation willing to open itself to influence (eg priority-setting) by a partner organisation?
- Is the organisation prepared to both defend and promote the partnership approach vis-à-vis funding agencies or other external stakeholders, and is the organisation's internal governance structure fully supportive, and aware of the implications?

Systems and procedures:
- Are planning, budgeting and reporting tools sufficiently flexible to accommodate the uncertainties and related characteristics of partnership?
- Is the organisation willing and able to take a long-term perspective on partnership development, and the realisation of results?
- Under what conditions and to what extent is the organisation prepared to adapt implementation plans priorities to the needs or preferences of the partner?
- Is the organisation willing to engage in a process of joint monitoring and evaluation, based on jointly conceived indicators?
- Does the organisation recognise and accept the validity of process indicators as legitimate measures of performance? Can it withstand external pressures to generate short-term results, and high disbursement rates?
- Is the organisation prepared to be transparent and account openly for decision-making and budgeting to the partner?

Financial resources
- To what extent can the organisation make long-term financial commitments to the partnership?
- Is the organisation willing and able to finance the up-front costs of investing in partnership, in particular, time and travel?
- Is the organisation willing to invest in the partner's overhead (i.e. institutional costs) and, if so, under what conditions? (question for Northern partner)
- Is the organisation willing to jointly fundraise with partner?
- Is the organisation willing and able to entrust financial resources and to delegate certain financial management responsibilities to 'level the playing field' (question for Northern partner)

Human resources
- Have provisions been made to train and sensitise staff to the cultural dimensions of partnering and in the skills of negotiation, confidence-building, facilitation and joint-working?

> - Do reward systems and performance assessments adequately acknowledge process-related factors and skills associated with institutional relationships? Is adequate time made available to staff to invest in partnership development?

APPENDIX 8

Example of promoting quality of partnership relationships:

Quality of dialogue
Putting partnership principles into practice is about the quality of the discussion and negotiation we have with individual partners:

- **Honest two-way dialogue** on results, progress, challenges encountered and process
- **Building rapport and mutual trust** - being open and reliable to foster trust
- Giving and receiving **constructive feedback** - with a joint objective to learn and improve
- **Being flexible** – not sticking to the detail of project activities but ready to act on feedback and new opportunities in order to pursue *NSC*
- **Being challenging**, not aggressive – asking questions rather than making judgements
- Being **open to disagreement** rather than stifling it – recognising and working with different perspectives can be empowering if managed well
- **Empathy** - understanding others' feelings and perspectives, taking an active interest in their concerns

Self-awareness - *recognising our own strengths and weaknesses; are* we *the change we want to see in the world?*

Reading List

Christian Aid and Partnership: (Part I of II) A Critique of the Partnership Literature, Dr Sarah Lister, Feb 2002

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