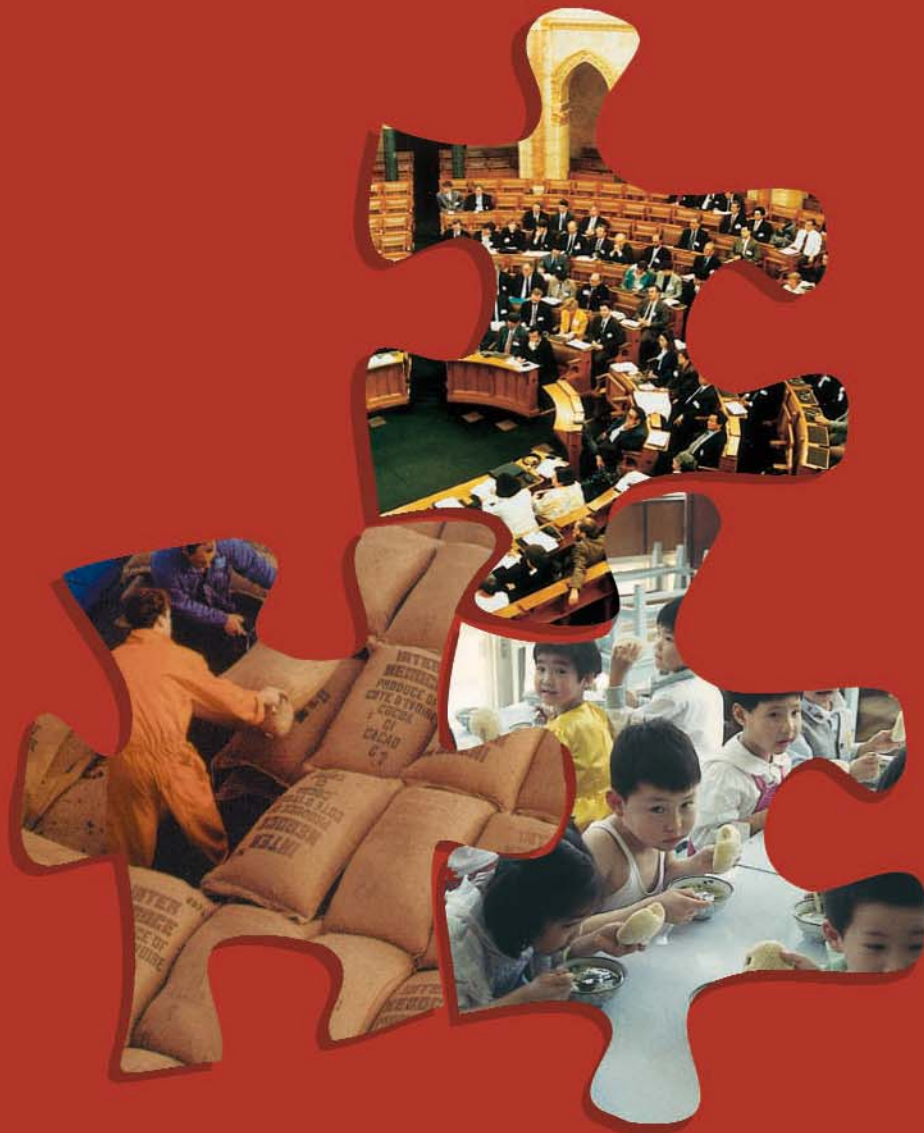# the
Partnering
toolbook

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Partnering
toolbook

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This publication is in three parts:

Part 1 is a short book that describes the generic partnering process from inception to conclusion.
Part 2 is in the form of 'stand alone' tools to enable practitioners to develop effective partnerships.
Part 3 includes more information about GAIN, the issues around food fortification and
case studies selected to be locally appropriate for each of the different language versions.

The views and ideas expressed in this publication are those of the author
and the additional named contributors (see inside back cover).

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PREFACE

Partnering is easy to talk about but invariably somewhat harder to undertake. It requires courage, patience and determination over time. It is rarely a 'quick fix' solution to a problem and can sometimes be a frustrating and disappointing experience - falling short of initial hopes and expectations.

But it does not have to be this way.

There is mounting evidence from many partnership initiatives under development in different parts of the world that such cross-sector collaboration can be highly effective and sustainable when it is designed, developed and managed in a systematic way.

The Partnering Toolbook builds on the experience of those who have been at the forefront of innovative partnerships and offers a concise overview of the essential elements that make for effective partnering.

We hope that it will give confidence and encouragement to all those who use it; that it will help them to build original, robust and highly successful partnerships and that the achieved development goals are not only genuinely sustainable but contribute to ending global poverty.

1 THE PARTNERING CHALLENGE

THE RATIONALE FOR PARTNERING

In 1992 the UN Conference on Environment and Development – the Rio Earth Summit – placed partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society as central to achieving global sustainable development. This has been echoed by successive summits on population, urban development, gender, social development and – most recently and most vigorously – at the Rio follow-up summit held in Johannesburg in 2002.

But why 'partnership'?

The hypothesis underpinning a partnership approach is that only with comprehensive and widespread cross-sector collaboration can we ensure that sustainable development initiatives are imaginative, coherent and integrated enough to tackle the most intractable problems. Single sector approaches have been tried and have proved disappointing. Working separately, different sectors have developed activities in isolation – sometimes competing with each other and/or duplicating effort and wasting valuable resources. Working separately has all too often led to the development of a 'blame culture' in which chaos or neglect is always regarded as someone else's fault.
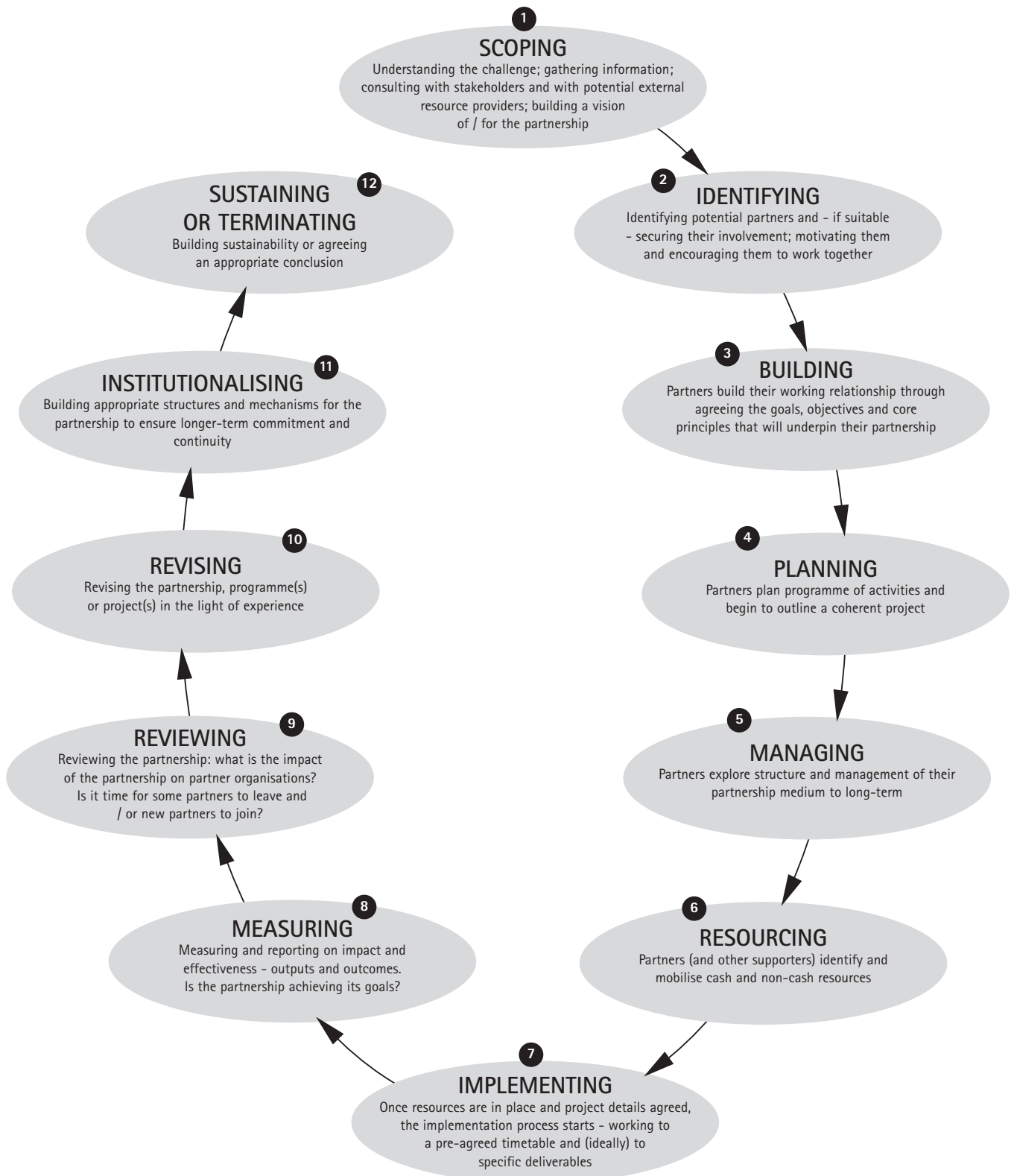
So partnership provides a new opportunity for doing development better – by recognising the qualities and competencies of each sector and finding new ways of harnessing these for the common good.

What does each sector – whether the public sector, business sector or civil society – bring? The 'core business' of each sector leads to quite different priorities, values and attributes. These can be summarised as follows:

SECTOR	CORE BUSINESS	MAIN ATTRIBUTES
PUBLIC SECTOR	*The rule of law by:* • Creating frameworks for economic, political and social rights and generating political commitment to development • Developing regulations and standard – setting mechanisms as well as adherence to international obligations • Providing public services to ensure basic needs and rights are met	'Rights' driven, the public sector provides access, information, stability and legitimacy
BUSINESS SECTOR	*Investment and trade by:* • Creating goods and services • Providing employment opportunities, innovation and economic growth • Maximising profits for investors to ensure further investment that will allow the business to continue to innovate	'Profits' driven, the business sector is inventive, productive, highly focussed and fast
CIVIL SOCIETY	*Social development by:* • Creating opportunities for individual growth and creativity • Providing support and services for those in need or excluded from mainstream society • Acting as guardians of the public good	'Values' driven, civil society is responsive, vocal, inclusive and imaginative

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 of / 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.

In addition to these general attributes, each sector has different competencies, aspirations and styles of operation that can - through successful partnering - be brought together to achieve a common vision.

By working together, partnerships for sustainable development can provide:

- **Innovative approaches** to the challenges of sustainable development and the hopes of ending global poverty

- **A range of mechanisms** enabling each sector to share their own specific competencies and capacities in order to achieve both common and complementary goals more effectively, legitimately and sustainably than when each sector operates separately

- **Access to more resources** by drawing on the full range of technical, human, knowledge, physical and financial resources found within all sectors

- **Dynamic new networks** offering each sector better channels of engagement with the wider community and greater capacity to influence the policy agenda

- **Greater understanding** of the value, values and attributes of each sector thereby building a more integrated and a more stable society

While partnerships can exist at many levels - from national or international strategic alliances at a policy level at one end of the partnering continuum, to locally based practical initiatives at the other - it is a common experience that the building and maintenance processes involved, apply to virtually all types of partnership (see Box 1, page 4).

OBSTACLES TO PARTNERING

But even if there are many good reasons for creating partnerships to tackle major development issues, it is not always obvious to all that this is the best way forward. It is also not always easy to promote collaboration in particularly unsympathetic cultural, political or economic contexts.

Obstacles to partnering can, therefore, take many forms:

SOURCE OF 'OBSTACLE'	EXAMPLE
GENERAL PUBLIC	• Prevailing attitude of scepticism • Rigid / preconceived attitudes about specific sectors / partners • Inflated expectations of what is possible
NEGATIVE SECTORAL CHARACTERISTICS (ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED)	• Public sector: bureaucratic and intransigent • Business sector: single-minded and competitive • Civil society: combative and territorial
PERSONAL LIMITATIONS (OF INDIVIDUALS LEADING THE PARTNERSHIP)	• Inadequate partnering skills • Restricted internal / external authority • Too narrowly focussed role / job • Lack of belief in the effectiveness of partnering

ORGANISATIONAL LIMITATIONS (OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS)	• Conflicting priorities • Competitiveness (within sector) • Intolerance (of other sectors)

WIDER EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS	• Local social / political / economic climate • Scale of challenge(s) / speed of change • Inability to access external resources

When too many obstacles are stacked against a partnership it may be best to abandon the idea and wait for better times. But most obstacles **are** surmountable with enough patience, commitment and effort. And even those that challenge the partnership to the point of break-down can be used to transform it into something better and stronger. Some argue (and many partnerships have experienced this as a reality) that a break-down or crisis can generate an unexpected and original response because it forces those involved to pay renewed attention and to see things more imaginatively.

From this perspective an obstacle can, in fact, provide the partnership with an invaluable turning point.

KEY PARTNERING PRINCIPLES

As well as a commonly agreed goal, all partnerships will need some guiding principles to hold them together. These principles should be worked out as part of the partnership-building process and agreed by all partners. If they provide the foundation upon which the partnership is built, then as things progress they continue to provide the 'cement' that holds the partnership together over time.

Each sector will have its own priorities and may struggle to accept the different priorities of others, but a robust discussion explaining why a particular principle matters to one or other partner may go a long way to reconciling apparent differences and to achieving compromise.

Three core principles that have recurred time and again in cross-sector partnerships in many different parts of the world are the principles of Equity, Transparency and Mutual Benefit. These are characterised below:

EQUITY?
What does 'equity' mean in a relationship where there are wide divergences in power, resources and influence? Equity is not the same as 'equality'. Equity implies an equal right to be at the table and a validation of those contributions that are not measurable simply in terms of cash value or public profile.

TRANSPARENCY?
Openness and honesty in working relationships are pre-conditions of trust - seen by many as an important ingredient of successful partnership. Only with transparent working will a partnership be truly accountable to its partner donors and other stakeholders.
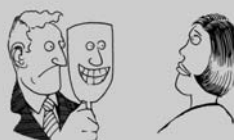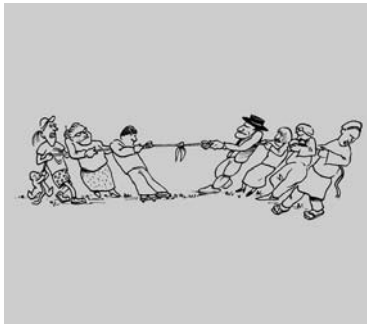
These three key principles can be a useful starting point for discussion between potential partners prior to formalising the partnership, even if they are subsequently replaced by different principles developed by the group. What is important is that all partners accept and agree to abide by whatever the group itself decides is appropriate.

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Dealing with obstacles to partnering and ensuring that agreed principles are continuously respected, constitute some of the major leadership challenges in a partnership. Other challenges are related to the day-to-day management tasks of the partnership's project and activities. Above all, what individuals operating in a partnership think about each other (do they feel connected to a common purpose?) and how they feel about the partnership (do they share a commitment to working together?) is of paramount importance. Partnering requires the right attitude and strong commitment just as much as the right structures, skills and actions. And the challenge of leadership within a partnership relates to all of these things - this is addressed in more detail in chapter 4.

REMEMBER

Partnerships take a lot of effort from all those involved - in particular they often take a considerable investment of time to build the quality working relationships that underpin effective collaboration. The risk here is that sometimes this can lead to a focus on the partnership for its own sake rather than for its capacity to deliver a useful programme of work. Partnering is a mechanism for sustainable social, environmental and/or economic development - it is not an end in itself.

NOTES

2 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

IDENTIFYING PARTNERS

The strongest partnerships are those that have drawn together the best set of partner organisations. At an early stage after 'scoping' a partnership, it is therefore critical to:

- Identify what types of partner organisations would add value
- Explore the range of options available either by building on existing and proven contacts or by seeking new ones
- Select the most appropriate partners and secure their active involvement

It is worth taking time over this and locating as much information as possible in order to arrive at an appropriate decision, including undertaking research to confirm the organisation's 'track record'. This can be done by reading their annual reports, looking at their web-site, undertaking a 'fact-finding' visit and / or asking others who know of the organisation's history for their views. A preliminary dialogue can then be arranged with a senior member of staff from the prospective partner organisation. This does not commit either side to a partnership - but it can provide a useful opportunity for both parties to assess at an early stage whether or not to proceed. At its best, it can address either party's concerns and clarify any potential conflicts of interest.

It may be necessary to explain the idea of partnership and to make a sound case for why this particular organisation would have something to contribute and how it would be able itself to benefit. It may take time to persuade enough people in the prospective partner organisation that this partnership will be worth the time and effort involved.

There may also be some value in organising special activities (workshops, site visits, exchanges) between several potential partner organisations to explore the idea of partnering more fully and collaboratively before any firm commitments are agreed. And it is a good idea to allocate some follow-up work to individuals to assess their capacity to actually turn a verbal commitment into action.

Tool I:
PARTNER ASSESSMENT FORM
- provides a 'check-list' of
questions to ask about any
prospective partner.

In some instances there may be little or no choice about partners. If it is important to work with a local government department, for example, then effort will need to be dedicated to persuading them to become actively involved by showing how they too can benefit (have their own goals met) by working in constructive collaboration with other sectors.

In all situations, however, it is important to be realistic about what the partnership is likely to be able to achieve and to be open about the challenges involved.

REMEMBER

No partner (including you and your organisation!) is perfect - what you are seeking is a partner organisation that will provide as good a match as you can find to enable the partnership to achieve its objectives. Essentially, you are looking for partners that have many of the appropriate attributes and the clear potential to grow more fully into the role of partner over time.

ASSESSING RISKS AND REWARDS

Each partner needs to assess the risks and rewards that may arise from being involved in a cross-sector initiative. In fact, each partner will need to understand the potential risks and rewards of their fellow partner organisations almost as deeply as their own if they are to really commit themselves to genuine collaboration and the principle of 'mutual benefit'. While it is common for each partner to believe the risks to their organisation are greater than to any other, it is interesting to note that most categories of risk apply equally to all partners.

Organisational risk for each of the sectors may arise in any of the following areas:

- **Reputation impact** – all organisations and institutions value their reputation and will rightly be concerned about whether that reputation can be damaged either by the fact of the partnership itself or by any fall-out in future should the partnership fail

- **Loss of autonomy** – working in collaboration inevitably means less independence for each organisation in the areas of joint work

- **Conflicts of interest** – whether at strategic or operational levels, partnership commitments can give rise to split loyalties and / or to feeling pushed to settle for uncomfortable compromise

- **Drain on resources** – partnerships typically require a heavy 'front end' investment (especially of time), in advance of any appropriate level of 'return'

- **Implementation challenges** – once a partnership is established and resources procured there will be a fresh set of commitment and other challenges for each partner organisation as the partnership moves into project implementation

Risk assessment is important and sometimes easily ignored in the enthusiasm for potential benefits from collaboration. Partners should encourage each other to undertake such assessments at an early stage of their collaboration and – wherever possible – find opportunities for addressing any concerns together as a partner group in an open and non-judgemental atmosphere.

But of course all partners anticipate that the rewards will outweigh the potential risks and here too there are many areas of benefit that may be common to all partners. These include:

- **Professional development of key personnel**
- **Better access to information and different networks**
- **Greater 'reach'**
- **Improved operational efficiency**
- **More appropriate and effective products and services**
- **Greater innovation**
- **Enhanced credibility**
- **Increased access to resources**

In addition to these common benefits, there are likely to be a range of further rewards that are specific to individual partners. Ideally these too would be acknowledged and shared at an early stage of the partnership to enable mutual appreciation of each others' specific priorities and to ensure that all partners understand completely the expectations each partner has from the partnership.

RESOURCE MAPPING

Prior to formalising a partnership, it is important for the partners to consider what resources will be needed for the agreed project or programme of work. Typically this is worked out in terms of funding requirement, but one of the real benefits of working cross-sectorally is the potential access to a wide range of non-cash resources that the partners can bring to the partnership.
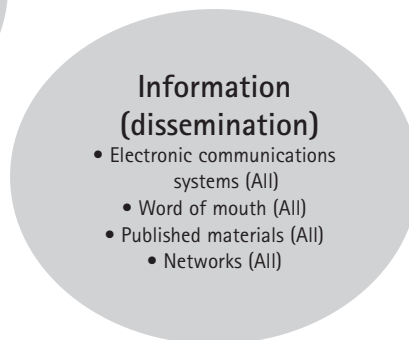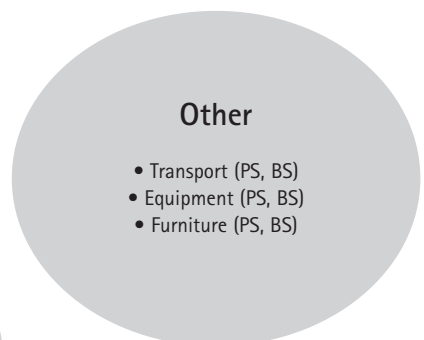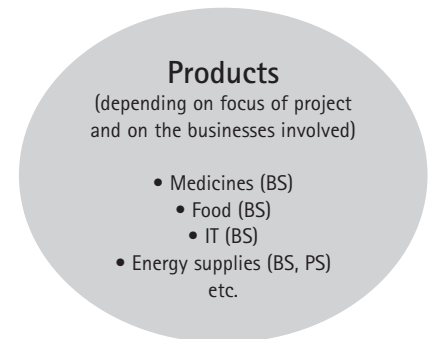
A partnership meeting (or several) dedicated to identifying the resources each partner might contribute can be invaluable. Run in a workshop format, possibly managed by an external facilitator with experience of this process, it can offer opportunities for partners to fully explore their own potential for resource contribution and - in the spirit of gentle competition - it can lead them to make tangible commitments that will enable the partnership to get underway more quickly and efficiently (see Box 2, page12).

There are various ways of doing this dynamically. The simplest way is to ask all those in the room to write each resource contribution they can offer on a separate card or 'post-it' note and then these can be stuck on to a large piece of paper on a wall where everyone can see the growing collection. The cards can be colour coded to record which partner has made which particular offer. These cards can then be 'clustered' appropriately under headings and reviewed by the group - with more being added as new ideas occur.

Apart from the very tangible contributions this will yield, the process is also invaluable in building respect, understanding and teamwork between partners – all important pre-conditions of successful collaboration.

BOX 2   BUILDING A RESOURCE MAP

KEY: PS = Public sector   BS = Business sector   CS = Civil society   All = All sectors

Information (capture)
- Statistics / Legal framework (PS)
- Market analysis / Forecasting (BS)
- Local knowledge / Social conditions (CS)

People
- Specialist staff (All)
- Secondees (BS, PS)
- Volunteers (CS, BS)
- Students / Interns (PS)
- Administrative support (All)

Accommodation for
- Partnership / Project Office (All)
- Meetings / Workshops (All)
- High profile events (PS, BS)
- Storage (BS, PS)
- Project activities (All)
- Public information point (All)

Relationships with
- Donors (CS, PS)
- Policy makers (BS, PS)
- Suppliers / Labour organisations (BS)
- Religious institutions (CS)
- Community groups (CS)
- Umbrella organisations (BS, CS)
- Media (All)
- General public (PS, CS)

WHAT CAN EACH PARTNER BRING TO THE PARTNERSHIP?

Products
(depending on focus of project and on the businesses involved)

- Medicines (BS)
- Food (BS)
- IT (BS)
- Energy supplies (BS, PS) etc.

Expertise
- Technical experts (All)
- Project development (All)
- Training/capacity-building (All)
- Management (BS)
- Marketing (BS)
- Facilitation (CS)
- Convening (PS)

Other
- Transport (PS, BS)
- Equipment (PS, BS)
- Furniture (PS, BS)

Information (dissemination)
- Electronic communications systems (All)
- Word of mouth (All)
- Published materials (All)
- Networks (All)

REMEMBER

All sectors have human, technical and knowledge resources of one kind or another. They are often very different and highly complementary and when pooled they can provide much of the resource needed for the planned activities. Donors like to see evidence of resource contributions from partners - and many non-cash contributions can be given a financial value as 'matched funding'. Money should therefore always be seen as a last rather than a first requirement!

3 PARTNERING AGREEMENTS

SECURING PARTNER COMMITMENT

Partnerships are little more than dialogues until those involved have made a tangible commitment to collaboration. Such a commitment is typically recorded in some form of Partnering Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. The difference between an agreement and a contract is that an agreement is usually:

- Not legally binding
- Developed and agreed between the parties as equals
- Readily re-negotiable
- Open-ended (though sometimes a series of short-term agreements is more appropriate than an open-ended one)
- Entered into voluntarily

Effectively partners are creating an 'agreement to co-operate' and this may be all that they need to start working well together. At a later stage it may be necessary to create legally binding contracts in order to undertake a large-scale or complex project; to handle larger amounts of funding or to register as a new form of 'institution'. But a Partnering Agreement is usually the first step and in many instances it may be sufficient to confirm and consolidate the partnership medium to long-term.

INTEREST-BASED NEGOTIATION

Securing agreement requires negotiation - but in a partnering arrangement this is not negotiation in the sense of a 'hard-nosed' business deal. What is required is the opportunity for the underlying interests of all parties to be drawn out and discussed in a purposeful way that aims at building consensus and complementarity out of diverse aspirations.

Partners going through this form of negotiation need to exercise considerable patience, tact and flexibility - but if just one individual demonstrates their willingness to do this others will follow their lead.

REMEMBER

Interest-based negotiation is best served when those involved:
- Listen carefully
- Ask open (rather than closed) questions
- Summarise what has been said to see if they have understood correctly and
- Agree to disagree when necessary in order to move the discussion forward

BOX 3   INFORMAL VS FORMAL STRUCTURES

TYPE OF STRUCTURE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
INFORMAL		
WORKING GROUP A small number of people who agree to explore a partnership initiative on behalf of a wider group	• Greater freedom to explore ideas / intentions and to build new relationships	• Not being taken seriously enough by external agencies or other key players
FOCUS GROUP A small number of people who agree to take forward one specific aspect of a partnership's development	• Cheaper - the major resource demand is time rather than cash	• Too easily neglected when those involved are diverted by their other priorities
TASK GROUP Mandated by a larger group to complete a specific task (e.g., procure resources; manage a registration process)	• Non-bureaucratic	• Not structured enough for the co-ordination and management of resources
MORE FORMAL		
NETWORK A communications arrangement linking people who are engaged in similar activities	• Developing a greater profile	• Needs greater co-ordination
FORUM A meeting place for open debate and new ideas	• Providing an 'umbrella' for a wide range of loosely linked activities	• Requires more agreement on policies and operational principles
SOCIETY A membership organisation with a dedicated focus of activity	• Building commitment from a wider constituency	• More complex decision-making processes
FORMAL		
ASSOCIATION A more formal, registered version of a society	• Increased authority and capacity to exert influence	• Subject to legislative restrictions on action
FOUNDATION An association that mobilises and disseminates resources	• More focused activities and greater likelihood of sustainability	• Tendency to become over-bureaucratic and impersonal
AGENCY An independent organisation established to act on behalf of others	• Enhanced ability to mobilise and manage large-scale resources	• Increasingly high administrative (as opposed to project) costs

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Even at an early stage, partnerships will need to have governance structures in place to ensure that decision-making, management and development arrangements are appropriate and operate effectively.

Partners often find themselves accountable to a number of different 'stakeholders' including:

- Partnership project beneficiaries
- External (non-partner) donors
  (who will each have their own reporting requirements)
- Individual partner organisations (which will each have their own accountability and governance systems)
- Each other as partnering colleagues

It is likely that accountability is much more a **driver** of a partnership than is commonly recognised and for this reason, governance and accountability procedures need to be agreed and put at the heart of the Partnering Agreement.

To some extent, partners will have choices about what they do and how they do it. They may want to consider a range of options from completely informal arrangements (e.g., an *ad hoc* collection of individuals), to those that are highly formal (e.g., a new legally registered organisation with independent governance and accountability procedures) before choosing the most appropriate for their needs. But however informal a partnership, a Partnering Agreement is always necessary to avoid later misunderstandings and conflict. Most partnerships start informally and grow increasingly formalised over time as their programme of work becomes more complex and more resource intensive (see Box 3, page 14 and Box 4, page 20).

Tool 2:
COHERENCE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNIARE
– flags up the key questions partners should ask to check out their own and each other's intentions, attitudes and commitment to the partnership.

Tool 3:
SAMPLE PARTNERING AGREEMENT
– offers a simple template for initial partnering agreements.

NOTES

4 MANAGING THE PARTNERING PROCESS

Once a partnership is in place and a Partnering Agreement is signed, there are new challenges to face.

PARTNERING ROLES

Many people will be involved in the partnership in its different phases, taking on a range of roles as required. It is important to recognise the differences and to understand which roles are needed, at what stage and for what purpose. It is equally important to ensure that the best person is allocated to a particular role. Roles may change often during the life of a partnership and partners may 'grow' into new roles as they become more experienced in partnering.

ROLE	NOTES
CHAMPION	An individual (or several individuals) who promote the partnership using their personal / professional reputation and / or role to give the partnership greater authority or profile.
BROKER / INTERMEDIARY	An individual selected (either from one of the partner organisations or from outside the partnership) to act on behalf of the partners to build and strengthen the partnership - especially in its early stages.
DONOR	If all partners are making a contribution to the partnership (see section 2), all partners are *de facto* 'donors'. (Note: there may be many situations where donors are entirely external to the partnership - the partners will need to clarify how they relate and report to them without undermining the integrity of the partnership).
MANAGER	An individual appointed by the partnership on a paid basis to manage the partnership and / or the partnership project - especially once the partnership is established and is at the stage of project implementation.
FACILITATOR	An individual (usually external to the partnership) appointed to manage a specific aspect of the partnering process (e.g., a meeting set up to deal with a particular issue facing the partner group).
PROMOTOR	An individual, most likely a member of the partnership, who acts as an advocate for the partnership to others - a 'champion' who argues the merits of the partnership on the basis of its track record rather than their own personal reputation.

In this framework, leadership may move from one person to another according to what is required for the partnership's healthy development and management.

PARTNERS AS LEADERS

Partnerships raise interesting issues about leadership. What is the role of a 'leader' in a paradigm that is essentially collaborative and based on a notion of equity between the key players? Is collaboration between equals and the notion of strong leadership incompatible? How does leadership emerge and find expression in a partnership paradigm without undermining the principle of shared responsibility? How do partners carry the necessary leadership roles on behalf of the partnership within their organisation as well as the other way round?

Naturally, at different stages over the course of the partnering process one or other partner will take a more pro-active, more exposed and more public leadership role - and will be responsible and accountable to their partner colleagues for their actions. What kind of leadership style is chosen at a given moment largely depends on the type of partnership, the complexity of the current issue, the urgency of the required action, and the personalities of the people involved. Ideally, partnerships will include people with diverse leadership competencies, so that all the challenges the partnership faces over the course of its existence can be tackled by strong leadership, shared - as appropriate - between the different partners.

There are other leadership roles likely to be required during the partnering process including:

- Acting as 'guardian' of the partnership's mission (internally and externally) and being prepared to stand up for its values

- Coaching each other (directly and indirectly) in good partnering behaviour and partnership / project management

- Challenging each other's ways of looking at the world, of doing things, and of approaching difficult or contentious issues

- Empowering other members of the partnership to be pro-active, to innovate and to be allowed to make mistakes

- Creating hope and optimism when the process seems to be stuck.

In the early stages of the partnering process, it may be very useful to select an individual - either from one of the partner organisations or from outside the partnership - to act as broker or intermediary on behalf of the partners to build and strengthen the partnership. In his/her ability to combine a compelling vision with day-to-day practical implementation, the partnership broker epitomises a new style of leadership, operating as a catalyst for change by 'guiding' rather than 'directing'.

For any partnership to be effective and to deal successfully with challenges, it needs to be built on a strong foundation of individual commitment to partnering and on the conviction that a partnership approach is necessary to achieve the desired goal.

PARTNERING SKILLS

Successful partnering takes a range of skills - some may come naturally and others may need to be acquired – but those required for negotiation and mediation, facilitation and coaching of others, and the ability to work in teams, are crucial for all individuals who want to work together effectively and to achieve outstanding results. They may find themselves **negotiating** agreements or **mediating** between different partners or **facilitating** an awkward meeting. They will almost certainly need to **assimilate**, **record** and **disseminate** a lot of information. They may need to **coach** or **capacity–build** other partners, key players or project staff. Their remit on behalf of the partnership to deepen the involvement of their own organisation may well require skills in **building institutional engagement** or **institutional–strengthening**. Last, but not least, each partner will carry some responsibility for **evaluating** and **reviewing** the partnership and its impacts.

Of course, no one has all these skills in equal measure and in a partnership tasks can be distributed to take account of professional strengths and weaknesses.Individuals from each sector will bring different skills and professional competencies to the partnership and at an early stage tasks can be allocated to those who demonstrate that they are good at a particular kind of activity.

But working in a partnership also offers the opportunity for individuals to develop their skills and to build their own capacities - indeed it is one of the aspects of partnering that makes it attractive as a new area of work for those ready for a change in their professional life.

During the process of professional skills and capacity development, individuals often discover that the partnering process has not only taken them on a professional journey, but also on a personal adventure of self-discovery and development.

Partnering skills, however, are most easily acquired by those who already have a level of self-awareness and self-management. In other words, effective partnering requires people who can read and control their own emotions, who are quite confident, and who embody qualities such as empathy, optimism, imagination, open-ness and modesty. Partnerships also crucially require partners who are good at taking initiative.

Tool 4:
PARTNERING ROLES
AND SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE
– enables individuals involved
in partnering to assess their own
competencies and how they might
develop their professional
capacities to be even better
partners in future.

BOX 4   MANAGEMENT AND MANDATE OPTIONS

MANAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
CENTRALISED MANAGEMENT (i.e., management of partnership or project taken on by one partner organisation on behalf of the partnership)	• Maximum efficiency • Unambiguous decision-making procedures and day-to-day management systems • Familiar / conventional management approach • 'One-stop shop' for external agencies / individuals • Quicker response time	• Too distant from experience / potential contribution of other partners • Too much influence / control perceived to be in the hands of one partner • Too conventional for flexible needs of the partnership • May take decisions inappropriately quickly
DE-CENTRALISED MANAGEMENT (i.e., different aspects of management shared between the partner organisations)	• Maximum diversity at operational levels • More opportunities for individual leadership • Shared sense of 'ownership' • Moving away from conventional 'power bases' • Greater freedom of operation	• Greater potential for conflicts of interest • Partners / individuals feeling isolated • Cumbersome decision-making processes • Lack of coherence
MANAGEMENT BY MANDATE (i.e., specific tasks contracted on a case-by-case basis to individuals or single partner organisations who / which are answerable to the partners as a group)	• Allows for those who have most time (or care most about the task) to be given the role • Highly flexible approach that can be reviewed and changed as often as necessary • Shares tasks between partners and promotes a sense of collective responsibility	• Tasks need to be clearly defined and allocated appropriately • Highly dependent on individual's action and reliability • Risks individuals / single partner organisations 'doing their own thing' without adequate reference to the partner group

GOOD PARTNERING PRACTICE

USING LANGUAGE AS A PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING TOOL

The way in which partners use language can make or break a partnership. Each sector is riddled with its own 'jargon' that can be completely alienating to those who simply don't understand it. At least, partners need to be sensitive to how they are using language - consciously and conscientiously speaking in language that is appropriate, clear and concise. A few words well selected and communicated is worth far more than a lot of words that are obscure and confusing.

At best, well-chosen words can be used as tools to build consensus rather than allowing careless use of language to reinforce divisions. Some examples of useful distinctions in language can be drawn from partnership experience to date:

DIFFICULT CONCEPTS FOR PARTNERS	PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING ALTERNATIVE
Trust	Transparency
Profit	Benefit
Common objectives	Complementary objectives
Contract	Agreement
Business plan	Action plan
Funding	Resourcing
Sectoral priorities	Sectoral values
Committee	Focus / Working / Task group
Evaluation	Review
Market analysis	Scoping exercise
Consultation	Participation
Exit strategy	Moving on strategy

Distinctions are about how we understand and relate to the world. The ability to make distinctions is extremely important for effective partnering. It gives people greater freedom of thinking and acting, and leads to greater personal and professional success and satisfaction. A few more useful distinctions for individuals working in partnership are mentioned below:

WORKING FROM FACTS

The ability to distinguish between facts and the interpretation of those facts is extremely important for any life situation. It can be detrimental to any partnership if people's action is based on their interpretation of events rather than on the evidence of the events themselves.

BREAK-THROUGH NOT BREAK-DOWN

Break-downs can occur during any stage of the partnering process. Indeed, break-downs are natural by-products of any challenging process. In spite of this, break-downs can be de-motivating and are often seen as insurmountable hindrances. A break-**down** is not necessarily a bad thing but rather the interruption of a process which is trying to achieve something different. The challenge for partners is to see a break-down as an opportunity for a break-**through**.

REQUESTING VS. COMPLAINING

Making requests is a feature of all partnering. Usually people don't make enough requests, instead, they simply complain. But there is a big difference between the two. Complaints put people on the offensive. They are therefore disempowering and often lead to animosity rather than problem-solving. Requests, on the other hand, create a completely different situation. A request invites a response and action.

CREATING QUALITY PARTNERING CONVERSATIONS

Partnerships are, at one level, networks of conversations. And the quality of the conversations between partners will largely determine the effectiveness of the partnership. In conversations partners create the future. They are jointly creating a vision of where they want to go. They discuss what they stand for, what each of them is accountable for, and create an understanding of how they can rely on each other. Conversations are one of the most powerful tools for building transparency and subsequently trust among partners. It is in conversation with each other that problems can be turned into opportunities and practical activity is generated.

MANAGING MEETINGS WELL

Partnerships rely - especially in the early phases - on people meeting each other either on a one-to-one basis or as a partner group. Meetings easily become repetitive, tedious and un-productive if they are not highly focussed and well-managed. It is a particular skill to create a good meeting environment and to ensure that any meeting:

- Achieves its goals
- Keeps all parties actively engaged throughout
- Concludes all the items on the agenda
- Allocates follow-up tasks and timetables for completion
- Agrees decision-making procedures that will operate between meetings
- Alerts those present to issues to be addressed at a future meeting
- Summarises all decisions taken
  and, above all,
- Ends at the pre-agreed time

This comprehensive approach to meetings (whether formal or informal) will engender a sense that everyone's input is valued and their time constraints are respected.

At their best, meetings will also be able to operate as a partnership-building tool - through the way in which responsibilities for managing the meeting, such as chairing / facilitating / record-keeping, are shared. Other ways of making meetings meaningful and lively include:

- Allowing opportunities for social interaction
- Brainstorming a new and topical issue
- Inviting a very interesting guest speaker
- Sharing a relevant experience - perhaps a visit to a project or holding the meeting at the premises of a new partner organisation and seeing their work at firsthand
- Using the meeting for enhancing learning, by ending with a review of what worked well and what could be improved in the way the participants interacted.

If attendance at partner meetings begins to drop off, it should be taken as a sign that the meetings are no longer engaging or important enough for partners to make the effort to come - some drastic measures should be taken!

KEEPING RECORDS

Keeping good records of meetings and of the partnership's progress is an art - it is a bad idea to give the role of record-keeper to the least experienced or most junior person available. The great challenge is whether to record everything or simply the bare minimum. Each partnership will have to decide what it requires but some basic considerations include:

- Deciding in advance who needs what kind of information and in what form and then adapting the information appropriately for different purposes
- Reducing notes from meetings to a) decisions b) areas needing further discussion c) agreed action points
- Keeping a lively record of the partnership's 'history' (including illustrations / photographs) so that newcomers to the partnership will be able to understand what has been achieved and how
- Making as many of the written records as openly available as possible so that the partnership is recognised as efficient and transparent

CREATING A 'LEARNING' CULTURE

Most of those involved in partnerships agree that the partnerships that endure are ones that are most open to learning from their own and other's mistakes. Every partnership can be seen as a form of 'action learning' where the partners are learning by doing. To see all partnership activity as a form of research (in addition to being a delivery mechanism for achieving a task) is to give partners the opportunity for deepening and enhancing their knowledge, skills and professional practice. True collaboration transforms the individuals that engage in it consciously: partners help each other grow personally and professionally while accomplishing the objectives of the partnership.

In addition, every partnership will have much to teach others who aspire to creating collaborative approaches to sustainable development in their own areas of work. Many partnerships - even those that seem to be well established - have benefited from being part of a 'learning network' where experiences, good **and** bad, are shared.

SETTING GROUND RULES

Some simple 'base-line' rules agreed between partners can be very helpful when the partnership is new and different partners feel the need to assert themselves and their 'agendas' at the expense of giving space to others. Some partners, from the business and public sector especially, may find it strange to set rules for behaviour whereas their civil society colleagues are likely to think this quite natural and acceptable (an early encounter with sectoral diversity!).

Ground rules might include:

- Active listening
- Not interrupting
- Speaking briefly and to the point
- Dealing with facts not rumour
- Respecting those not present

Typically, in the early phases partners may need to remind each other about the agreed ground rules - it can take a while to break behaviour patterns! But over time the partnership will naturally adopt these new methods and the ground rules are simply there in the background as a gentle reminder. Newcomers to the partnership then quickly adapt to a modus operandi that they see working well.

Ground rules can even be written into the Partnering Agreement.

REMEMBER

Partnerships work well when:
• There are clear decision-making protocols / procedures agreed and in place
• Most day-to-day decisions are carried by individuals or small groups on behalf of the partnership
• Only major decisions (for example, of policy or expenditure) are brought to the partners as a whole group
• **There is regular, easily accessible and succinct information-sharing between the partners**

5 DELIVERING SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

Once the partnership is established and a Partnering Agreement in place, the partners will turn their attention to the development of their proposed project / programme of work or joint activities. This is the partnership getting down to business and marks a significant transition from a focus on partnership building to project development and implementation. Some partners will be far more comfortable with this phase because they like to get on with practical tasks and may have found the earlier phases irksome. Others will be anxious that the partnership is not yet robust enough to move from talk to action.

As with all projects, considerable attention will need to be paid to working out the details and a clear Action Plan is important to give a framework and milestones that all can agree on (see Box 5, page 26).

It may be useful at this stage to revisit the partnership's management arrangements and to adjust them if necessary (see Box 4, page 20).

KEEPING TO THE TASK

The most successful partnerships are those that are highly task-focussed – where all partners are actively engaged in delivering tangible and practical results. At this point it may be that a Co-ordinator or a Manager needs to be appointed to manage the project on behalf of the partners who are unlikely to have the time to do this on a day-to-day basis. One person certainly needs to have an overview of the delivery process and to ensure that project staff **and** partners are fulfilling their commitments well and on time. It is a measure of how far the partners have grown to trust each other if they can let go of the day-to-day details confident that the partnership-initiated programme of work is operating smoothly.

REPORTING, REVIEWING AND REVISING

Once the project or programme of work is up and running, the partners may decide to meet less frequently and, when they do meet, operate more as a review panel. A regular cycle of reporting will need to be in place to ensure the partners are informed of progress (and challenges). These reports, written or verbal, can form the basis of reviews both of the project and the partnership itself (see Section 7). The partners may want to review their own Partnering Agreement (say once a year) and alter it if necessary to reflect new priorities and aspirations.
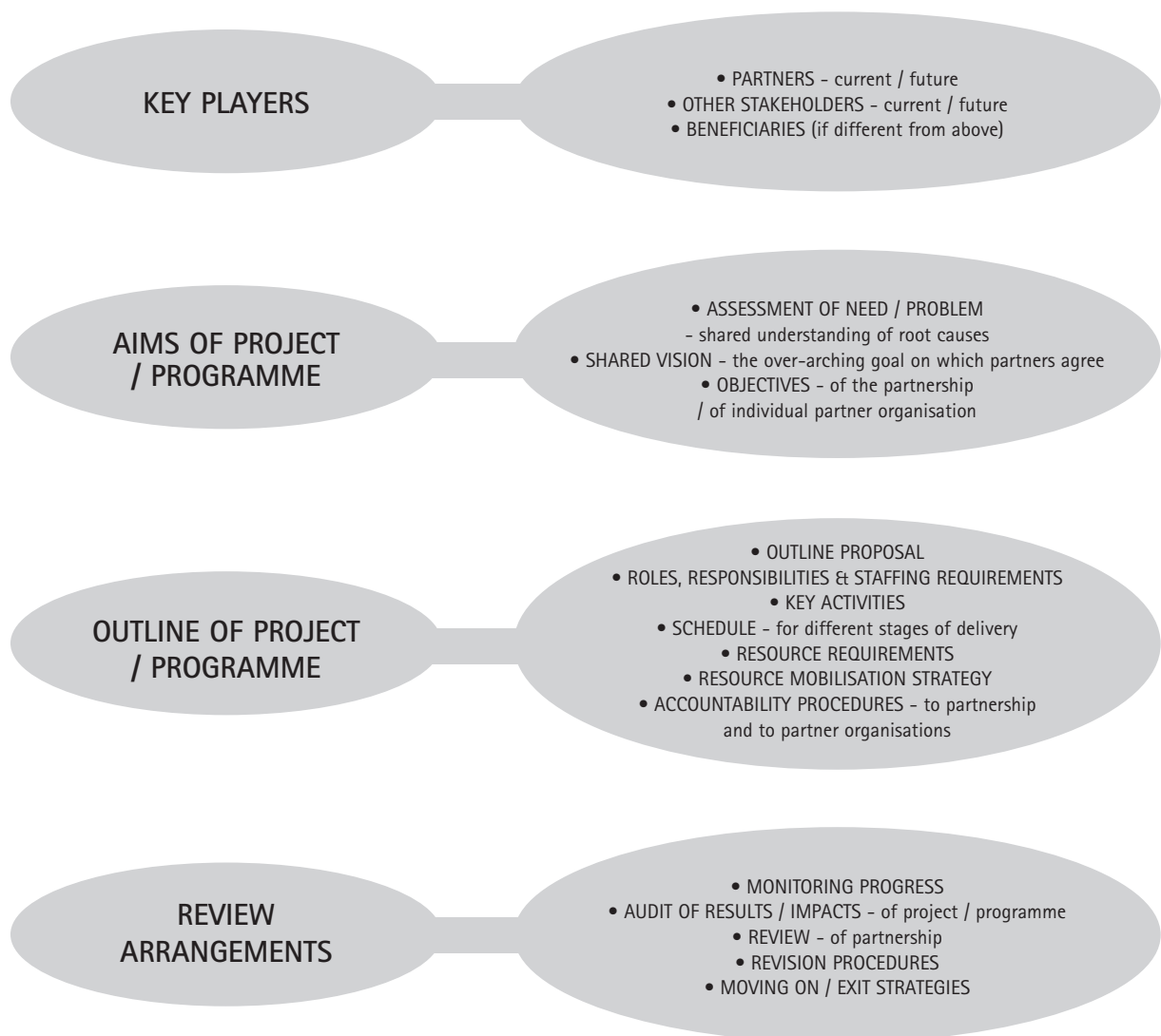
BOX 5   ACTION PLANNING

Action planning (sometimes known as Development Planning or Business Planning) is a familiar process to most professionals and there are many ways of approaching the task. In a partnership it is particularly important to remember that:

- All partners must be involved in the action planning process to feel a sense of commitment and 'ownership'
- Each individual will bring different skills and expectations to the task – managing this diversity may be time consuming but – at its best – it will add considerable value
- Each individual will need to consider the implications of the action plan for their own organisation and for their organisation's own planning process and priorities.

SAMPLE ACTION PLANNING FRAMEWORK

KEY PLAYERS

- PARTNERS – current / future
- OTHER STAKEHOLDERS – current / future
- BENEFICIARIES (if different from above)

AIMS OF PROJECT / PROGRAMME

- ASSESSMENT OF NEED / PROBLEM – shared understanding of root causes
- SHARED VISION – the over-arching goal on which partners agree
- OBJECTIVES – of the partnership / of individual partner organisation

OUTLINE OF PROJECT / PROGRAMME

- OUTLINE PROPOSAL
- ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & STAFFING REQUIREMENTS
- KEY ACTIVITIES
- SCHEDULE – for different stages of delivery
- RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS
- RESOURCE MOBILISATION STRATEGY
- ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES – to partnership and to partner organisations

REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

- MONITORING PROGRESS
- AUDIT OF RESULTS / IMPACTS – of project / programme
- REVIEW – of partnership
- REVISION PROCEDURES
- MOVING ON / EXIT STRATEGIES

REMEMBER

Action planning represents a significant point in a partnership – where the partnership relationship has been established and the focus of attention is moving from building the partnership to designing and delivering a collaborative programme of work. It is therefore vital it is done well or the partnership itself will be undermined.

6 SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

PLANNING FOR THE LONGER–TERM

One of the biggest challenges to partnership sustainability is the issue of long-term resourcing. Each situation will have different resource requirements and some initiatives may always be dependent on external funding. Wherever possible, however, local and renewable resourcing arrangements should be put in place. In many instances the partners take on a programme of work in a pioneering spirit and once their initiative has proved effective more permanent arrangements are made with, for example, local government or public sector agencies.

Partners, both individually and collectively, need to have a 'moving on' strategy in mind - possibly from the very beginning and even articulated in the initial partnering agreement. There can be four different 'moving on' scenarios:

'MOVING ON' SCENARIOS	COMMENTS
INDIVIDUAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS LEAVE THE PARTNERSHIP	In all partnerships there will be an issue of succession - the process of handing over from 'founders' to 'followers'. Individuals may leave the partnership (for whatever reason) at any time. Succession planning is therefore vital in order to: • Ensure the partnership survives the departure of individuals • Enable newcomers to catch up and fit in quickly • Enlist the active engagement of those who join later even though their operational style is likely to be different from their predecessor's
PARTNERSHIP DISBANDS (1)	Partners may decide that one of the partner organisations is now best placed to manage and develop the programme of work independently. In this case, the partners will agree to hand over the partnership's activities and assets to this partner. Perhaps key individuals from the other partner organisations may stay involved as trustees or in an advisory capacity but responsibility will no longer rest with the partnership itself.
PARTNERSHIP DISBANDS (2)	Partners decide to create a completely new cross-sector institution to take over the management and development of the partnership-based initiative. There are a number of choices here (see Box 6) and partners may need some external help in selecting the most appropriate one. As above, individuals from the partnership may take on trustee or advisory roles - at least during the handover phase.
PARTNERSHIP IS TERMINATED	Some of the most successful and innovative partnership initiatives are designed to be 'temporary' so termination of the partnership is a sign of achievement rather than failure (though it can be hard to convince those external to the partnership that this is the case). In some cases, inevitably, a partnership is terminated because it is unable to achieve its goals for whatever reason. If the steps outlined in this publication are followed, this should not happen! When a partnership ends - for whatever reason - it is important for all those involved to acknowledge and celebrate achievements.

SECURING GREATER ENGAGEMENT

Partners will always need to work hard to secure greater engagement from partner organisations and often also from other non-partner organisations.

With regard to partner organisations - it is not uncommon for a partnership to be quite peripheral to the very organisations in whose name it is operating. Why might this matter? Failure to engage partner organisations can mean (at best) a less vigorous and comprehensive involvement from the organisation and (at worst) the collapse of the partner relationship if one or two key players move on. It may well be that the active involvement of partner organisations is far more important than is generally realised.

And what of other non-partner institutions?

There are several other institutions or agencies for whom the partnership may be important and who therefore need to understand and become more engaged with the partners in a number of ways. These include:

- INSTITUTIONS OPERATING AT STRATEGIC / POLICY LEVELS
  (e.g., government departments, political parties,
  international agencies)

- ORGANISATIONS AT OPERATIONAL LEVELS
  (e.g., other companies, public sector agencies
  and civil society organisations)

- DONORS (resource providers external to the partnership)

Partners will need to assess how important each of these different relationships is, either in terms of enabling the partnership to have more impact, or in terms of being influenced by the partnership in the way they operate.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

How do partners help to build the capacity of those institutions involved? It is a question of helping institutions to internalise the partnership's lessons. Sometimes it is simply a matter of time, but more often it is a case of combating active or passive resistance. There are several different approaches partners can employ to build greater institutional capacity in the institutions and organisations involved directly or indirectly in the partnership. These can include bringing their experiences of cross-sector collaboration into the institutions in order to build:

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE	• Demonstrating that other organisations do things differently (and sometimes more effectively) • Providing evidence of the value of an organisational 'learning' culture • Promoting more values-based organisational approaches • Persuading managers that more participatory approaches can work efficiently
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	• Demonstrating that cross-sector collaboration can improve professional performance • Engaging employees in practical ways in the partnership initiative(s) • Persuading managers that the organisation can benefit from their employees involvement in cross-sector collaboration
DYNAMIC NETWORKS	• Demonstrating the value to the organisation of these new relationships and the diversity of their reach and influence • Illustrating the potential for new relationships / ideas / areas of work • Bringing key others into the organisation in creative and useful ways
BETTER COMMUNICATIONS	• Endorsing the organisation through good publicity for the partnership's achievements • Using internal communications systems to keep people engaged and informed • Creating special events for other people to illustrate the benefits of the partnership (especially to organisational sceptics)
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING 'OUT OF THE BOX'	• Providing opportunities for key players to have a direct, first-hand experience of the partnership's work • Setting up and managing encounters between key people who do not usually meet (and may have a record of mutual dislike or suspicion) • Creating new 'experiential learning' opportunities (e.g., job swaps, secondments, internships, partnering workshops)

In some situations it may be appropriate to create a completely new kind of institution to take over the role of the partners medium to long-term (Box 6, page 30 describes seven different types of partnership 'institution' that have evolved over the past decade - formalising to a greater or lesser extent the different models of cross-sector engagement outlined in Box 3, page 14).

BOX 6 BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTIONS

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS
LOCAL ALLIANCE	Partners from all main sectors given equity of involvement and decision-making responsibility within an independent formal structure operating locally	• Strong sense of local ownership and self-determination • Builds and institutionalises local collaboration
GLOBAL ALLIANCE	As above but operating internationally	• Economies of scale • Builds strategic links between players who together bring power, resources and influence
DISPERSED	Partners have agreed a common aim but they rarely meet face-to-face. Instead they operate by different partners (or sub-groups of partners) being mandated to complete tasks on behalf of the partnership to which they are ultimately accountable	• Maximum flexibility • Freedom of operation and self-determination for partners
TEMPORARY	The partnership structure is designed for obsolescence. It is time-specific and therefore dispensed with once the agreed programme of work is completed	• Intensity of involvement • Focus on immediate and visible results
CONSULTATIVE	The 'task' of the partnership institution is to provide advice and / or a sounding board for new ideas rather than to develop and implement a project	• Built into the political process • Authority drawn from consensus rather than power base
INTERMEDIARY	An organisation operating between and on behalf of partners and many other players. Essentially it supports the development of a number of independent partnership initiatives rather than being a partnership itself	• A highly 'empowering' model • Helps to build a 'culture' of collaboration • Creates appropriate and flexible support structures
LEARNING	The partnership is established with the primary goal of learning and sharing information arising from partnership experiences	• Flexible • Building knowledge and capacity as a primary aim

So partners need to address whether their efforts are best spent engaging institutions more effectively; building the capacity of existing institutions or creating a new institutional structure. In fact, a partnership may - over time - need to do all three things.

And - ultimately - it may become more a question of institutional **reform**.

We turn to a cross-sector partnership to create an approach to sustainable development that will be more innovative and far-reaching in social, economic and / or environmental terms than single sector approaches. But if the partnership fails to challenge and ultimately change entrenched institutional / sectoral behaviour then it is likely that its impacts will be merely transitory or superficial.

At some stage it will become clear that partnerships have a potentially major role to play in, directly or indirectly, reviewing and revising the central values, roles and primary activities of the different sectors - whether public, private or civil society.

Institutional reform may be a more important outcome of the partnership than any other. In other words, if the partnership leads to a government department functioning more creatively or efficiently; or to a corporation contributing more rigorously and systematically to sustainable development in all aspects of its operations; or to an NGO having much larger-scale and more credible impact as an organisation then the 'outcomes' of the partnership will have become significantly more substantial that its 'outputs'.

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7 SUCCESSFUL PARTNERING

DEFINING SUCCESS

What does a successful partnership look like? Who defines 'success'? How is it measured? Partnering and partnership-based projects are invariably complex and can therefore be very challenging to evaluate. Outputs, outcomes and impacts are usually diverse, sometimes quite subtle and often unexpected. In this publication we address the specific issue of assessing the partnership, we assume that the projects will be evaluated in the way that all development projects are - according to criteria laid down by donors / partners at the beginning. Our primary concern here is the effectiveness of the partnership from the perspective of the partnering organisations.

Partners are likely to need to measure or assess three things. These are:
- Impacts of their partnership project on society
- Value of the partnership to the individual partner organisations
- Actual costs and benefits of the partnership approach

Only by looking at all three will it be possible to evaluate whether the:
- Partnership has been effective in achieving its aims
- Partners have truly benefited from their involvement
- Partnership approach was the best / most appropriate choice

Collecting the information on which to make a judgement about the partnership's effectiveness is in itself a challenging process. Most partnerships that have reached the stage of being evaluated tend to distinguish between measuring the impacts of the partnership projects and assessing the value of the partnership to the partner organisations.

It is reasonable to expect that the projects and activities can be evaluated using fairly conventional methods based on outputs and statistics, but assessing the value of the partnership itself demands a somewhat different approach. To assess a collaborative and participatory venture requires a collaborative and participatory research process, if the integrity of the partnership itself is to be respected and maintained.

So what would a successful partnership look like? A successful partnership might have any, several or all of the following characteristics:

- **The partnership is doing what it set out to do** - the project or programme of activities has achieved pre-agreed objectives

- **The partnership is having impact beyond its immediate stakeholder group** - there is some recognition of achievement from project beneficiaries, key others and / or the wider community

- **The partnership is sustainable and self-managing** - either through the continuing engagement of partner organisations or through a self-sustaining mechanism that has replaced the partnership, enabling partners to move on to other things

- **The partnership has had 'added value' in which individual partners have gained significant benefits** - partner organisations have established new ways of working with other sectors and / or have had their own systems and operational styles improved

BOX 7

TELLING THE STORY

Once upon at time...

Partnerships start out as stories inside our heads, and end up as stories out in the world. In the voyage from the ideal to the real, we begin with the imagination. While we imaginatively conceive an initiative, we must also be able to share the story in a way that engenders lively interest and enthusiasm in others.

Sharing our experience without recourse to imagination can make partnering sound like a painting-by-numbers exercise. The process is reduced to a series of strategic manoeuvrings, to statistical descriptions, to factual analysis. While such stories have their place, they offer little by way of inspiration. To be truly moved, we need to know that something meaningful is at stake and that in trying to bring a vision to life we run real risks.

To tell the story of a partnership is to recount an adventure, a quest to achieve something both unique and universal. Unique because no one has made this particular journey before. Universal because every partnership sets sail upon an unknown sea, seeking a destination that is far from safe or certain. There is indeed a prize to be won, but there is also the very real danger that the partnership will founder long before the end is reached.

In communicating this journey it is important not to skip over the obstacles faced - be they half-submerged problems that surfaced early on, stone-throwing cynics who argued for a less co-operative approach, or monstrous errors of judgement which had to be faced and worked through. The most engaging stories maintain a tension between good and evil, between the possibility of success and the possibility of failure. Ensure that mistakes as much as successes are allowed to appear as fully-fledged characters. We - the audience - desperately want to hear about the near misses, the last minute cliff-hanging efforts to secure agreement.

If there is one key piece of advice, it is this: allow for the heroic. It is easy to be modest; to discount what has been achieved. Cross-Sector Partnerships, however, are far from commonplace. True partnerships are the stuff of legends. Think of the Fellowship of the Ring. In making a conscious choice to operate as a partnership, to overcome barriers, to do what it takes to achieve the goal - all this is still a rarity, unusual, exceptional.

This doesn't mean using flowery language or overly dramatic phrases. It does mean not reducing achievements to just the facts. Allow us to marvel at what's been accomplished. Equally, help us to see that partnership is truly an ideal worth aspiring to.

In the end, having stayed the course, fought the dragons, sailed triumphantly home, no-one is ever the same again. The experience has left its mark. Confronting doubts and working through the difficulties has brought new learning, new strength and new understanding. In practising the art and craft of partnering we have transformed our organisations and ourselves - in other words - our world.

This is always a story worth telling.

- **The partnership has made a useful contribution to the global partnership movement** - information about the partnership is widely available in the public domain for others to build on in their own ways

The important thing here is that, at an early stage of their partnership, partners agree on a number of indicators (both tangible 'deliverables' and broader 'process' indicators) and use these as a basis for tracking the effectiveness of their partnership over time. Ideally, indicators should cover partner-specific as well as shared goals.

SHARING GOOD EXPERIENCES

If your partnership has been successful and productive then spread the word - but make sure you wait until you have a convincing and real story to tell. When you do decide to 'go public' tell the story well (see Box 7, page 34) and make sure you select the best 'story-tellers' from your partnership's network.

Who is it that might be interested in whether or not the partnership has been successful?

There are a number of potential 'internal' and 'external' audiences for this information:

<table>
<tr><td>'INTERNAL'
AUDIENCES</td><td>Partnership project beneficiaries
Partners and staff involved in the partnership
Their respective line managers
Senior management within the partner organisations
Selected departments within the partner organisations
Operational staff facing similar challenges elsewhere</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>'EXTERNAL'
AUDIENCES</td><td>External donors
Policy makers
Bi-lateral, regional or multi-lateral agencies
Relevant 'umbrella' organisations
Media / general public
Key others - including those who might join the partnership or who might develop their own partnership inspired by this one</td></tr>
</table>
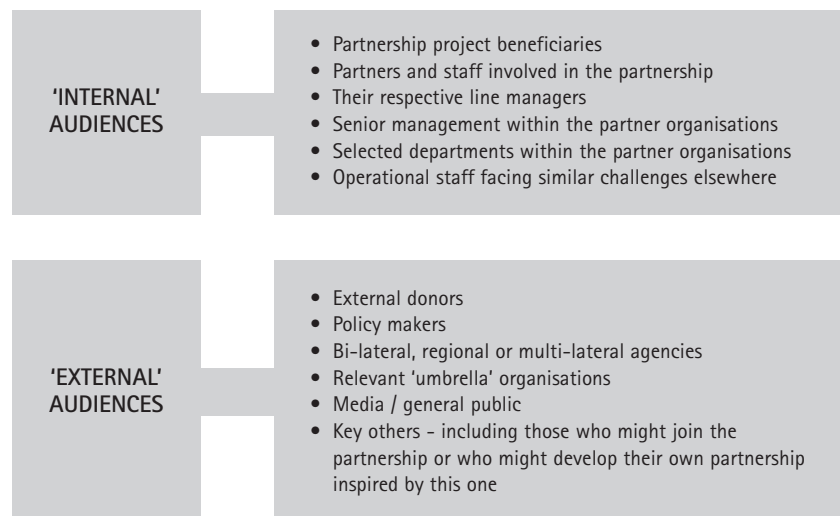
It is important to impart information in the right way for the different audiences. An external donor will expect a formal report. The public will want a story with a personal dimension. Policy makers will like statistics. Potential partners will want to know how current partners have benefited from their involvement. A successful partnership will understand who needs what kind of information and will find methods for communicating to different audiences in many different ways.

COLLABORATION IN A COMPETITIVE WORLD

Partnerships offer a real alternative approach to sustainable development by substituting collaboration for competition.

No partnership is ever easy, comfortable, secure, safe, quick or cheap. But with a lot of good management, some good will and a little determination, cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development can work well and may achieve a great deal more than single sector approaches to the same issue.

Finally, there are just three 'golden rules' that should help to keep partnering on track when the going gets tough...

REMEMBER

Golden rule 1 – BUILD ON SHARED VALUES
(because successful partnerships are values-driven)

Golden rule 2 – BE CREATIVE
(because every partnership is unique)

Golden rule 3 – BE COURAGEOUS
(because all partnerships involve risk)

Above all, never forget that however tough things get - in the words of Nigerian author, Ben Okri: "Human beings are blessed with the necessity of transformation". A cross-sector partnership has the potential to be an excellent mechanism for economic, environmental and social transformation.

Good Luck in making your partnership work towards this goal!

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TOOL 1

PARTNER ASSESSMENT FORM

A 'prompter' enabling those creating a partnership to ask systematic questions of any potential partner to ensure a good fit with the goals / needs of the partnership. This tool should be used as a starting point for exploring a potential relationship by providing a basis for frank discussions with the key players involved at both senior and operational levels. It is designed to raise appropriate questions - not to provide definitive 'screening'.

DOES THE PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANISATION HAVE…	CURRENT STATUS A review of: • What you know so far • The reliability of your sources of information • Whether you have enough information upon which to base a decision	FURTHER ACTIONS A note of: • Further information required • Remaining concerns • Timetable and criteria for making a decision about suitability
1. A good track record?		
2. Reasonable standing / respect within their own sector?		
3. Reasonable standing / respect from other sectors and other key players?		
4. Wide-ranging and useful contacts they are willing to share?		
5. Access to relevant information / resources / experience?		
6. Skills and competencies that complement those of your organisation and / or other partners?		
7. Sound management and governance structures?		
8. A record of financial stability and reliability?		
9. A stable staff group?		
10. Sticking power when things get tough?		
ARE THE STAFF IN THE PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANISATION . . .		
11. Experienced and reliable in the development of projects?		
12. Successful at mobilising and managing resources?		
13. Good communicators and team players?		

TOOL 2 — COHERENCE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Individual leaders' intentions, attitudes and commitments

- Do I view the partnering approach as crucial to achieve our goals?
- Do I believe that my partners want the partnership to succeed?
- Am I committed to the outcomes of the partnership?
- Am I willing to challenge my assumptions?
- Do I value the differences among us?
- Do I trust my partners to make appropriate decisions on my behalf?

2. Individual leaders' behaviours

- Am I an advocate for the partnership approach?
- Do I listen actively to my partners?
- Do I adhere to the partnership's principles?
(e.g., equity, transparency, mutual benefit) in my daily behaviour?
- Do I seek and give helpful feedback from / to my partners?
- Do I follow through on my commitments?
- Do I show respect for my partners even when they are not present?
- Do I support the development needs of my partners?
- Do I acknowledge my partners for their accomplishments?

3. Partnership's mindsets, values and norms

- Do we share an understanding of the benefits and risks of partnering?
- Are we aligned around a shared vision and shared values?
- Do we freely share our ideas even when they are at odds with others?
- Are we open to changing our viewpoint about other stakeholders?
- Are we giving each other the benefit of the doubt?
- Have we developed a culture of transparency among ourselves and around the partnership?
- Are we continually looking for opportunities to learn, change, and improve?

4. Partnerships' structures, systems and strategies

- Is our partnering agreement clear and well understood by everyone?
- Are incentives in place for the partners to think and act for the benefit of the partnership?
- Do we have the skills, competencies and technologies to succeed in our joint efforts?
- Do we have the structures and ground rules in place to work effectively together?
- Are we freely sharing information with our stakeholders?
- Are our strategic priorities clear to everyone concerned?
- Do we set and respect high standards of quality in everything we do?
- Are we bringing the best and most complementary resources to make the partnership successful?
- Do we institutionalise the partnership so that it can continue working without us?

Framework adapted from "A Brief History of Everything", Ken Wilber, Shambhala Publications.

TOOL 3

1.0 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1.1 Partner A
Contact details
Contact person

1.2 Partner B
Contact details
Contact person

1.3 Partner C
Contact details
Contact person

2.0 STATEMENT OF INTENT

2.1 We, the undersigned, acknowledge a common commitment to / concern About…

2.2 By working together as partners, we see the added value each of us can bring to fulfil this commitment / address this concern

2.3 Specifically we expect each partner to contribute to the project in the following way(s):
Partner A…
Partner B…
Partner C…
All partners…

3.0 STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Partner roles and responsibilities…

3.2 Co-ordination and administration…

3.3 Working groups / committee(s) / advisory group(s)…

3.4 Decision-making processes…

3.5 Accountability arrangements…

4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 We will provide the following resources to
a) the partnership and
b) the project…

5.0 AUDITS / REVIEWS / REVISIONS

5.1 We agree to make available all information relevant to this partnership to partners as necessary

5.2 We agree to review the partnership every … months

5.3 An independent audit of the financial arrangements of the partnership(and any projects resulting from the partnership)will be undertaken on an annual basis

5.4 We agree to make adjustments to the partnership (including re-writing this agreement) should either a review or an audit indicate that this is necessary for the partnership to achieve its objectives

6.0 CAVEATS

6.1 This agreement does not permit the use of copyright materials (including logos) or the dissemination of confidential information to any third party without the written permission of the partner(s) concerned

6.2 This agreement does not bind partner organisations or their staff / officers to any financial or other liability without further formal documentation

SIGNED

_____
on behalf of Partner A

_____
on behalf of Partner B

_____
on behalf of Partner C

DATE _____

PLACE _____

TOOL 4

PARTNERING ROLES & SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for individuals involved in partnerships to assess their own partnering skills -in order to build confidence about skills strengths and strategies to address any skills weaknesses. It can be used by the partners as a group to build a picture of the competencies within the partnership and to identify which individual is best equipped to undertake which tasks / roles. It can also be a tool for enabling partners to recognise when specific skills might need to be brought in from outside the partnership.

ROLES ASSESSMENT (1 = low, 5 = high)

KEY ROLES IN PARTNERSHIPS	Assessment of current capacity in this area	Strategy for improvement (if necessary)
Partnership / project 'championship'	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Awareness raising	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Co-ordination / Administration	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Relationship management	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Resource mobilisation	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Project / programme planning	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Project / programme management	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Communications	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Monitoring	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Other (specify)	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	

SKILLS ASSESSMENT (1 = low, 5 = high)

KEY ROLES IN PARTNERSHIPS	Assessment of current capacity in this area	Strategy for improvement (if necessary)
Negotiation	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Mediation	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Facilitation	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Synthesising information	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Coaching / capacity-building	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Institutional engagement	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Institution-strengthening	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Evaluating / reviewing	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
Other (specify)	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	

REMEMBER

Skills can be developed and roles can change over the lifetime of a partnership. The more each individual can develop their professional capacities and take on new tasks, the more they will feel engaged and valued within the partnership. Partnerships can work well because they provide new opportunities and allow individuals to get 'out of the box' of their day-to-day operational style.

Conversation for Generating Possibility

A Conversation for Generating Possibility is a conversation to envisage the future as a rich scenario of inspiring possibilities. It is about sharing creative and imaginative ideas. Questions of feasibility are of no concern at this stage. Rather, a Conversation for Possibility is intended to bring out intuitive and aspirational views of how the best possible future might appear.

A Conversation for Generating Possibility will be most appropriate during the early stages of the Partnering Process, when partners are working together to create a vision, but it can also be applied later on as the partnership is being renewed. It should be conducted as a brain-storming session around a set of specific strategic and open questions that encourage reflection and imagination, and do not elicit simple 'yes' and 'no' answers.

A Conversation for Possibility should continue for at least 15 minutes, although it could last up to an hour. Examples of suitable 'open' questions include:

What would a break-through in ... (insert theme or desired outcome) mean?
What would a break-through in ... (insert theme or desired outcome) make possible?
What are you / we building with this initiative?

Conversation for Generating Opportunity

A Conversation for Opportunity is concerned with generating concrete joint commitment for break-through action. It is a conversation about shared accountabilities. It is through such a conversation that partners arrive at agreement about which of the possibilities that have been created earlier constitute concrete opportunities for the future and could be realistically pursued by the partners.

A Conversation for Opportunity invites people to answer the following question:

What can you declare that at the end of this initiative would be a break-through?

Once this question has been discussed for at least fifteen minutes, partners can move on to develop a shared Partnership Commitment Statement (not to be confused with a Partnering Agreement). The Statement might begin with an opening statement such as:

We are / Our partnership is… committed to ...

Each partner is asked to write down what he/she thinks that the commitment statement should be. This is then shared with the other partners and the strengths (not the weaknesses) of each statement are discussed. The group will choose the statement they consider best to work on further and then continue to amend it together as a group until it adequately reflects the commitment of all partners, and everybody is fully satisfied.

Conversation for Generating Action

A Conversation for Generating Action can be held at all stages of the Partnering Process, whenever joint or individual action is required. It helps to clarify individual responsibilities and to create a common understanding of who is accountable for what. It also helps to take the Partnering Process a step further, turning possibilities and opportunities into concrete activities. The key opening question might be: *Who will take what actions, by when?*

It is recommended that written notes are kept of the individual commitments made and that these are copied to each partner. This will enable the partners to hold each other accountable later on.

Conversation for Completion

Being 'complete' with something means being 'whole' with it. Completion not only applies when terminating a certain process, but it is equally important that partnerships are complete on an on-going basis. This helps to promote understanding and create alignment between the partners. A Conversation for Completion can therefore be conducted at all stages of the Partnering Process. Partners can usefully ask themselves (and each other) the following questions and undertake further activities based on the answers given:

What is left to accomplish in order for us to say that the partnership has been successful or is finished?
What actions do we need to take to achieve this?
Who will do what, by when?

What promises or commitments have we made but not yet delivered on?
Who will do what actions, by when, to complete these?

Who wants/needs to be apprised of the status/outcome of the partnership?
What will we do to communicate this to them?

Who might be angry, annoyed, irritated or disappointed with us or with our activities?
How will we complete this with them?

Who has contributed to the partnership and its activities?
How will we acknowledge them and their contribution?

What else will we do to be complete (i.e., whole) with our initiative?

TOOL 6

This is designed as a tool for reviewing the partnership to assess whether it is achieving the goals / expectations of the individual partner organisations. It is essentially a 'health check' of the partnership rather than a more formal audit of the project or programme the partners have undertaken.

AIMS	POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES
To offer partners an opportunity to reflect on the value of the partnership from their own organisation's perspective	• **1:1 conversations** with key players from each partner organisation undertaken by a nominated 'reviewer' that are then written up as a narrative for partners to discuss • **Group workshop** – run separately within each partner organisation – undertaking a SWOT analysis (exploring Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the partnership) which are then 'matched' across the different partner organisations • **Meetings in pairs** (2 individuals from different partner organisations meeting as 'critical friends') for a frank exchange of views that are then shared at a partners' meeting / workshop
To assess what – if any – changes would improve the effectiveness of the partnership	• **Change of focus** – can be explored through a 'futures workshop' or a 'scenario planning exercise' where partners are invited to do some 'blue skies' thinking • **Re-definition of roles and responsibilities** – partners invited to undertake a roles / skills re-assessment (see Tool 3) and re-assigning responsibilities between partners to tackle new tasks differently • **Institutionalisation** – engaging a larger number of people from the partner organisations in the partnership in new ways
To agree as a group to any revisions to the partnership agreement to take account of the findings of the review process	• **Re-writing the Partnering Agreement** to reflect new goals; changes of focus or new activities • **Expanding the partnership** – either by incorporating new partners or by publicising its activities and achievements and supporting others in creating similar initiatives • **Developing a termination or moving on strategy** – for the project, or the partnership, or one or more of the partner organisations. Moving on can mean 'job well done' it does not have to be interpreted as failure. A healthy partnership copes with closure / changes / departures in a creative and positive way

REMEMBER

It may be important for a number of reasons to publicise a partnership and / or its activities and these reasons need to be taken into account, but 'going public' too soon can put a lot of pressure on a partnership and can have some unexpectedly negative impacts. Partners need to assess the risks and benefits of publicising their work and ensure that all partners concur with and adhere to an agreed strategy.

TOOL 7

INFORMATION	Name of initiative, partner details, other stakeholder details, key dates, location
HISTORY	What key issues led to the partnership initiative? Who started it? What were the agreed core principles / values underpinning it? What were its aims and objectives? What were the first steps?
ACTIVITIES	What has the partnership undertaken? How were activities managed? What have been the outcomes and outputs to date? What more is anticipated?
ROLES	Who were the key individuals involved and what were their roles? How did they change over time?
ACCOUNTABILITY	In what ways is the initiative accountable? How is its impact / effectiveness measures assessed? How is the partnership reviewed? What is the process for making key decisions – including changes?
CHALLENGES	What have been the main challenges encountered during the partnership's lifetime? How have they been dealt with? What challenges remain?
RESOURCES	How is the initiative resourced (cash and non-cash in-puts)? Is there funding from any external source(s)? If so, from where and what proportion of the budget does this represent? To what extent are resources renewable and / or is the initiative sustainable? Now? At some stage in the future?
THE FUTURE	What are the immediate development plans? Are there longer-term plans in place? Do partners have a 'moving on' strategy? Does the initiative have a finite term of operation? What time-scale is envisaged for moving on or termination strategies?
ACHIEVEMENTS	What are the main achievements?
CONTACT DETAILS	Who can be contacted for further information and how?

REMEMBER

In conducting interviews with key people in order to access information don't forget to:

- Tell the interviewee(s) who you are and why you are asking these questions
- Use 'open' rather than 'closed' questions – open questions invite a description; closed questions invite a 'yes' or 'no' response
- Be an active listener – listen attentively and don't be mentally preparing your next question
- Write your notes during a break in conversation so that you are looking at the interviewee(s) and not at your notebook while they are speaking
- Feed back what you have heard to make sure you have understood correctly and to enable the interviewee(s) to add anything they may have forgotten.

TOOL 8

POTENTIAL AUDIENCES	COMMUNICATIONS OPTIONS	POTENTIAL MESSAGES
Partners ☐	Conversations ☐	*"We have learnt the value of working collaboratively - you should try it!"* ☐
Project staff ☐	Public meetings ☐	
Other staff in partner ☐	Workshops ☐	*"We have tackled a major issue and been more effective than other approaches that have been tried in the past "* ☐
organisations ☐	Capacity-building ☐	
Project stakeholders ☐	activities ☐	
Project beneficiaries ☐	High profile events ☐	*"Our evidence demonstrates that this intervention has had real and positive impacts on those who need it most "* ☐
Community group(s) ☐	Site visits ☐	
Non-partner donors ☐	Print media ☐	*"It is all a question of leadership and a determination to work together to make a difference"* ☐
Public figures ☐	Radio / TV ☐	
Policy makers ☐	Video / DVD ☐	*"This approach is cost effective and sustainable"* ☐
Local / regional / national government ☐	Internet ☐	
Potential new partners ☐	CD Rom ☐	*"This is a local solution to a local challenge"* ☐
National organisations ☐	Written case studies ☐	
Academic institutions ☐	Newsletters ☐	*"This form of collaboration allows for greater participation and empowerment for those we seek to help"* ☐
International agencies ☐	Publications ☐	
Other? ☐	Other? ☐	Other? ☐

REMEMBER

It may be important for a number of reasons to publicise a partnership and / or its activities and these reasons need to be taken into account, but 'going public' too soon can put a lot of pressure on a partnership and can have some unexpectedly negative impacts. Partners need to assess the risks and benefits of publicising their work and ensure that all partners concur with and adhere to an agreed strategy.

References

The Partnering Toolbook has drawn on material from three earlier publications:

- Managing Partnerships: Tools for Mobilising the Public Sector, Business and Civil Society as Partners in Development, Ros Tennyson
Published: The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, 1998

- The Guiding Hand: Brokering Partnerships for Sustainable Development, Ros Tennyson and Luke Wilde
Published: United Nations Office of Public Information, 2000

- Institutionalising Partnerships: Lessons from the Front Line, Ros Tennyson
Published: International Business Leaders Forum, 2003

Further inspiration has come from:

- The Way of Being Free, Ben Okri
Published: Phoenix

- A Brief History of Everything, Ken Wilber
Published: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

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GAIN

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a global and regional alliance of public, private and civil society partners committed to eliminating vitamin and mineral deficiencies. By 2007, GAIN aims to have contributed to the improved nutritional status of at least 600 million people in up to 40 developing countries, primarily through facilitating fortification of commonly available and consumed local foods. GAIN also aims to energise and harmonise the work of governments, bilateral donors, UN agencies, the private sector as well as public health and development organisations working to reduce micronutrient malnutrition.

More information: www.gainhealth.org

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build better lives. UNDP is active in 166 countries, working with them on developing and implementing their own solutions to global and national development challenges. World leaders have pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the overarching goal of cutting poverty in half by 2015. UNDP's network links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach these goals.

More information: www.undp.org

IAEA

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the global focal point for nuclear cooperation within the United Nations family. Its programme, dedicated to helping its Member States achieve their social and economic goals, is focused on many activities that serve basic human needs by applying nuclear science to improve health care (nutrition, cancer treatment, communicable diseases etc.), increase food production, improve management of water resources and assess sources of environmental pollution.

More information: www.iaea.org

IBLF

The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is a not for profit organisation established in 1990 to promote responsible business practices that benefit business and society and contribute to sustainable development. The IBLF believes that business has a significant role to play in addressing the downsides of globalisation: poverty, social inequity and environmental degradation. With a membership of over 80 companies from around the world, the IBLF works at strategic levels as well as in developing / transitional countries. IBLF has established an international reputation in its cutting edge cross-sector partnership building work.

More information: www.iblf.org