

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

An Inclusive, Cross-Sector Approach

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Abstract

Cross-sector partnerships are increasingly being seen as a key development approach for the 21st Century, with many governments and international agencies viewing them as the most effective way to deal with complex and intractable development problems that have defeated single-sector interventions.

However, partnerships are not a straightforward option. Some see them as merely a “phase of policy experimentation” (Geddes, 2000, p797) – a short-term response to rapid global change. There can also be issues of accountability and power imbalance, when un-elected corporations and NGOs have influence in states where governments are weak or failing. Even where they are the best solution, there can be real obstacles in both the development and management of partnerships which are too easily ignored.

This research draws on the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry’s (CPI’s) many years’ experience of partnership work – and in particular on the experiences of those running and participating in the Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (PCCP) course.

Through exploring the experiences of these partnership practitioners, together with current thinking on the topic, the paper concludes that, if we are relying on partnerships to bring about structural change and long-term development impacts, then they need to be firmly tied into genuinely inclusive consultation processes, operate within accountability frameworks, be properly supported and evaluated, and where appropriate lead ultimately to policy change.

Introduction

Following the perceived shortcomings of the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programmes in developing countries, public/private partnerships or tri-sector partnerships are perceived as a more sustainable option, with donor agencies giving direct budget support to governments, along with the encouragement of partnership between development agencies, national governments and business. Tennyson asserts (2004, p3) 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.”

The increasing popularity of partnership as a development solution, however, makes it all the more important to take a realistic view and to test the assumptions made about it. Two common pitfalls need to be avoided:

1. that the act of setting up a partnership is seen in itself as having taken action on a problem, irrespective of its appropriateness or outcomes; and
2. that cross-sector partnership is seen as a friendly, straightforward solution to development issues, resisting efforts to problematise, question or test its effectiveness.

Unless a more robust and realistic approach is taken to partnering as a development approach, then it risks suffering a backlash from unmet, unrealistic expectations which could result in its positive potential being lost. For this reason, we have endeavoured to take a critical approach to the findings of this study and look at ways in which partnership can, if it is to offer a successful way of aiding inclusive development, be supported through planning and policy.

In order to achieve this, we look first at what “partnership” means and what kinds of partnership contributed to the study. We then explore the different stages of partnership and their implications

for inclusivity: firstly the motivations for setting up partnerships, and the factors that can help them achieve their aims or hinder success; secondly, the importance of the way that the partnership aims are scoped, and consultation with stakeholders both at this stage and in the ongoing activities of the partnership. The paper then explores two factors of particular significance to partnerships as non-elected institutions: power structures, and accountability and governance. The final stages of the partnership "cycle" are also considered, namely its success and impact, and the continuation and growth of its activities. We then take a broader look at partnerships as agents of change, before discussing the implications for policy-making.

Methodology

The research for this paper included three main stages, and drew extensively on the experience of partnership practitioners who are current or previous participants on the Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (PCCP). Following a literature review and initial scoping interviews, an online questionnaire was designed and around 100 PCCP students and alumni were invited to respond.

PCCP brings together practitioners who are leading their organisations in the development and implementation of cross-sector partnerships across the world. Now in its sixth year, the Programme's alumni number about 200 from 47 countries across Africa, Asia, Western and Eastern Europe, the Americas and Australasia, with a wealth of experience in the challenges and potential of partnerships for development.

Representatives of twenty-seven partnerships completed the questionnaire, based in 13 different countries across five continents, and representing a total of 311 partners. A detailed analysis of the results can be seen in Appendix 1.

From these responses, seven were picked out which represented particularly interesting partnerships with a range of aims, target groups and geographical areas, and detailed telephone interviews were carried out. The initial findings from an analysis of the questionnaire and interview data were tested and discussed with a focus group of partnership practitioners from a range of countries, who were attending the second residential workshop of the 2007 PCCP course in Cambridge.

The paper also draws on research carried out by Melanie Rein, Leda Stott, Kavwanga Yambayamba, Stan Hardman and Stuart Reid, and published by the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry in 2005 as *Working Together – a critical analysis of partnerships in South Africa*.

Defining partnerships

Even the first step of agreeing on a definition of "partnership" is difficult; as Rein et al (2005) point out, the term has been used interchangeably with many others such as alliance, compact and collaboration. Perhaps the clearest, if slightly idealistic, definition comes from a United Nations report to the General Assembly: "Partnerships are commonly defined as voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both State and non-State, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits" (UN General Assembly 2003, p4).

Within these parameters, however, Utting and Zammit (2006, p19) highlight the complexity: "It has come to be an infinitely elastic concept, embracing a range of actors, each inspired by different motivations and objectives, and involving varying types of relationships between the partners."

In trying to find a route through this complexity to aid analysis, Utting and Zammit (2006) suggest that taxonomies are of limited value, at least from a development perspective, as there are so many possible permutations and levels of relationship, motivation and context that any attempt at classification becomes an over-simplification. The Partnering Initiative (led by the International Business Leaders Forum) has dealt with this challenge of complexity by designing a typology which includes a range of dimensions (see Appendix 2) within which partnerships can be located, determined by objective, by delivery model, by scope and operating level, and by relationship/depth

of engagement. This multi-dimensional approach at least enables researchers to attempt some meaningful classification in an equitable development context.

The partnerships in this study

The wide geographical spread, the range of partnership aims and the very large number of partners represented by the partnerships in this study, are shown in Figures 1 to 3 below. Full details are given in Appendix 1. The average age of the partnerships is around four years, but this represents a range from one year to 18, with the most common age being two to three years.

Figure 1 – Geographical area

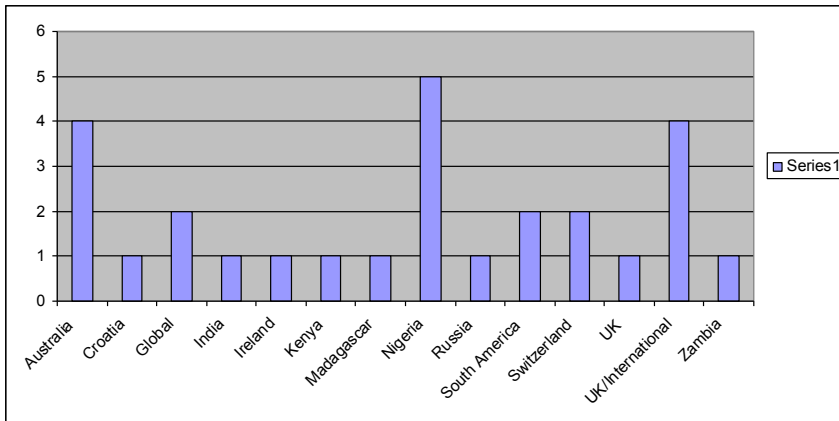


Figure 2 – Partnership aims

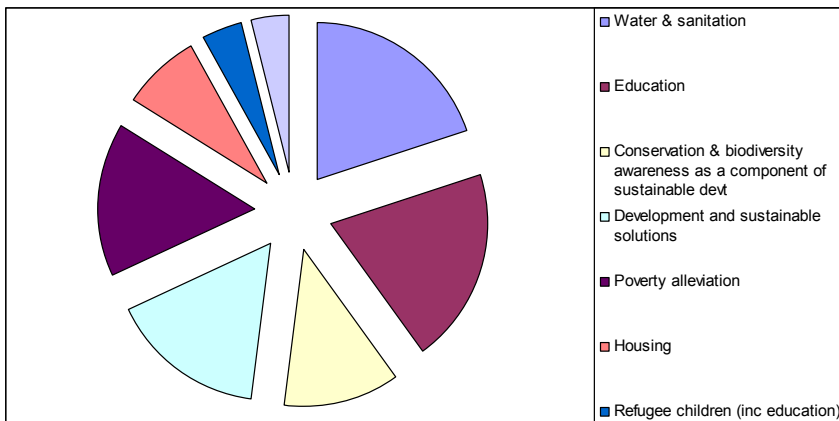
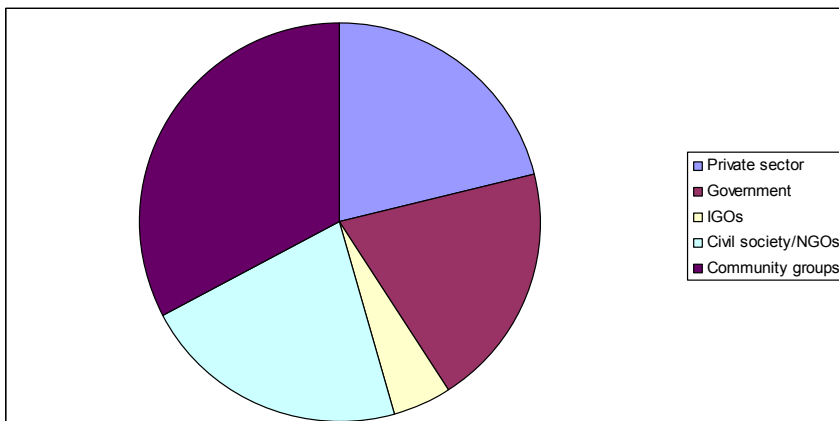


Figure 3 – Partners (from a total of 311 partners)



Why partner?

Why has partnership become such a popular approach to addressing development problems? One of our interview respondents commented: "There's a lot of support for the idea of partnership and for people working together, but no understanding of what it really means". Her observation at a local level seems to reflect a global level drive to partnership – sometimes with a similar lack of understanding of the full implications.

The high expectations of a partnership approach are illustrated by the optimism that surrounded the setting up of UN-business partnerships to work towards the Millennium Development Goals: "These multi-stakeholder and cross-sector approaches to problem-solving offer one of our greatest hopes for meeting, together, the challenges of the twenty first century" (Nelson, 2002, pp36-37). Matthews counters this with a more cautious approach: "Multi-sector partnerships have the potential to contribute significantly to efforts to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, but they are not a panacea and it would be foolish to underestimate the difficulties involved in building relations across sectors and between non-traditional partners." (2005, p6)

Utting and Zammit suggest that the drive to partnerships arose partly as a response to pressure from civil society organisations concerned with the "perverse effects of corporate globalisation" (2006, p17). As the influence of corporates grows and spreads, recruiting them as allies in the battle against poverty, rather than seeing them as the "enemy", offers a much more positive approach and one which brings new potential for tackling "insoluble" development problems.

The potential offered by different sectors working together to achieve development goals is viewed positively by many: "partnerships can be as diverse as the creativity of governments, NGOs and business allows. This gives them an experimental quality that may lead to breakthrough approaches to development problems." (Hale et al 2004 p223)

This concept of different sectors pooling their complimentary skills and resources to deal with complex, intractable problems was the most commonly cited motivation for the respondents in our study (see Appendix 1 below). One interviewee in a multi-sector partnership commented that the government partners had been "on top of the simple stuff, but not the complex interface 'wicked' problems where social, economic and environmental issues meet". As another respondent succinctly put it: "By and large the problems we're dealing with are ones where other people have tried and failed".

This is an important point to bear in mind when looking at partnerships; if by definition they are likely to be tackling intractable problems which have defeated other approaches, then expectations should not be unrealistic. A cooperative approach may be more effective than a single-sector one, but it still needs time to bring about change.

Whatever the nature of the overall partnership aims, the individual sectors may have different motives for collaborating. Frequently cited reasons among the respondents in our study included enhanced reputation and funding, while for one partner it was gaining access to politicians. A "licence to operate" is another frequent motivator for partnering. As one respondent explained: "Sometimes if an initiative is seen to be owned by a single body it can put other bodies off participating – the reasons can be political, organisational, or personality driven. In these instances the broader-based partnership is seen as an honest broker".

For corporates, particularly in the extractive industries, partnering with intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), civil society and/or community groups can give much-needed legitimacy. The resources and funding they provide in return are sufficient motive for prospective partners. On the other hand, for the UN or for NGOs wishing to operate in areas where they have little sway with governments, the economic power of large corporates can be a useful influence – an example given was helping refugees in a country that had not signed up to an international treaty.

But the same motives which bring partners together, can also get in the way of the partnership's expressed aims. As a respondent explained: "One partner wants money, the other wants legitimacy

by association. The mere act of coming together satisfies these underlying needs of the separate partners, which may be termed success, even if the written objectives are not achieved.”

Inevitably, many partners from all three sectors will have “covert” motives for partnering which are different to the project outcomes, whether this is the pursuit of funding, credibility, or a licence to operate. The end may well justify the means, as long as these motives are not in conflict with the project outcomes or seen as more important. If the disconnect between the motives of the partners for partnering and the desired outcomes of the partnership itself leads to partners feeling they have succeeded because they have gained what they were looking for and are seen to be doing something, this can be at the expense of making real steps in development goals. In this case, partnership could be viewed as an expensive distraction which appears to involve action in response to development challenges, while in reality soaking up large amounts of time and money.

The second problem with covert (and potentially conflicting) motives for partnering is the risk of misunderstanding between partners. Rein et al (2005) stress the importance of real honesty and clarity about the goals of the partners and of the partnership, particularly where partners are very different to each other. The problems that can ensue when the motives for the different sectors remain covert, are explored in Stott’s study of a failed UN partnership: the corporate’s “long-term profit motive and desire for effective brand reinforcement and UN [department’s] need to attract wider corporate funding for its on-going development ... were never fully explored together ... As a result the partnership was impacted negatively” (2007, p10).

Perhaps for these reasons, many of our respondents gave single-issue motives – for any of the three sectors - as a reason not to partner. For example:

- Where money is the main driver, or profit the only goal;
- Where a company is simply trying to improve a poor image through partnering with a “credible” organisation, or just wants to “sell more soap” with no interest in long-term solutions;
- Where governments are trying to offset social injustice by placating civil society, are too weak to manage private sector inputs, or cannot accept equality and shared decision-making; and
- For the purposes of “blue-washing”¹. Utting and Zammit show how the Global Compact, the UN’s flagship partnering initiative, is seen by some as “a mechanism for ‘bluwashing’ corporations that could project a socially responsible image through their association with the UN” (2006, p18).

This is reinforced by Hale’s even more critical view of motives for partnering: “corporations, governments, and IGOs may use partnerships as a showcase for sustainable development to divert attention from their other environmentally and socially unfriendly activities” (2004, p223). Utting and Zammit put this in a wider context, seeing the partnership movement as constrained and dominated by a “global economic system that is not only increasingly interdependent and interconnected but also moulded and controlled by global corporations and corporate elites” (2006, p16).

In view of this, it is understandable that many respondents to the questionnaire felt partnership is only an appropriate approach where goals or motives are compatible, sectors are linked or at least understand each other, and partners agree (for a full analysis see Appendix 1). Partners need to be committed to finding common ground for a partnership to work.

Finally, there was a concern among respondents that partnership should be avoided where it puts the intended beneficiaries at risk, either through power imbalance “where control is hierarchical and/or local people are not consulted in changes that will affect their lives”, or where people may be harmed - through delay caused by consultation in emergency situations, or through participation within a context of conflict.

¹ “Corporations that claim to abide by internationally agreed upon standards of the United Nations when they actually do not, in order to enhance their brand reputation, are engaged in bluewashing” (Cohen in Visser, et al. 2007)

Partnership success factors

Having come together to form a partnership, what are the factors that can assist or hamper success? The mutual commitment of partners was perceived by respondents to the study as being the most important factor for partnership success – it rated highest in the questionnaire, and several of the interview respondents mentioned it as a factor:

“The commitment of the partners has been very important ... the organisations were in it together to address the problem and all had a common goal.”

“The corporate partners were keen to work with an operational humanitarian organisation. On the other hand, our senior management was willing to experience a new type of partnership, different from the NGO/ government partnership.”

According to the survey respondents, it is important for partnerships to find the right balance between mutual commitment and compatibility, and the complementarity of expertise that the different sectors can bring.

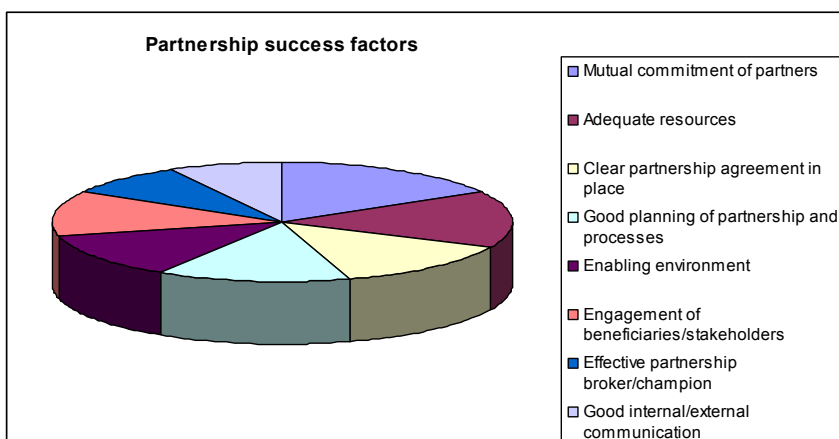
On a more practical level, adequate resources are seen as the next major success factor, tying into the problems with funding discussed below. Good planning is considered important, and a clear partnership agreement – although it seems to be the process of preparing and agreeing this document that has the most impact in clarifying partners’ expectations and commitment – once the partnership is underway many agreements and MOUs are no longer seen as important. One respondent reflected a common view: “A firm agreement was put in place at the start of the partnership, although the partnership functioned without this playing a significant part.”

An enabling environment is another important factor for partnership success: “There was a commitment at national level to social partnership and we’ve had significant funding as part of that initiative. Thus we have benefited from an enabling environment both financially and legislatively.”

Rein et al also stress the importance of environment and context, from their study of partnerships in Africa: “The issue of context is central to our findings. One of the undoubted dangers of the fashionable status that partnership currently enjoy is the assumption that there is a model of partnership which can be applied to each and every situation. Our research suggests that partnerships need to be built very carefully both on established good practice and on the constraints of local conditions” (2005, p125).

Interestingly, however, engagement of beneficiaries and/or stakeholders only ranked joint fifth in the questionnaire results out of eight success factors, which appears to tie in with the lack of consultation with beneficiaries noted below – the relationship between partners is viewed as much more important than the relationship with the target group. This raises interesting questions in relation to inclusive development. A full breakdown of partnership success factors is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 – Partnership success factors



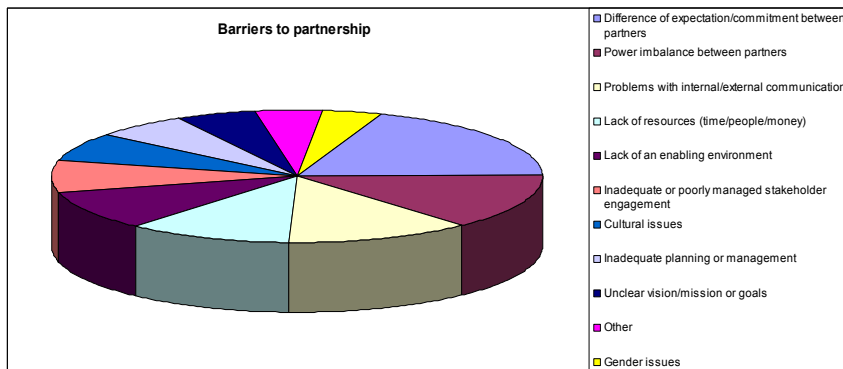
Barriers and challenges

Inevitably in practice partnership is not a straightforward option. One respondent commented: "For a partnership to work, people with a vision are needed at the outset, people to communicate the objectives and really make the partnership happen. The people involved had the drive to pull together different organisations and individuals. However, resources are important too just to get the basics right and organise the work; someone needs to provide the desk space and set up meetings and make it happen at the start." This reinforces Rein et al.'s point that: "Partnerships are not an easy option and, by their very nature, they require a sophisticated multi-disciplinary approach to ensure that they are able to meet their objects. It may also be argued that, potentially, partnerships are resource-hungry and require additional funding and support which, in turn, are likely to detract from the resourcing of projects." (2005 p128).

It is perhaps inevitable, given the different motives of the sectors discussed above, that by far the largest set of challenges to effective partnership identified by the study respondents relate to the relationship between the partners themselves. The questionnaire responses show that the greatest of these is a difference of expectation and/or commitment between partners, followed by a power imbalance and communication problems. Matthews confirms these points: "problems can result from the asymmetries of power and resources between partners, from their divergent decision making processes and even from the latent hostility that sometimes exists between partners as a result of past antagonisms" (2005, p6).

The other two key barriers mentioned by the questionnaire respondents are lack of resources, and lack of an enabling environment (for a detailed breakdown see Figure 5 below) – the flipside of the success factors discussed above.

Figure 5 – Barriers to partnership



Practical barriers

The importance of practical factors in implementing partnerships was illustrated by one respondent: "Barriers to partnerships are often resource driven, because these resources are needed to move from the vision of a partnership to achieving outputs." This bridge between vision and implementation can be hampered, as Rein et al (2005) illustrate, by the difficulties of matching up the different sectoral approaches to timing of funding, decision-making etc.

As one interviewee explained: "Things were lining up at a conceptual level – so the ideas were all fine and everyone's on board, but the logistics and practicalities, particularly with more than one funder and a co-investment approach, this was the challenge... We're at this part of the budget cycle, this part of the political cycle ... getting everything lined up is a huge challenge. The barriers are timing of funding programmes, decision-making processes, but also the practicalities of one guy trying to run ten projects!"

Similarly, resolving legal issues can be a challenge, including agreeing on frameworks such as auditing and a reporting line. Inevitably, however, the most important factor in most cases is funding.

Funding

The issue of funding for partnerships involved in development is not just about the amounts available, or the problems of different accounting systems, but also the reliance on short-term funding when tackling long-term problems. The tendency for funders to look for short-term successes with easily quantifiable outcomes is unlikely to be compatible with sustainable, inclusive development within challenging contexts.

Two partnerships which rely mainly on government funding highlight the challenges: "A Government department gave us a small amount of money – we could only get funding for the first year, and the private sector guys put in three years' funding but it was only a small amount per partner per year. Uncertainty around funding beyond year one resulted in not being able to commit to recruiting staff and this put significant pressure on key individuals."

A second interviewee agreed: "Longer-term funding certainly enables you to be more creative and to think more broadly. Short-term funding can be a huge problem. It's hard to retain expertise where there's no security of tenure."

The problems are summed up by one respondent: "In seeking funding the dominant system is an input-output system – but ours is about the learning, so we don't know the outputs until we get there, and [the government] won't put public money into that! They want sustainability, but in reality it doesn't fit their model."

The complexity inherent in the partnerships in our study, as illustrated in Figure 3, represents considerable risk as well as great opportunity for innovative approaches. Inevitably, partners will find working with organisations from different sectors challenging, and in setting up a partnership it is essential for them to recognise and allow for the differences. However, there is a particular responsibility for the public sector, if they see partnership as a meaningful approach to development, to recognise the particular challenges that it can present as a partner, and to seek ways of mitigating these. For this reason, we explored the challenges of partnering with government and with inter-governmental organisations in more detail.

Partnering with government

Virtually all the partnerships involving government departments highlighted the challenges of working with the public sector. In spite of these obstacles, there was agreement that, as one respondent stressed: "Governments should not be left out of the equation ... It is important to work with governments in developing countries to improve public policy and acceptability."

There was some perception that operating within a "weak" state is inadvisable, and this is discussed further in the section on accountability. However the general reaction showed that all governments – whether "weak" or not – present a particular challenge to working in partnership. Along with the difficulties of short-term funding cycles discussed above, the other two key difficulties are the segmented nature of government, and the rapid turnover of staff.

On the first of these, one respondent explained: "The challenge was how to bring together a lot of government departments. It's difficult for government departments which are arranged on themes; they're fine for the simple things, but when you're sitting in a place where it hasn't rained for three years then you really don't care who helps or what they're called."

The difficulties of reconciling rapid staff turnover, characteristic of governments in both developing and developed countries, with long-term partnership commitment, are illustrated by two respondents: "I know there are a lot of problems with government bureaucracy, but it's doubtful whether that's because it's a "weak state" - more because of bureaucratic structure, as with many governments! Four months ago we had a meeting with our government partner; days later the government partners all changed. We only got new ones last week, so people are still trying to find out who has responsibility for what."

A similar picture emerges from a European partnership: "There must be trust between partners. This can sometimes be a problem when partnering with the government. Public servants change roles quite regularly. An example of this is where there have been as many as five different contacts in the government for a specific partnership project and each time a new person enters into the job they do not understand how the partnership has come about or got to the stage that it is at. Time is required each time to bring new personnel up to speed. There is far more consistency in the corporate world and therefore they can be easier to partner with."

It seems unlikely that these challenges of working with government will change, wherever in the world the government is. Staff turnover is high because that is how governments operate, and funding cycles are annual because public money is voted or allocated only on a yearly basis – and continuing funding depends on demonstrating successful delivery of targets for the previous year. Therefore for governments to work effectively in partnership two things need to happen. The first is not simply around staff core competency in partnership (a possibility that has been explored, for example, by UK Government departments), but about a higher-level change in all governments who genuinely seek to use partnership as a development solution. Partnership needs to be viewed and articulated as a strategic priority. If it is seen as important at a senior level, then staff coming into a post will view it as a priority and demonstrate their commitment, without having to be constantly brought up to speed by the other partners. This needs genuine commitment and decision-making by governments at a senior level, so that prioritisation and ownership of partnerships filters through to the more junior level and is implemented.

The issue of short-term funding is not something that governments can do anything about directly – it is up to the partners who wish to work with government to recognise and work within this framework. Ensuring that plans, although they may be longer-term, are accountable and reviewed on a yearly basis, that original targets are not over-blown in order to get funding, and that targets and milestones are delivered on – quarter to quarter and year to year – is an essential skill for anyone wishing to partner with government. Where governments can play a direct role in helping with this, is in building capacity within their potential partner organisations and ensuring that the targets and milestones they will be judged against are realistic.

Partnering with inter-governmental organisations (IGOs)

The challenges of partnering with IGOs need to be viewed in perspective, as there are many successful UN/private partnerships, two of which were described by our respondents. In these instances, corporate funding, drive and expertise had been successfully aligned with UN development goals. However, there are also unique obstacles to partnering with IGOs, highlighted by two projects where the UN partnered with large corporates, one perspective from each sector:

"Organisational cultural differences were a major challenge. They [the corporate partners] could easily make the decisions and go ahead with the implementation. We [UN department] had to focus on the process by consulting different technical divisions, different regional offices and desks, different budgetary units ..."

"There has been some discussion about how to account for the money intended for the local area. There were differences in the accounting systems between the two organisations which have caused problems. The UN just sends a summary of expenditure, which is not adequate for us to report back to the government."

These issues are further explored by Stott in her study of a real but "fictionalised" UN/Corporate partnership (2007). Stott outlines some of the obstacles that, despite goodwill on both sides, ultimately led to its failure:

- A difference in culture – creative versus bureaucratic. While the company was fast-moving and creative, the UN "decision-making was slow and there was hesitancy about making quick choices and assessment without careful consultation and sign-off" (op. cit. p6);
- A difference in goals, and misunderstanding between the two organisations;

- The view of the corporate partner as primarily a source of cash, when they wanted wider involvement;
- Difficulties over aligning funding cycles and decision-making processes;
- The isolation of those working on the partnership within both institutions, and the lack of a champion within the UN;
- Within the UN department “personnel were generally divided between those who welcomed the engagement with [the corporate] as a ‘cash cow’ and little more, and those who saw the relationship as a dangerous precedent with business playing too great a role in the development of UN programmes at the expense of the credibility of the institution”(op. cit. p7); and
- Differences in approach to evaluation, with the UN “focusing on obtaining statistical data at pre-established intervals in order to demonstrate project impact”, and the corporate partner looking for a review of the added value of the partnering relationship, and ongoing learning that could feed back into both organisations. (op. cit. p8)

Partnership scoping and consultation with stakeholders

Having explored the relationship between the various partners, we went on to look at the partnership’s relationship to the beneficiaries or target group. As discussed above, questionnaire respondents only rated engagement with beneficiaries/stakeholders joint fifth out of eight success factors. However, it is reasonable to assume that an inclusive approach to development will be based on a meaningful consultation with the intended beneficiaries. As well as helping to ensure the appropriateness of the intervention, this also gives stakeholders more sense of ownership of the partnership activities. The first stage of this would be during partnership scoping stage, and might be expected to include a needs analysis involving the target group. It is interesting to note therefore that, although 22 out of the 25 partnerships who responded to this question had carried out a consultation exercise, at least 11 of these had not included the intended beneficiaries. Some of the partnerships viewed their civil society partners as having strong enough links with the beneficiaries to represent them, while others considered that as they were delivering part of a global or international programme for which a need had been identified, consultation with local groups or a full scoping exercise was unnecessary. In some cases, the beneficiaries were consulted after the partnership structure and aims were put in place, and eight of the 11 partnerships mentioned had taken subsequent steps to ensure inclusivity after the launch of the partnership, including stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and “capacity-building” for beneficiaries.

A more detailed discussion with the interview respondents gave some interesting – and contrasting – perspectives:

“A large scoping exercise was put in place at the start of the project. This had an element of financial risk for the funding agency because if a project is not deemed viable as a result of the scoping then the money spent has been wasted. However...the scoping exercise gave the partnership legitimacy and a major foundation.”

“The beneficiaries are represented on a national level, but it is difficult to get representation from communities because they are, by definition, very diverse and very localised.”

“Discussions between the partners took place for three or four months and an MOU was signed. After the main structure was put in place the local communities were consulted. The programme is very flexible though and changes occurred throughout as a result of community and expert consultation.”

Some partnerships, however, do go to great lengths to try to be inclusive in their scoping, while recognising the barriers: “We do our best but those who are most excluded and need it most are least likely to participate. You would try and use the structures that are already there in the community. You can go to where they go rather than expecting them to come to you. We go to the local community centre, schools and crèches. We have also had some research done door to door.”

Difficulty of access isn't the only challenge to consultation, and in an attempt to be inclusive it is clearly important to avoid naivety: "Consultation can be high-risk both for the researcher and for the respondent. Where there are high levels of criminality and intimidation you need to be careful about not putting people in danger."

In emergency situations, too, carrying out a consultation with the target groups can put them in danger – this time through delays and unnecessary bureaucracy. However, this isn't an easy circle to square, as one of our respondents described instances when, in trying to react quickly, humanitarian missions rush in with clothes and food which turn out to be unacceptable or inappropriate to the recipients.

Ongoing consultation and inclusivity

Related to the question of inclusivity in scoping consultations, is the problem of determining which groups to work with and what activities to focus on once the partnership is underway. Hale et al point out that "a barrier to grassroots involvement is a lack of economic resources and human capacity. Those communities and organisations that would most benefit from partnership are, more often than not, precisely those without the ability to participate" (2004, p232).

This dilemma was clearly echoed by many of the partnerships in our study, who recognised that those most in need of support are the least able to ask for it. To take one example: "It became clear there was diversity around the capacity of communities: the communities that are proactive and who are innovators; then communities that are reactive, who think they're okay until something comes along like the drought; then the third group are the inactive, and they need the leg-up more than anyone else. There are a small group which will always be ahead of the curve and we want to help communities like that because there we can innovate, but we also have an obligation to work with the ones that need us most."

Another partnership had gone to considerable lengths to ensure balanced representation: "We have 10 representatives. The most deprived areas are all represented. The umbrella groups for each area decide who should be the representatives, but we have a rule that they must actually be resident in the areas. There is also a seat for special interest groups, such as travellers, youth, those with disabilities etc. The nominating bodies for these again would be umbrella groups, for example the local branch of the national disability group would appoint that person."

In other areas the approach – although still attempting to be inclusive – is very different: "There is a committee comprised of community representatives who were selected by the two main partners. They meet a couple of times a year – it's not a very large group however, so it's difficult for them to challenge project decisions."

In our initial analysis of the questionnaire and interview data, there appeared to be a clear contrast between the partnerships working in "developed" and "developing" countries. Although the sample is too small to reach broad conclusions, the pattern indicated that partnerships working in developed countries are more likely to go to considerable lengths to ensure that processes are inclusive and that all stakeholders are fully represented both in planning and implementing the partnership activities. In developing countries, however, the tendency appeared to be for outside agencies to decide what the problems are, and then to move in and attempt to "solve" them. The difference of approach is between working with local people on mutually-identified issues, and approaching them with pre-determined answers to problems they have not necessarily been consulted about. Government and IGO partnerships, as well as philanthropic initiatives, seem particularly to favour the latter approach. One respondent commented: "You can't just rock up and say to someone, you have a problem – we're here to help", but in many cases that's exactly what seems to happen.

However, the focus group comprised of PCCP participants, which reviewed the initial findings, took the view that it is the capacity of the target community rather than its geography which determines how involved it is in the process. Examples were given of partnerships working in Canada and Australia where the involvement of indigenous communities was quite different – and much less inclusive – than that of non-indigenous groups. This led to the question of capacity-building, and the

focus group felt strongly that to talk about the need to build capacity within some communities to work better with development partnerships is a very patronising approach. In the view of the focus group, often it is the partnerships and the outside agencies who need to build their capacity to understand the groups they are working with, and to learn to listen to them rather than making assumptions.

One of the difficulties in achieving genuine communication between different groups comes from their conflicting worldviews and ways of talking about things. One of our focus group members gave the example of agreeing on locations, when the indigenous community relates to the landscape in terms of sacred sites and ancestral connections, while an extractive company trying to negotiate with them sees it in terms of map references and geological features.

Idemudia confirms this view: "The problem with this tendency by oil TNCs [transnational corporations] to frame the situation in scientific terms is that it clashes with the worldviews held by local communities, which are often based on beliefs and perceptions ... This clash in worldview and expectations ... invariably fosters the violation of the psychological contract that exists between local communities and oil TNCs from the perspective of the communities. Oil TNCs are, therefore, often not given the benefit of doubt in the event of crisis or accidents, while corporate-community relations remain largely conflictual and community development partnerships have limited impact on community development" (2007, p20).

The results of our study do appear, as discussed above, to indicate a tendency for partners to view their relationship with their partners as much more important than the relationship with beneficiaries. It is difficult to see how partnerships can contribute to inclusive development unless they genuinely engage with their target groups rather than seeing them as passive recipients, as in: "they" have the problem while "we" have the solution. However, it is essential to avoid simplistic assumptions, particularly about the way that partnerships work with communities in developing countries or with indigenous groups. Attempts to be inclusive or to build capacity can simply be seen as patronising. Genuine mutual understanding and the development of common aims may be essential, but it is not an easy, quick solution. It may be that the capacity building needed is to find a common language to engage in dialogue, not just consultation, between partnerships and stakeholders/community groups, in order to understand how each other works and find ways to identify problems and solutions together.

Power

One of the key difficulties in genuine stakeholder participation, as well as in partnership more generally, is the issue of power. There can be inequities within and around partnerships, between partners and with and between beneficiaries. Partnerships operate within existing power structures, and can unsettle, cut across or reinforce them. Rein et al point out the importance, but also the potential implications, of stakeholder participation. Through engaging or excluding particular groups, while seeking to be participatory, partnerships can reinforce or unsettle pre-existing power relationships within and between communities. They suggest that further analysis is needed of "terms such as community engagement and stakeholder engagement" (2005, p10). On what basis are stakeholders engaged? Does the appearance of collaboration mask asymmetries of power?

Looking at the wider picture, Hale et al (2004, p223) point out that "partnerships lead to imbalances of power by bringing together large government agencies and small rural villages, transnational corporations and local NGOs. The resource imbalances among such partners may result in the exclusion of the smaller partners' viewpoints or even their cooption by the larger organisation".

One reaction to the difficulty of dealing with unequal power can be the temptation to partner only with similar organisations. Hale et al. point out that in the partnerships arising from the World Summit on Sustainable Development, "only a handful of the largest and richest [governments] have taken an active lead in promoting partnerships. Additionally, most of the NGO partners are large, Northern organisations. Small businesses are completely absent from leading roles." (2004, p231)

Finding routes for genuine inclusivity within complex and unequal power structures is challenging, but naivety or ignoring the issues can be disastrous. Dealing with power struggles between partners is described by one respondent: "Every partner wanted to be a leader in the programme. Power imbalance was a problem at the beginning of the partnership – but this issue was resolved by organising several levels of working groups."

Another interviewee addresses the issue of working with community groups: "Power imbalance always needs to be kept an eye on. To begin with I believed that of course we are equal, but now I've come to realise that we're not equal at all, but that we have respect for the experience of everyone whoever they are. A community organisation sitting at table with the person who funds it can't be there on an equal basis, but if they can respect my contribution as the person who has the local knowledge, then they can respect me. So talking about parity of esteem is a better term than talking about equality, otherwise one can kid oneself."

Accountability and governance

Like power, accountability is an important factor that some partnerships appear to be oblivious to. It is a particular concern in areas where partnerships may have a lot of power, influence and/or money relative to the state or to local organisations, and where development is being carried out by organisations who have not been elected and whose mandate may be questionable. This is an issue both for corporates, for NGOs and for IGOs such as the UN. If cross-sector partnership is to be a viable, inclusive development mechanism, then accountability frameworks need to be accessible, robust, and come to be seen as the norm rather than an optional extra. Yet as Zadek points out "there are signs that accountability issues have been ignored as the floodgates to private sector collaboration have opened" (2006, p45).

While Zadek and Radovich (2006, p1) suggest that there is a growing recognition of the need for systematic governance and accountability in partnerships, this was not evident from the majority of the responses received in our survey. One partnership had gone to great lengths to adapt and implement Zadek's framework for partnership accountability and governance (AccountAbility 2006), but only after having found it by chance during a search of the Web for a suitable tool. For the majority of partnerships consulted, an MOU and/or financial reporting was the extent of the accountability framework they were using. Of 24 questionnaire responses in our study, 18 said they were operating within an accountability framework, while six were not. However, in many cases these frameworks either simply took the form of regular reporting, or only appeared to be taken seriously by some of the partners – for example: "The partnership unit sends monthly reports to the corporate partners. On the other hand, corporate partners do not feel accountable." There is also a gap between accountability on paper and in reality, as one respondent pointed out: "There is an MOU partnership agreement – it covers the expectation and evaluation process. It covers a lot of things. But there is a disconnect between the formal structure on paper and the reality on the ground."

It is not just corporate partners that can be oblivious to the need for accountability: "The UN is not good at accountability – this frustrates corporate partners. There are too many actors involved to make accountability easy ... Large NGOs such as Oxfam or Care International are much more accountable and have better accountability structures."

Partnerships operating within poor political governance contexts highlight the ambiguities of accountability, as one respondent pointed out: "Partnerships can be a good idea where the state is weak or lacking the necessary capacity. There may be an issue with accountability here with an unelected body (i.e. the partnership) delivering development outcomes. However, in such a situation, there would already be problems with accountability if the state was weak or not accountable to the electorate – so a partnership would improve the situation on the ground."

For those who try to balance accountability with inclusivity, there can be opportunities and challenges: "In the drive to regulate and to increase accountability, you can lose the community involvement. For instance the rules against participation of individuals in decisions which may benefit themselves take away empowerment."

Issues of governance and accountability are further explored in Rein et al (2005, pp9-10), who point out that the structures partnerships adopt are crucial to their accountability. The importance of this is stressed by Zadek (2004, p12): "Are they destined to become stable, permanent governance fixtures? And if so, on what basis and on whose terms? And how do they relate to each other? Some seek to reinvigorate and reinvent our Bretton Woods institutions in pursuit of effective global governance. But are we in practice seeking a new civil governance emerging in partnership form?" If this is the case, then proper governance and accountability structures are essential.

Partnership success and impact

Reports of success from the partnerships in our study were mixed, with the majority of questionnaire respondents feeling that their partnership was "fairly successful", seven regarding it as "very successful" and two as "not very successful". Two IGO partnerships had got very bogged down in process and had not so far managed to achieve their intended outcomes.

Measures of success varied however, with respondents differentiating between the immediate goals of successful partnering, and the longer terms outcome goals. As one questionnaire respondent commented: "This depends on how success is defined. Would it be based on the objectives indicated on the partnership agreement or include or be limited to the underlying expectations which most partnerships have?"

The complexity of gauging partnership outcomes is highlighted by Rein et al, who suggest that "The value of partnerships ... lies not just in their ability to deliver tangible improvements in social services or economic goods: it can also reside in the vantage point a partnership can give to relatively weak or disadvantaged sections of the community, to enable them to express their needs, draw attention to pressing problems and build dialogue with other groups and institutions" (2005, p125).

This "by-product" of capacity-building is seen as a very important and positive partnership outcome by many. Some partnerships recognise that this is a two-way process: "There is capacity building both within the partnership and within the communities; we're learning a lot and helping the partner organisations to know how to work together and to work with the communities."

The process of working in partnership can in itself bring about change: "You are bringing together partners for new initiatives who couldn't have started it themselves. Through participating in the partnership they then built up capacity and became independent. But it takes time for a partnership to get to that stage so that the individual partners are confident...The achievements also include supporting the capacity development of communities."

Other partnerships also highlighted the benefits of building the capacity to partner: "The communities said by and large that even if the project doesn't find the solutions, you've given us the confidence to engage with players we would never have thought to engage with, and to work with new players." Furthermore, "a lot of the NGOs who were involved in the programme are looking to build partnerships using the structure of this programme."

Success in achieving partnership aims is often also dependent on the macro-level context, as the following comments suggest: "We are working in a system that has got firmly entrenched over a period of 60 years. It will take time to get this system to move"; and "As ever, the project turns out to be more complex than foreseen; volatile national level issues determine overall success." When looking at partnership as a mechanism for genuine inclusive development, the distinction between achieving success at an individual or group level, and making changes at a structural level is a recurring theme. One respondent explained: "It has been successful in making people aware of the debate but not necessarily in changing policy." Similarly: "Lots of people have been helped and progressed to coming into training programmes, labour programmes, education, jobs etc. Yet the structure still remains. I think what it would have to do to make a structural difference is to feed into the decision-making processes. To make sure that inclusion is on the agenda for those who make decisions. You may not always succeed but you have to keep trying." This tension between change at an individual and at a structural level is an important one, and is further discussed below.

The difficulties of gauging the impact of partnerships are widely acknowledged. Their long-term nature and engagement with complex issues involving a wide group of stakeholders makes it difficult to find meaningful measures of success. Tennyson (2003, p15) points out that evaluation needs to look at changes that have taken place for beneficiaries and stakeholders as well as for partners.

Utting and Zammit suggest that for UN partnerships, "impact assessment is rare and is not conducted consistently" (2006, p30). However, they also acknowledge that making such impact assessment meaningful, rather than a pragmatic distraction from the wider implications of the partnership, would be extremely complex and challenging (op. cit., p34). A consideration of more contested factors such as accountability and equity, as well as partnership "value added", rather than just of factors such as relevance and effectiveness, is essential.

Continuation and growth of partnership activities

The mainstreaming and growth of successful partnership activities can take a number of forms, for example continuation, scaling-up, replication, or incorporation into government policies.

Utting and Zammit point out that one should not automatically assume the growth of partnership activities is a good thing: "The case for scaling-up, and how this should be done, rests on whether it can be plausibly demonstrated that such scaling-up would, of and by itself, have a decisive impact on the problems or issues at stake. The absence of greater information derived from evaluations of existing UN-business partnerships suggests that advocating scaling-up may be premature" (2006, p29).

However, the risks of undertaking partnership activities without an assurance of long-term and sustainable resourcing are also noted: "The partnerships themselves risk disguising the severity of the underlying problem by offering or attempting partial or piecemeal solutions that do not take enough factors into consideration. In practice, they are likely to encounter significant problems of sustainability if resources are not guaranteed in the long-term" (Rein et al 2005, p126). Limitations on funding can restrict replication of even the most successful projects, as one of our respondents explained: "The [award-winning] partnership is already widespread within this state, but will not continue out of the state as funding comes from a regional government department."

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire (20 out of 22) felt that their partnership would grow through replication to other areas, while only one feared that the partnership would not continue at all. Three commented that the future of the activities had been assured through their institutionalisation within government policy, and this appears to be an important factor in "mainstreaming" outcomes.

However, approaches to the long-term impact of partnerships do not have to be simplistic. Rein et al point out that: "Replication need not necessarily imply the "copying" of activities, but rather the copying of successful process and understanding: in other words, it is the learning that is transferred from one situation to another" (2005, p125).

The importance of finding models to share learning, and if possible to inform policy, was recognised by partnerships in our study: "In the places we worked we delivered effective outcomes, but there was no model to take the learning to share with other regions, or to do meta-analysis to inform policy at a higher level. Now we've developed an evaluation and learning model. So partnership and action learning is generic across everything with the aim of mutual benefit for everyone and the extraction of meta-level learning that can be useful for policy-makers."

Similarly: "We have always been conscious of the need to pass on the learning. We do this through evaluation and spreading the learning. There are 38 funded partnerships across the country. We are looking now at new geographical areas which were not formerly priority areas. We're looking at the type of community infrastructures that have been successfully developed in the most disadvantaged areas and rolling them out."

Partnerships as agents of change

In the light of this discussion and the findings of the study, can partnerships bring about inclusive development and act as genuine agents of change?

There is no doubt that many partnerships are doing good and effective work within the development field. However, the question of whether they are dealing with the symptoms or addressing the disease is an important one. The discussion above, based on the experience of the partnerships in our study, of whether development can occur at a structural level or only in helping groups of individuals (important though this is), indicates the challenges of effecting systemic change.

Uwafiokun underlines the difficulty of effecting genuine change within complex contexts: "The implication is that there is a need for an enabling environment for partnership in developing countries, which requires addressing the structural determinants of maldevelopment and building local individual and institutional capacity. Efforts presently geared toward institutional capacity building in existing partnership schemes will continue to yield limited dividends as long as the more fundamental issues are ignored" (2007, p23).

Stott's study of a UN partnership illustrates this, showing how early successes were ultimately derailed by political and environmental events within the target country, together with critical staff changes in all the three organisations involved in the partnership (2007, p9).

But at a wider level it should perhaps be recognised that many of the institutions involved in partnerships for development are the very institutions around which the structure is built – so it would be extremely difficult for them, however good their intentions, to do anything other than reinforce it.

This challenge affects not just partnerships themselves, but also the ability to look objectively at their role as agents of inclusive development. The hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism and capitalism – the framework in which partnerships inevitably operate - makes it very difficult to stand back and assess the wider ways in which they interact with complex power structures. In other words they will inevitably, if they are judged at all, be judged on their own terms. If partnerships arise out of and can only be critiqued from within the current paradigm, then review and revision may be possible, but not revolution.

Utting and Zammit wisely advocate moving "beyond pragmatism" in looking at partnerships, to analysis: "There is a tendency in the mainstream literature and best practice learning circles to suggest that reforms derive essentially from 'learning by doing'. In other words, pragmatism, rather than politics, is the keyword" (2006, p19).

Certainly we need to move beyond naïve models of "best practice" which take too much as read, and towards an approach which questions the terms of reference. And yet this is still a very new field, where we are (or should) also be learning through experience. Simply theorising partnerships becomes a hall of mirrors, where all the references lead back to each other in a never-ending circle, with only occasional injections of primary data, and where the analysis is almost always done by those in positions of power.

The ultimate realisation has to be that, in an imperfect world partnerships can only ever be an imperfect solution. But are they (one of) the best imperfect solutions we have? And if so, what straightforward ways are there that would at least help them to be as good as they could be? Perhaps an analytical pragmatism is needed, where we act because action needs to be taken, but in a reflective, analytical way which understands the context and which extracts the meta-learning from the process of partnership. We need to listen to the unheard voices that form part of this hybrid approach to development, so that the learning can be shared, and grown and built upon – added to by each partnership, but continually tested, and always in context.

Implications for policy

At a more practical level, what are the implications of this study for policy?

Firstly, the importance of an enabling environment for partnerships to flourish was highlighted by the respondents in our study, as discussed above. Uwafiokun confirms this view: "Part of the problem with existing partnership initiatives is government failure, either in terms of failure to adequately address its partnership responsibility or to ensure an enabling environment for CSR. The role of government as a driver of CSR is, therefore, of utmost importance if the different community development partnerships in the region are to achieve their full potential" (2007, p23).

Secondly, the role of government and IGOs as partners themselves needs to be taken seriously if they see partnership as a meaningful approach to development rather than just an easy option when dealing with intractable development problems. The UN needs to recognise that its processes are very different from those of its corporate partners and agree in advance, for example, how decision-making and budgetary reporting will be carried out. If partnerships are seen by governments as a viable development mechanism, they need to find ways of working which are compatible with long-term, inclusive, sustainable development solutions. If high staff turnover and annual funding cycles are inevitable, then ways of working need to be explored with their partners which will enable forward planning and recruitment of good people.

However, genuinely working with other organisations and groups, rather than simply imposing partnerships from above, is also essential. Rein et al point out that "Governmental 'top-down' creation of partnerships can generate problems for local implementation, because the specific needs and constraints arising from the latter will be likely to conflict with the more general policy directives imposed by the former ... By giving room at national policy level for flexible approaches that encourage the crafting of local solutions to local problems, partnerships (even when ... superimposed from on high) can be afforded a greater chance of success" (2005, p127).

There is also a responsibility for partnerships themselves to engage with local and/or national government where relevant rather than trying to "go it alone". Stott's partnership study highlights the problems that resulted from a partnership's lack of contact and cooperation with national-level government agencies concerned with education, which could have assisted the development of a more sustainable, replicable model (2007, p9).

Thirdly, responses to our study indicate that, for effective partnership activities to continue beyond the short-term, they need to feed into decision-making and wider policy. Rein et al also suggest that, as partnership activities become institutionalised and "mainstreamed", working strategically with government departments and public sector bodies is important, so that public policy frameworks are influenced and partnership become part of policies and programmes (2005, p11).

However, perhaps the most important element, if partnerships are to contribute to long-term development and change, is to put in place frameworks which can extract and share the learning, and inform policy decisions.

It is very easy to criticise partnerships – both at an outcome level and as a development mechanism. They are still a relatively new and complex development mechanism, trying to tackle hitherto unsolvable problems. However, if we start from the assumption that they are – in the main – genuinely trying to contribute to development, then it is surely more constructive to help make them work effectively. If partnerships are seeking to bring about structural change and long-term development impacts, then they need to be firmly tied into genuinely inclusive consultation processes, operate within accountability frameworks, be properly supported and evaluated, and where appropriate lead ultimately to policy change and improvements in the lives of those they are trying to affect. If this can be achieved, then partnership has a lot to offer as a mechanism for inclusive development.

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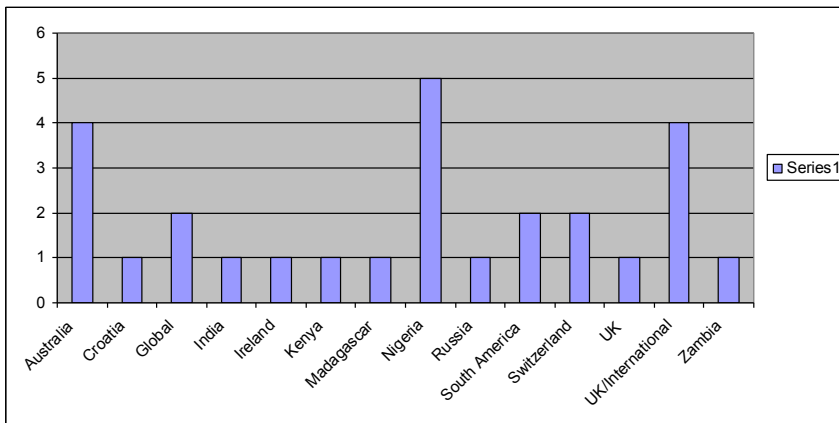
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Appendix 1

Partnership research questionnaire analysis:

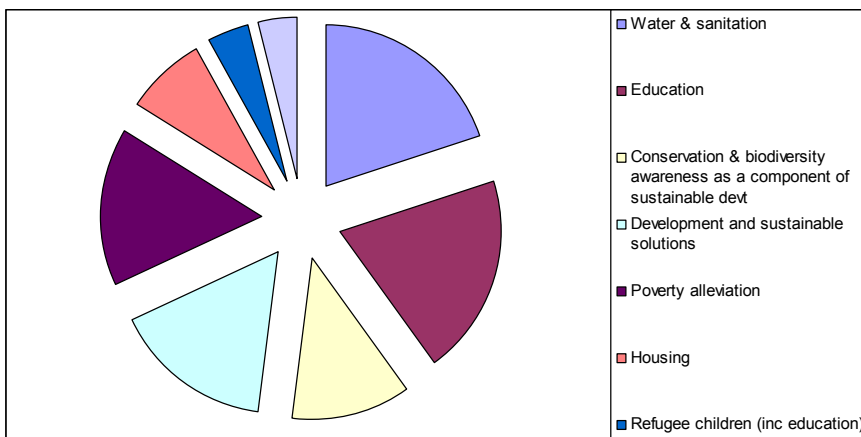
1. Location

The 27 partnerships represent a wide geographic spread. The largest number (eight) are based in Africa: five in Nigeria, and one each in Kenya, Madagascar and Zambia. Five partnerships are based in the UK (but of these, four operate either in Africa/Asia or globally), and two are based in Switzerland but operate internationally. Four are based in Australia and two in South America, two operate globally, while the others represented are based in Croatia, India, and the Republic of Ireland.



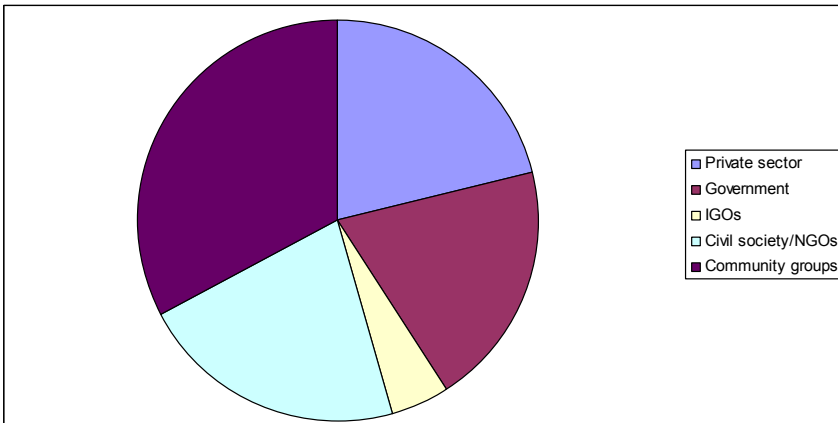
2. Aims

The most common aims (5 partnerships each) are improved water and sanitation for the poor, and education, followed by development and poverty alleviation (4 partnerships each). Three partnerships are targeting biodiversity and conservation awareness as a component of sustainable development. Housing for the poor is the target for two partnerships, while one focuses on refugee children and one on social inclusion.



3. Partners

The 26 partnerships represented in this question include a total of 311 partners, representing a range between 2 and 53 partners. Of the total, the largest number are community groups, comprising 102 partners – but this is somewhat skewed by one partnership which includes 44 community groups. Civil society (67) and the private sector (66) come next, then 61 government partners and 15 intergovernmental organisations.



4. Length of time

The average age of the 24 partnerships is 3.92 years, but this represents a range from 1 year to 18 (and includes a number of partnerships that are still operating). The most common age is 2-3 years: 13 partnerships in total.

5. Consultation exercise/needs analysis

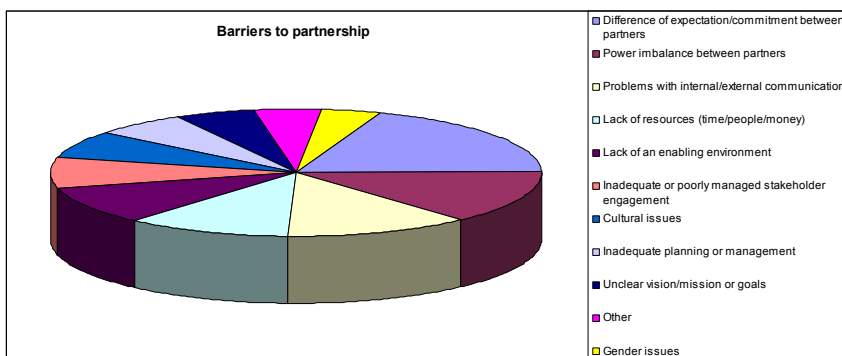
Of the 25 respondents, 22 had carried out a consultation exercise and/or needs analysis while only 3 had not. Of these three, one was a UK government initiative, one a “philanthropic” style corporate partnership, and one a UN initiative. Of these consultations however, at least 11 had not included the beneficiaries, raising questions about inclusivity in the partnership set-up. It should be noted that some of the partnerships viewed their civil society partners as having strong enough links with the beneficiaries to represent them. Of these 11, 8 had taken subsequent steps to ensure inclusivity after the launch of the partnership, including stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and capacity-building for beneficiaries.

6. Partnership agreement

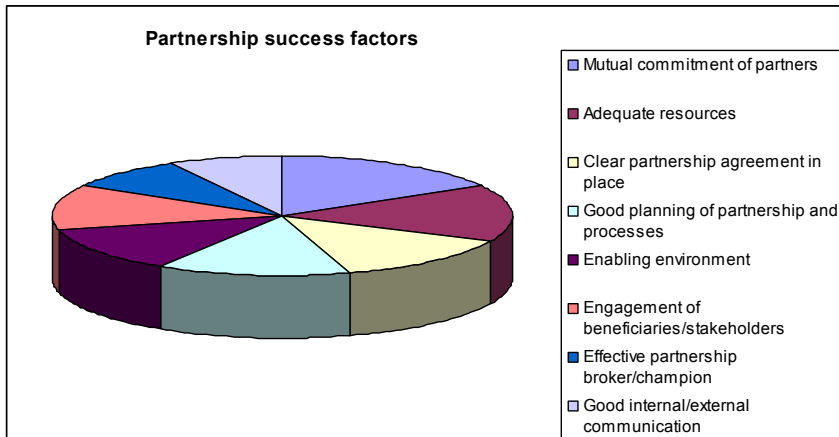
All but one of the 25 respondents to this question do have a partnership agreement in place. However, it is clear that the nature of these agreements varies widely, and in at least five cases it takes the form of an MOU. Participation in some agreements is also limited - one respondent commented “This was between the two main beneficiaries, not between all partners”.

7. Partnership challenges and success factors

By far the largest set of challenges to effective partnership relate to the relationship between the partners themselves. The weighted responses show that the greatest of these is a difference of expectation and/or commitment between partners (rating 25), followed by a power imbalance (18) and communication problems (16). The other two key barriers are lack of resources (rating 14) and lack of an enabling environment (13).



Respondents' perception of partnership success factors is more evenly distributed, with mutual commitment of partners rating highest (with a weighted average of 27 points) and communication as the lowest (13 points). Adequate resources rate next (25) followed by a clear partnership agreement and good planning (22 points each). Interestingly, engagement of beneficiaries and/or stakeholders only ranks joint 5th out of 8, which appears to tie in with the lack of consultation with beneficiaries noted in section 5.



8. Accountability

Of the 24 respondents, 18 said they are operating within an accountability framework and 6 are not. While in some cases these are clearly formal frameworks, in other cases they either take the form of regular reporting, or only appear to be taken seriously by some of the partners – for example: “The partnership unit sends monthly reports to the corporate partners. On the other hand, corporate partners do not feel accountable.”

9. Reasons for setting up a partnership

The most commonly cited reason for partnering was, understandably, where one partner cannot achieve the goals on their own. Six of the 21 respondents also stressed the importance of mutual benefit and complimentary skills and goals, while five considered a key motivator to be obtaining adequate resources (although one points out that it should not just be about who holds the purse strings, but about recognising what each partners brings to the table). Complex issues and large or global-scale projects were seen by four as reasons for partnering, while three saw it as a way to address power imbalances.

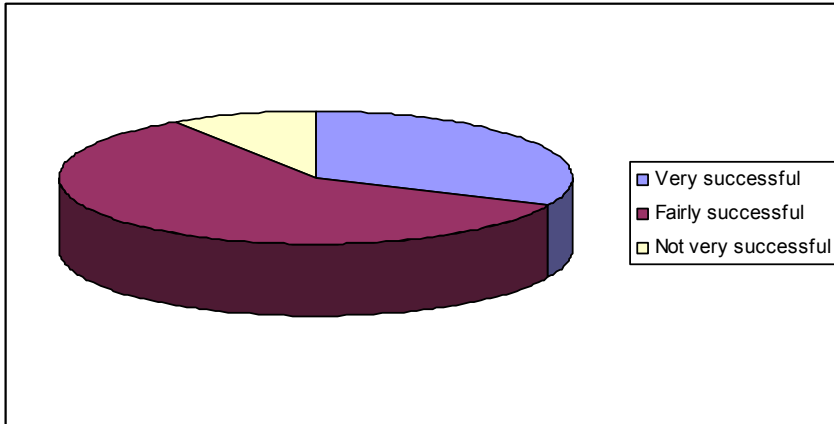
10. Reasons not to partner

Respondents suggested the following as situations where partnership should be avoided:

- When goals or motives are not compatible, sectors are not linked or do not understand each other, or partners cannot agree. (8 respondents)
- Straightforward issues with clear market-based, community or political solutions. (7)
- Where money is the main driver, or profit the only goal. (7)
- Where people may be harmed, either through delay caused by consultation in emergency situations, or through participation within a context of conflict. (4)
- Where governments are trying to offset social injustice by placating civil society, are too weak to manage private sector inputs, or cannot accept equality and shared decision-making (3)
- Power - where control is hierarchical and/or local people are not consulted in changes that will affect their lives (2)
- Where a company is simply trying to improve a poor image through partnering with a "credible" organisation, or just trying to "sell more soap" with no interest in long-term solutions.(2)

11. Partnership success

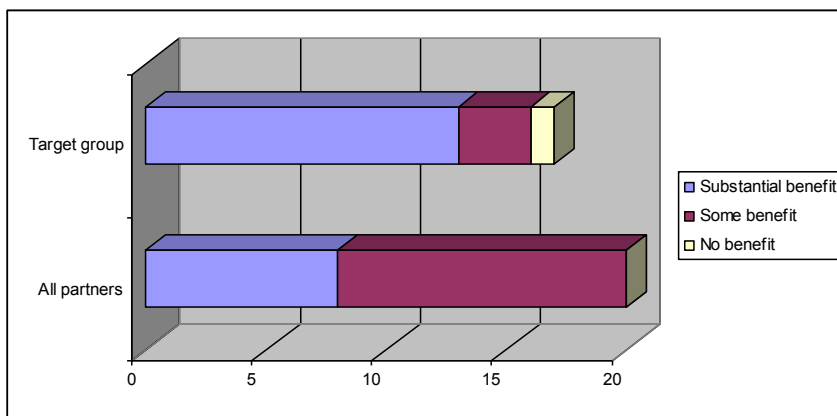
Reports of success were mixed, with the majority (11 of 21) feeling that their partnership was “fairly successful”, 7 regarding it as “very successful” and 2 as “not very successful”. No one, however, felt their partnership had completely failed.



Measures of success varied, with respondents differentiating between the immediate goals of successful partnering, and the longer terms outcome goals. As one commented: “This depends on how success is defined. Would it be based on the objectives indicated on the partnership agreement or include or be limited to the underlying expectations which most partnerships have? E.g. in a certain partnership, one partner wants money, the other wants legitimacy by association. The mere act of coming together satisfies these underlying needs of the separate partners, which may be termed success, even if the written objectives are not achieved.”

Some respondents stressed the difficulties of changing structures, with comments such as “We are working in a system that has got firmly entrenched over a period of sixty years. It will take time to get this system to move”, and “As ever, the project turns out to be more complex than foreseen; volatile national level issues determine overall success”.

12. Benefits achieved

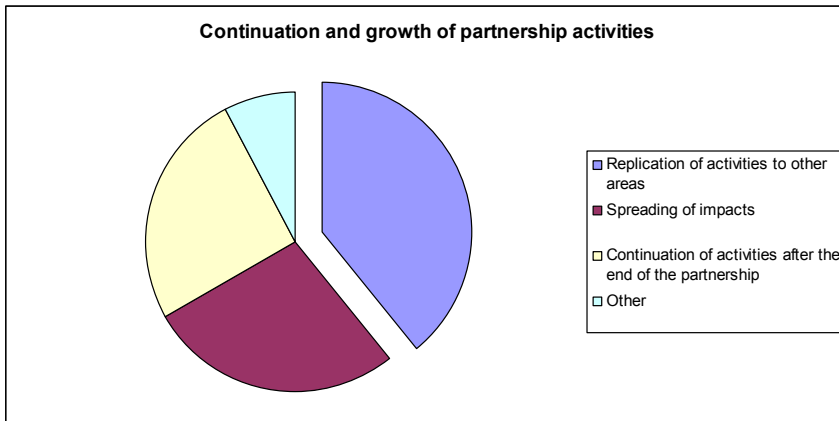


Overall, the outcomes of partnering were seen to be positive, with all partners gaining some benefit and some gaining substantial benefit, while the target groups for most (13 of 17) projects were seen as benefiting substantially, and only one not benefiting at all.

13. Continuation and growth of partnership activities

Of the 22 responses, 20 felt that their partnership would grow through replication to other areas, while only one feared that the partnership would not continue at all. Three commented that the

future of the activities had been assured through their institutionalisation within government policy, and this appears to be an important factor in “mainstreaming” outcomes.



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