



PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

CURRENT ISSUES IN CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

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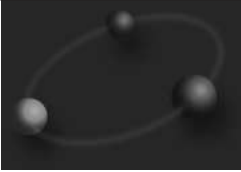
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Introduction

It is a great pleasure to bring you the third edition of *Partnership Matters*. This annual publication continues to share new thinking and practice in cross-sector partnerships through the work of those involved in the Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (PCCP), which is developed and managed as a collaboration between the International Business Leaders Forum and the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry.

As it moves towards the final stages of Cohort Four, PCCP continues to go from strength to strength with participants now coming from countries as far afield as Australia, Chile, Ecuador, Ghana, Iran, Sakhalin Island and the United Arab Emirates. Policy institutes, multi-national corporations, international and national NGOs and donor agencies are all represented well, although it remains a serious challenge to find ways and means of enabling key players from the public sector to participate. The wide variety of national and organisational backgrounds on the course is a reflection of the continued and growing interest in partnerships globally and the increased publicity that they have been awarded as a result of their espousal by major players across all sectors.

In response to such international attention, there has been an increased expectation upon those involved in PCCP to take a lead in promoting ever more systematic and methodological approaches to the study of partnerships. Last year we pointed out in our introduction to *Partnership Matters* that, if Simon Zadek was right in suggesting that “the partnership movement had come of age”, then understanding and sharing the lessons from different partnership experiences was crucial. This challenge has been taken up by further developing and refining the focus and content of PCCP so that it ensures an appropriate blending of the “art” and “science” of partnering through combining experience, reflection and the academic rigour required of an institution such as the University of Cambridge. We hope that the reader will see this mirrored in the articles contained in this edition of the journal.

Our keynote article this year is by Donald Reeves. From his perspective of trying to re-build religious and political relationships in Bosnia, he challenges what he sees as the de-humanisation of development language and funding procedures. His piece is provocative and, as those course participants in Cohorts One, Two and Three who have heard him

speak will remember, captures something of the restlessness of spirit that can be so important in challenging the status quo and demanding radical change. Ros Tennyson, one of PCCP’s Co-Directors and herself a prolific writer on partnership issues, has adapted Donald’s paper for the journal and contributed an endnote.

The portfolio of assignments submitted by PCCP participants includes a review paper which provides an overview of literature on a partnership-related topic; a reflective essay which analyses the learning from activities during the course and a final project which applies course learning to the individual partnering activities of course participants. In the past we have included summaries of some of the best final projects in *Partnership Matters* but this year, in recognition of the inquiry, analysis and broad scope of some of the topics addressed, we have chosen to draw on a wider range of participant contributions and include a selection from both review papers and project summaries. In this way it is hoped that the reader will gain a flavour of how the course is promoting new strands of ‘thinking in progress’ on partnership issues within a solid academic structure and discipline.

We start with a full piece by Gisela Velasco on the subject of Knowledge Management and Partnerships. Gisela was an outstanding participant in Cohort Three, gaining the course's first distinction. As a tutor on this year's course, PCCP has continued to benefit from her unique insight and skills. In this paper she examines Knowledge Management in relation to a partnership in the Philippines and analyses how a complex cross-sector partnership among eight organisations, addressing sources of conflict and poverty on the island of Mindanao, can take back its experience and transform it into new knowledge.

Much of the review and research work in Cohort Three concentrated on the importance of the individual in the partnering process and the interplay between the individual and the organisation. Gilles Goepfert of the French railway engineering company, TSO, examines this phenomenon by looking at the opportunities that partnership provides for individual transformation to impact organisations.

Kerri Hancock, formerly of Rio Tinto Australia and now working as a freelance project manager, takes this notion a stage further in her exploration of employee engagement partnerships. She asks, with specific reference to companies in Australia, whether the involvement of individuals in such collaborations has the potential for generating an integrated CSR culture.

Kerri makes the observation that leadership is vital to the development of changing cultures

and this is a topic covered by Basheer Habib, an independent consultant from Canada. He examines the significance of leadership in cross-sector partnerships by drawing on selections from the extensive body of literature on this topic and combining it with his own research. In doing so he attempts to define the crucial ingredients for leadership success in partnerships.

As well as individual engagement, the involvement of stakeholders in partnerships is also an important issue. Groups that appear to be all too frequently side-lined merely as 'beneficiaries', as opposed to 'partners', often belong to the community. Stefanie Koch of the Holcim Group and Olagoke Macaulay of Shell Petroleum Development Company in Nigeria (SPDC), both of whom have been involved extensively in community development work, reflect upon this topic. Stefanie provides an overview of how participatory engagement processes in partnership can be used to more effectively engage stakeholders and encourage empowerment. Olagoke, meanwhile, addresses the challenges involved in community engagement for SPDC. His frank piece is a real testimony to the often invisible work on the ground of a company that has wrestled with this issue in the full gaze of publicity.

Because of his own background working in Mexico and the United States, Sean Ansett of Gap Inc. is interested in the issue of national cultural challenges in relation to partnerships. His contribution looks at the possibilities of achieving a more synchronised 'partnership tango'

that takes different cultural models into account.

Elena Korf, who works with the International Business Leaders Forum in Russia, explores the issue of institution-building in relation to two partnerships with which she has worked. Her findings suggest that flexibility in institution-building is a key strength for many partnerships due to the varied nature of the different collaborating partners.

Last year we included a summary of a PCCP 'learning partnership', in which participants from different backgrounds work together on an action research project over a six-month period drawing on their own partnering experiences to inform this enquiry. This year our learning partnership consists of Andrew Bone of the De Beers Group; Andrew Donnelly from The Australian Museum; Cynthia Goytia from Torcuato di Tella University in Buenos Aires; Krzysztof Kwatara, an independent consultant from Poland; Irene Mutalima from the Zambian-based micro-finance institution, Christian Enterprise of Zambia (CETZAM) and Salma Sadikha who works for the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) in India. Their varied experiences have been used to develop a series of general findings about cross-sector partnerships relating to issues of incentives, people, agreements, roles and responsibilities, resources and processes.

The partnering themes identified by the learning partnership are being tackled on the ground by a growing number of PCCP alumni. This year, in order to give

our readers an idea of the on-going partnering challenges being addressed by this group, *Partnership Matters* includes a brief update on the activities of some of the graduates of PCCP's first cohort who completed the course in December 2002. Clare Verberne of Rio Tinto Australia; Jonathan Stacey of BirdLife International; Maria Bobenrieth of Nike's Europe, Middle East and Africa region; Mounir Kleibo of the United Nations Development Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) and Karolina Myzk from UNDP's Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, provide us with a selection of illustrations from different contextual perspectives which demonstrate how their partnering work has developed since graduating.

PCCP is part of a wider programme of cutting edge partnership activities under the umbrella of The Partnering Initiative (TPI). The Initiative explores more widely, and in practice, the issues and challenges that cross-sector partnership work involves. Some of these activities are profiled in the journal. They include The Case Study project, which is a unique one-year programme developed by TPI in collaboration with the Alcan Prize for Sustainability and SEED (Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development) to compile partnership 'learning' case studies. The case studies will be profiled on the Initiative's website and a publication entitled: *Making The Case, Partnership Case Studies as Tools for Change* will be published in December 2005, involving contributors from around the world.

The book *Working Together; A Critical Analysis of Cross Sector Partnerships in Southern Africa*, meanwhile, has emerged from a two-year research project funded by DFID/EC-Prep to examine how six partnerships in Southern Africa have addressed pressing development issues in the areas of agriculture, health and education. The project was managed by The Cambridge Programme for Industry (CPI) with a team that included Stuart Reid, Co-Director of PCCP; Melanie Rein, a former tutor and regular contributor to the course; and myself, as well as two PCCP graduates; Stan Hardman (Cohort One) and Kavwanga Yambayamba (Cohort Two). Stan and Kavwanga, who are from South Africa and Zambia respectively, were instrumental in mobilising local researchers and gaining direct access for the team to partnership projects in their countries.

We are also pleased to announce a new publication from Ros Tennyson. Designed to develop aspects of her earlier publication: *The Partnering Toolbook*, the new book is entitled *The Brokering Guidebook* and it explores the skills and responsibilities of 'brokers' in the partnering process.

As readers of previous editions of *Partnership Matters* will recognise, PCCP has grown and changed a great deal since Cohort One and this has also been reflected at programme and delivery level. Ken Caplan and I have been joined as tutors by Gisela Velasco, a Philippines-based consultant who was a course participant in 2004, and Santiago Porto, Membership Development Manager of the UK-based Ethical Trading Initiative. The

Programme Team has benefited from the skills and expertise of a new Programme Manager, Ruth Findlay, and a Senior Project Coordinator, Becky Simpson. At the same time Gill Coleman from the University of Bath School of Management has become an External Examiner. This new group of individuals has provided PCCP with new perspectives and ideas and the course has gained enormously as result.

The combination of new course participants and programme team members continues to benefit from the innovative leadership of the two PCCP Course Directors, Ros Tennyson and Stuart Reid. Their ability to successfully combine an exciting mix of different course ingredients provides its uniqueness. They have been assisted in this through the continued support and involvement of individuals such as Nelson Phillips (The University of Cambridge Judge Institute of Management); Nigel Ewington (TCO International Diversity Management); Michael Jacobs (Kenosis), Louise Kjaer (COWI A/S) and Martin Kalungu-Banda (Oxfam UK) among others; and organisations such as UNDP, Rio Tinto, Shell, Nike and Thames Water, which fund participants from both their own organisations and their key non-corporate partners. Particular mention should also be made here of Alcan's award of five bursaries to NGOs that were 'runners up' in the Alcan Sustainability Prize. This will continue on an annual basis, thereby providing suitably qualified individuals from smaller NGOs with the opportunity of taking a course they would otherwise have no possibility of accessing.

These contributions add to the richness of PCCP and provide it with a unique learning space for the creative debate, discussion and investigation that it has enjoyed throughout the four years of its existence.

The learning from PCCP continues to be integral to the development of TPI itself. After just over a year in existence TPI has taken on a wide range of activities including two areas of particular focus: the first in providing partnership review and evaluation services to a range of partnerships; and the second in the area of professional development for partnership practitioners, including tailored programmes for specific organisations, both corporate and non-corporate. These varied projects and programmes have made TPI a real hub of international partnership activity and research.

As a result of TPI's growth and expansion, this will be the last edition of *Partnership Matters* that draws solely from PCCP. In future years it will broaden its base to include new material from TPI projects and programmes. The knowledge-base of PCCP alumni and participants will of course continue to be a central part of this but it will be as one element of a larger, more packed and varied journal that reflects the changing nature of the interest in partnerships internationally and the new insights arising from TPI's work.

We hope you enjoy reading this publication. It has certainly been a pleasure to edit it and to see the many exciting developments in the study of Cross-sector Partnership over the last three years.

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July 2005

KEYNOTE

Imagination Confiscated: Partnership-Building vs Business Speak?

By Donald Reeves

*“What is the price of experience?
Do men buy it for a song?
Or wisdom for a dance in the street?
No, it is bought with the price
Of all a man hath, his house,
his wife, his children.
Wisdom is sold in the desolate
market where none come to buy,
And in the wither'd field where the
farmer plows for bread in vain.”*

WILLIAM BLAKE

Banja Luka is the administrative centre of the Srpska Republic, one of the two entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina and created in 1995 as part of the Dayton Agreement. It did not constitute a war zone during the Bosnian conflict. The city saw no fighting, but it experienced the worst abuses of human rights in the whole country. Nearly all non-Serbs were forcibly removed from their homes (the numbers are still being contested but are between 30,000 and 70,000). As they left the city, Serbs, being driven out of Krajina and Sarajevo by Croats and Muslims respectively, took their place. Despite the efforts since the war to encourage Muslims back, most have not returned. This is due to a number of things including continuing violence and discrimination, lack of housing and poor employment prospects.

We discovered our ‘mission’ in Banja Luka as we learned about the deliberate attempt to destroy all evidence of the Ottoman

Empire. This was exemplified by the destruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in the heart of the city – an operation undertaken with military precision, literally removing stone by stone probably the finest mosque in Europe that had been listed as a heritage site by UNESCO. We decided to help the city – against all the odds – to rebuild the mosque. We have described this as a potentially unique collaboration between Islam and Christianity where the mosque and other buildings around it can become a place where cultural memories are honoured and where ‘those who do not usually speak are heard by those who do not usually listen’. (This is the central tenet of the new Banja Luka Civic Forum established as a partnership between different elements of the city.)

Having made the first tentative steps in this direction, we met with an unexpected impediment. We discovered not simply that securing funding for the project is difficult, but – far more significantly – that the process of obtaining funding compounds the very problems the funding seeks to address.

Put simply, it is our experience that the values which inform funding – whether in governments, grant-making bodies or the European

Commission – contradict the very aims of our small NGO committed to the slow work of addressing issues of justice, reconciliation and collaboration.

Our experience can best be characterised by one funding bid, though it applies to many others. We were encouraged to apply for funding for a three-year project by the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. We submitted the bid in November 2002 and the results were due to be announced in June 2003. Only in October 2003 were we told our bid had failed. Finding out why we had failed was impossible since we were never allowed contact with any individual but were required to communicate to an e-mail address that disappeared as soon as the deadline for submissions was past.

One reason for this is to prevent any opportunity for bribing officials. Of course, this is valid – but it masks another reason. Given the way that these applications are framed and evaluated, human contact is rendered unnecessary. Bids are evaluated using a *technical and financial grid*. The title says it all. Social engineering is the core conviction that affirms that the world can be analysed, observed and measured and that all activities can be pre-decided,

controlled and managed. If the world is unpredictable, uncertain and unstable a well-constructed 'logframe' will ensure that the project is predictable, certain and stable!

The language of applications is now riddled with 'business speak': impact, stakeholders, fast-track, level-playing fields, resources, targets, bullet points, delivery, out-sourcing, bench-marking, ring-fencing, business plans, key performance indicators, measurement. The language is ugly, sloppy and meaningless. I remember one official with whom we spoke before deciding whether or not to proceed who said: 'Make sure you deliver the deliverables in a sustainable way'. When I challenged him to define in what sense he was using the word sustainable in relation to our work in Banja Luka, he could not answer me.

The values, assumptions and principles informing this process of funding are part of a culture of 'materialistic determinism' that has become so pervasive, so embedded in the way we operate and the institutions we have created, that they are perceived as facts. This is based on a view of human nature and human endeavour that is reductionist and mechanistic. It takes no account of the astonishing potential in each of us to create something unexpected and utterly unpredictable.

What we have constructed, we can change. We need not – indeed we must not – be enthralled by reductionism and 'business speak'. We are facing a kind of crisis of epistemology – a crisis of what counts as 'knowledge'. But there is

another way. This is the way of 'knowing' through imagination.

Imagination is a problematic concept for our post-modern world. Post-modernism describes, sometimes too extravagantly, the fragmentation, incoherence and nihilism of contemporary culture. Only 'market economics' and 'the market state' remain unchanging and invincible. A brief sketch of the genealogy of one aspect of the imagination will show that our present melancholy landscape has not always been so.

Once upon a time, the artist used his skill and honed his disciplines to lead the worshipper to the spirit through the stylised features and passive eyes of the icon. Then the painter created the image as a means of self-expression – whether through self-portraits (for example, the late works of Rembrandt chronicling his physical disintegration before death) or through revelation of their mental condition (for example, Van Gogh's frenzied landscapes that so vividly capture his suicidal state). Today's Pop Poster revels in surface effects, incorporating images ransacked arbitrarily from any source.

Or to put the matter differently: the artist who in the past was a craftsman whose task was to serve and imitate the plans of the Creator has been replaced by the artist as 'operator', simply playing with images, symbols and metaphors. This is a huge topic, well beyond the scope of this paper, but touched upon to suggest that in order to move beyond post-modern confusion we need to pay attention to how we arrived at where we are, and then to look more creatively for a way forward.

Imagination is nothing to do with daydreaming, wishful thinking or the creation of the fantastical.

Imagination is that capacity to picture, portray and receive the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance and it is a valid way of 'knowing'. When the imagination truly begins to function we live as if we are free, as if justice will be done, as if forgiveness and peace are possible. The imagination helps us to reject as false what has been long accepted as if beyond question. The expression of imagination is often unreasonable and indispensable.

There is something old-fashioned, steady and ancient about this form of hopeful and ethical imagination. It is not about 'pie in the sky when you die' neither is it 'hoping for the best'. It is a shared and public assertion in which our inter-connectedness as human beings is expressed and nourished. Far from being separate, distant and detached from each other in a world informed merely by facts of materialistic determinism, there is a striving for connection, communion and community even though at every turn these aspirations are being threatened and are often defeated.

The conscious incorporation of what I am now calling 'ethical imagination' has at least three implications for peacemaking and partnership-building:

Firstly, there has to be a willingness to trust whatever emerges: not manipulating, not even searching for explanations. Attention becomes as necessary as analysis. Stories as well as statistics. I am trying to convey the journey of an artist or a poet.

Secondly, the process is as much a product as the end result. Time is needed – a lot of time. This is about the ‘long haul’ not a ‘quick fix’. I am speaking about a weaver’s patience and quiet determination to continue weaving a strong new cloth, even when some threads start to unravel.

Thirdly, the future cannot be anticipated and contained (as required in a ‘logframe’). There is always a tentative, provisional quality that is essential if the imagination is to flourish and a new reality is to come into being. It is similar to a composer who has the germ of an idea but doesn’t know what the piece of music will actually sound like until it is finished.

If these things are true – namely that the ethical imagination is central to our aspirations to build collaboration – then it requires a major upheaval in thinking and in the way our organisations and institutions function.

Endnote

ROS TENNYSON

Donald Reeves is an extraordinary individual. On ‘retiring’ as the vicar of St James’s Church, Piccadilly in London – where he transformed the church and its grounds into a heady mixture of inter-faith services, a refuge for those in need, a haven for music lovers, craft market, community centre and much more besides – he went on to found a new organisation called ‘The Soul Of Europe’. Dedicated to promoting reconciliation and hope between people of different faiths in places where racial and religious hatred

is rife, this tiny organisation (always teetering on the edge of insolvency) has, in the view of some of those most deeply affected, done more to bridge the chasm between Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats than the combined might of the international agencies.

For years I have eschewed a 19th century view of the leader (as a towering individual with authority over many others) in favour of a view of leadership as an innate and often hidden quality operating in the background, dedicated to the empowerment of others. Having worked with Donald in Banja Luka (the ‘capital’ of the Serbian part of Bosnia though until the war a predominantly Muslim town) and seen his energy and dedication first hand I have had to radically overhaul my own views of what makes for leadership.

Donald epitomises the kind of leadership that is based on force of personality, on huge personal dedication and on simply refusing to take ‘no’ for an answer. He is eccentric, idiosyncratic and (sometimes) infuriating but he is a constant reminder of the virtue and value of righteous indignation as the driving force enabling an individual to stand against hatred and injustice, wherever it manifests.

Many people have said to me that Bosnia is not ready for a partnership approach to development – that the level of trauma and the complexity of the many unresolved issues make a development approach based on collaboration unthinkable. But if the collaboration slowly emerging

to re-build the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka succeeds – which has only got this far because of this one man’s intervention – a major step will have been taken and the foundations will have been laid for cautious optimism for the future of a devastated country.

Cross-Sector Partnership in Action: A Framework for Knowledge Management

By Gisela Velasco

This article deals with the topic of Knowledge Management as it applies to a learning partnership in the Philippines.¹ Takeuchi and Nonaka define Knowledge Management as the process of continuously creating new knowledge, disseminating it widely through the organisation and embodying it quickly in new products/services, technologies, and systems.² The focus of this paper is to analyse the application of this theory in a non-business setting, where eight organisations have come together to test and apply a partnership-building methodology to address long-term causes of conflict and poverty.³ The paper will analyse the relevant elements of knowledge creation and propose how this framework can be useful in meeting the knowledge creation needs of the partnership.

The Learning Partnership for Mindanao

Knowledge creation is at the heart of innovation. In this age of complexity and constant change, the ability to bring innovative products or ideas to the market at a rapid rate can provide a company with competitive advantage. In developing countries like the Philippines, those who work to promote social justice and human equity are also pressed to become innovative. What drives this process is partly

the need to maximise the benefit of increasingly scarce funding resources. What used to be an environment of easily available development funding has been converted to a situation of strong competition for smaller development budgets. Another factor is the increasing drive among development activists to produce exemplary results, what Martin Kalungu-Banda has called “superior performance”.⁴ Despite years of development work, social problems have worsened, poverty has increased and conflicts have persisted. The civil society sector’s need to learn from mistakes and create knowledge quickly is increasing. As Fowler describes it, these organisations have emerged from and been driven by action, activism and deep belief in doing practical things with and for people.⁵ The rigor and discipline of learning has always been the least prioritised. Present times though, indicate that belief and action are no longer enough.

In the latter part of 2003, I was involved in leading the formation of a learning partnership in the Philippines involving eight organisations. The impetus for this was my own institution’s interest in testing and validating the notion that bridging across sectors can lead to increased resources and commitment to reduce poverty and increase equity. Steven Pierce of Synergos

defines bridging as a method of coordinating the energy, interests and resources of multiple and diverse actors/stakeholders in a way that builds trust and stimulates collaborative action.⁶ Synergos’ premise is that a number of divides prevent people from collaborating with one another and key individuals are needed to take on the bridging stance to build partnerships.

In the Philippines, Synergos and its local partner the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), have developed and tested a course on leading collaborative action for societal change.⁷ One of the training courses focused on bringing in key actors to address the conflict issue on the island of Mindanao. But one-time training of leaders alone was deemed insufficient. Addressing the sources of conflict and decades of neglect for the welfare of the Muslim population in Mindanao requires a continued, comprehensive and integrated approach from all sectors. AIM and Synergos deemed it appropriate that Mindanao be the pilot site for testing the bridging divides methodology. Leaders of six institutions working in Mindanao have previously undergone training in the bridging methodology and were invited to join the initiative.

All expressed willingness to participate in the interest of improving their own approach to their work.

The group tasked itself to apply and evaluate the ‘bridging divides’ methodology over three years to reduce the incidence of conflict and poverty in Muslim communities. The partnership is premised on the notion that development projects and skills training will not be enough unless there is also an increase in the trust and cooperation across sectors, across ethnic groups and between these Muslim communities and the decision-makers and policy-makers. A key aspect of the work is the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships focused around community peace-building and development initiatives which increase social capital, access to assets, services and resources and promote long-term peace and reconciliation. The six partner institutions will identify the twelve communities that would be the pilot sites of the initiative. These communities are those that are already part of their on-going programme, and which they think will benefit from adopting the bridging divides methodology. Staff of the partner institutions will take the lead in facilitating the convening of stakeholders and the formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships. AIM and Synergos will provide capacity-building support to enhance their ability to manage these collaborative initiatives and partnerships. A key output of the initiative is the development of a replicable methodology for bridging divides at the community level that can be applied in other

municipalities and regions of the Philippines and in other countries.

In the course of four months of designing the initiative, the eight organisations have consolidated the partnership and are now poised to embark on the first training of the staff in facilitating bridging processes in the community. In the meantime, other elements of the partnership need to be discussed and developed, including how to establish the connection between experience in the field and theory development. A system for managing knowledge creation is needed as the partner institutions apply the strategy. This will ensure that staff participating in the initiative get the opportunity to reflect on their experience and heighten their own learning. The system also has to ensure that the new approach does not become an isolated process and that learning permeates within each institution as well as the learning partnership itself. Finally, if this methodology were to be disseminated to other organisations, the process of how the methodology itself was adapted and mainstreamed within an institution will be a valuable contribution.

The Theory of Knowledge Creation

The basic assumption of the theory of knowledge creation developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi is that human knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge.⁸ Explicit knowledge

can be seen, heard and shared, through numbers, sounds, and words. Training manuals, project reports, statements of vision and aspirations are examples of explicit knowledge that a non-profit institution would possess. Tacit knowledge on the other hand does not come in concrete form and therefore is less easy to share and communicate. It is often developed over years of experience and training and provides the basis by which we perceive the world. Examples of this are expectations of social justice and empowerment, or norms of participation and consensus decision-making.

Takeuchi and Nonaka argue that knowledge is created and utilised by the organisation when it converts tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and vice versa.⁹ The two authors identified four modes of knowledge conversion, namely: (1) *socialisation*: a process to facilitate sharing and creating tacit knowledge through direct experience (from tacit to tacit); (2) *externalisation*: articulating tacit knowledge through dialogue and reflection (from tacit to explicit); (3) *combination*: systematising and applying explicit knowledge and information (from explicit to explicit); and (4) *internalisation*: learning and acquiring new tacit knowledge and practice (from explicit to tacit).

Each mode by itself is not sufficient to create knowledge. It is the conversion from the tacit knowledge of the individual to the explicit knowledge of the organisation that allows an organisation to develop innovation.

However, the same explicit knowledge has to be internalised by individuals as tacit knowledge in order to explore new areas of work. This tacit knowledge accumulated at the individual level has then to be socialised again with other organisational members. Nonaka and Takeuchi's model of knowledge creation, called SECI model, operates in a spiral process, starting from an individual level and moving out to encompass work team, division, the entire organisation and outside groups.¹⁰

Both Ichijo¹¹ and Nonaka and Toyama¹² highlight the importance of an enabling context, a shared space – physical, virtual or mental or all of the above – that fosters the development of relationships, connection and communication among the organisational members. Based on the Japanese idea of *ba* (or “place”), the space must facilitate sharing of local knowledge across organisation or beyond geographic and cultural borders.

Ahmadjian¹³ further extends the theory of Nonaka and Takeuchi in the context of inter-organisational knowledge creation pointing out that it shares a number of features with knowledge creation within an organisation. Ahmadjian notes that the most important of these features is the creation of a *ba* or a space for interaction to encourage the inter-organisational community to engage in the spiralling knowledge creation process – ways must be found to nurture a culture, a language to facilitate exchange of ideas, and an atmosphere of trust and care.¹⁴ Thus, in the process of creating *ba*, a number of additional factors

need to be considered – the number of organisations/ institutions collaborating in the knowledge-creation process, the ties by which these institutions are linked and the temporal duration of these relationships.

Various authors have pointed to the challenges that confront the work of knowledge creation. Takeuchi and Nonaka acknowledge that knowledge as a resource becomes obsolete as soon as it is created.¹⁵ A constant and continuing process for knowledge creation need to deal with the challenges an individual confronts.

Foremost of these challenges is the time requirement. Senge points out that it takes considerable time to surface assumptions, examine their consistency and accuracy, and see how different models can be knit together into more systemic perspectives.¹⁶ Another source of resistance is that learning can be a threatening experience to the individual. Ichijo notes how new situations can be overwhelming and provoke loss of interest on the part of the individual.¹⁷ New knowledge requires changes in the person and breaking away from old habits can threaten the very personal identity, further inhibiting new behaviour.

To address these challenges, Ichijo proposes five key tasks to assist the individual navigate through the process of knowledge creation.¹⁸ *Instilling a knowledge vision* is one key requirement which will justify and provide legitimacy to the entire knowledge creation process. *Managing conversations* is another key requirement, allowing

commonplace conversations within communities of practice to facilitate sharing of tacit knowledge. Organisations must also be able to *mobilise knowledge activists*, those in a position to support, encourage and energise the group to continue the process. *Creating the right context* for knowledge creation implies ensuring that the organisational structure should facilitate cross-functional exchanges to reinforce what Ichijo calls tacit-explicit knowledge interaction across many boundaries.¹⁹ Finally, *globalising local knowledge* is important to enable institutions to reduce time and cost for knowledge creation initiatives. Ichijo notes that this is critical when knowledge creation and utilisation are separated in time and space.²⁰

As a final point, Ichijo admits that while it is possible to manage related organisational processes such as community building and knowledge exchange, one cannot manage knowledge itself.²¹ In the end, Senge acknowledges that while learning is a collective process, the responsibility for learning can only come from individual choice.²²

Application to the Learning Partnership

The theory provides important starting points that the learning partnership can consider. The four modes of knowledge creation is one of these. At the level of the partner institution, a core group of two to three people have to be involved in the initiative so that the process of socialisation can occur. The shared experience of building multi-sectoral partnership enables tacit

knowledge to be developed in the process. Opportunities for this core group to regularly articulate and share their experiences have to be created within the institution (externalisation). This can be orally (in staff meetings or reflection sessions) and in written form (through journal writing, regular reports and narratives). The use of figurative language using metaphors, analogy and models must be kept in mind to better capture the complex elements of their partnership-building experiences.

The theory also provides a good basis for designing how the two other processes of knowledge creation – combination and internalisation – can be carried out inter-organisationally through the learning partnership. Combination involves combining different bodies of explicit knowledge to create a new knowledge system. AIM as an academic institution can provide additional research, materials and case studies to facilitate the process of developing new knowledge. Synergos through its global connection can provide experiences and knowledge available elsewhere. AIM and Synergos will take the lead in capturing the body of knowledge into explicit form for dissemination and socialisation to other institutions and settings, ensuring that parallel processes in the partner institutions have to be considered as well.

The key challenge though for the partnership is the creation of the *ba*. Four of the partner institutions have had previous relationships with each other but two of them have not worked

with the rest. Opportunities to make the partnership an environment where relationships can be nurtured to promote shared learning need to be created. The first live-in course will be one opportunity to do so but more activities for this purpose need to be planned. Another challenge is having two physical locations – Manila (where the leaders and head offices are) and Mindanao (where the communities and staff are). Provisions for building *ba* in both locales have to be considered as well.

Some of the tasks that Ichijo has outlined above will be helpful. Those leading the partnership have to develop a knowledge vision to guide the knowledge creation process of the group. The basic question of why the group exists needs to be answered thoughtfully and clearly before the training. Managing the conversations will also be critical. Opportunities for sharing tacit knowledge within the organisation, across the organisation, and in both Manila and Mindanao have to be consciously designed and developed amidst the busy routine for everyone. Identification of knowledge activists in each organisation will also be helpful. This core group can be the champions within their own institution as well as for the partnership over-all.

Knowledge creation though requires self-directed and self-motivated learners. In the learning partnership for Mindanao, this was evident in the choice of institutions that have undergone the previous bridging courses.

Leaders of these institutions have the knowledge and appreciation of the concept to be applied and tested, and have interest to use it for their own work. However, those who will actually be involved in the initiative still have to undergo the course itself. The selection of those who will be participating in this initiative is critical. At present, the partnership has as a general criterion: any staff that currently do work in Mindanao and can undertake partnership-building. It will be important to consider as well other dimensions related to knowledge creation such as their interest on the topic of bridging and partnership formation, their ability to engage in reflection, analysis and synthesis, and capacity to engage in effective communication. These aspects were not covered in the theory discussed above.

In conclusion, the theory of Knowledge Creation provides a useful basis to start framing an approach by which the learning partnership for Mindanao can develop its own knowledge management process. It provides insights as to how a learning partnership engaged in a complex arena of cross-sector partnership can take back its experience and transform it into new knowledge. The theory though can be further enriched with the inclusion of the criteria or requirements for effective learners rather than assuming the readiness of every individual to engage in knowledge creation.

NOTES

- ¹ Discussed in a lecture by Michael Barrett entitled “Cross-Sector Partnerships: Knowledge Management and Organization Change”, PCCP, Residential 1, 15 March 2004.
- ² Takeuchi, H. and Nonaka, I. (2004) ‘Preface’ in Takeuchi, H and Nonaka, I (Eds.) Hitotsubashi on Knowledge Management, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd), Singapore p.ix.
- ³ The eight organisations are composed of donor institutions (Consuelo Foundation, Local Governance Support Program, Philippine Development Assistance Program, Tabang Mindanaw), NGOs (CO Multiversity, Philippine Business for Social Progress), academic institution (Asian Institute of Management) and an international NGO (Synergos Institute).
- ⁴ Kalungu-Banda, M. (2004) “Changing Boundaries” presentation at the Residential One, Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership, 14 March 2004.
- ⁵ Fowler, A. (2000) The Virtuous Spiral: A Guide to Sustainability for Non-Governmental Organizations in International Development, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London and Virginia p.135.
- ⁶ Pierce, S. (2002) *Bridging Differences and Building Collaboration: The Critical Role of Leadership*, Synergos Institute, New York p.3.
- ⁷ While AIM took the lead in developing the course, the research and discussion forum happened in the global meetings that Synergos organised in a course of three years with other partners from Southern Africa and Latin America. By the end of 2003, AIM had trained about 150 individuals from the business, military, local government and civil society sectors. All courses have been received very favourably by those who attended.
- ⁸ Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (2004) ‘Theory of Organizational Knowledge Creation’ in Takeuchi, H and Nonaka, I (Eds.) Hitotsubashi on Knowledge Management, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd), Singapore p.53.
- ⁹ Takeuchi, H. and Nonaka, I. (2004) ‘Preface’ p.x.
- ¹⁰ Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (2004) p.65.
- ¹¹ Ichijo, K. (2004 p125), ‘From Managing to Enabling Knowledge’ in Takeuchi, H and Nonaka, I (Eds.) Hitotsubashi on Knowledge Management, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd), Singapore p.137.
- ¹² Nonaka, I. and Toyama, R. (2004 p91) ‘Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process’ in Takeuchi, H and Nonaka, I (Eds.) Hitotsubashi on Knowledge Management, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd), Singapore p.101
- ¹³ Ahmadjian, C. (2004 p227), ‘Inter-Organizational Knowledge Creation: Knowledge and Networks’ in Takeuchi, H and Nonaka, I (Eds.) Hitotsubashi on Knowledge Management, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd), Singapore p228.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p229.
- ¹⁵ Takeuchi, H. and Nonaka, I. (2004) ‘Preface’ p.ix.
- ¹⁶ Senge, P. M. (1990) *Senge, P. et. al. (1994) The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*, Currency Doubleday, New York p.304
- ¹⁷ Ichijo, K. (2004) pp.128–9
- ¹⁸ Ibid p.137
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p.144
- ²⁰ Ibid. p.149
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Senge (1990) p.360

Transcending Boundaries: How Partnering Can Promote Individual and Organisational Change

By Gilles Goepfert

Partnerships involve complex interactions between individuals, organisations and the emergent construct of the partnership. The role of the individual as the bridge and catalyst between the partnering institution, the other members of the partnership, and the partnership itself, is central to this interplay. This article focuses on the reciprocal interaction between individuals and partnerships and explores how the change of values prompted by the individual partnering experience is integrated into the fabric of the partnering organisation when transformative opportunities are correctly leveraged.

The impact of individuals on partnerships

Partnerships are constructed at two levels, at an organisational level by the participating organisations, but more fundamentally at the level of the individuals representing these organisations.¹ Business Partners for Development (BPD) captures this dual nature of partnerships when it states that, “Partnerships are likely to fail unless there are internal champions and sufficient institutional buy-in”.²

The depth of involvement in a partnership has great bearing on individual behaviour. A partnership ‘champion’, for example, will act differently to a

nominated representative who is not privy to the genesis of the partnership, even if their mandate appears *de prima facie* identical. The choice of the participants’ representative is therefore a crucial parameter within the partnering equation as individual behaviour can affect its effectiveness and even its very survival.

The effect of the partnership process on the individual

While individuals have a critical impact on the partnering process, they are also affected by their partnering experience. The cross-sectoral viewpoint required for effective operation in a partnering setting initiates a reflective self-awareness in the individual, forcing them to experience other modes of being. This increases the risk of institutional backlash for the individual if this personal change is not mirrored in the organisation.³ If the organisation’s involvement in the partnership is only peripheral, the identity conflict, or oscillation in Maiteny’s terminology,⁴ experienced by the committed individual is profound, especially if their new identity within the partnership is close to their personal values. The individual’s new role within the partnership may create an identity dissonance, and kick-start a sequence of psychodynamic changes.⁵ This process of change

occurs through feedback loops initiated by the very process of partnering; from the partnership itself, through the individual, to the organisation. These cascading effects are by no means unidirectional and can occur between any of the components and levels of the collaborative framework.

The transformation of the partnering organisation

While the partnership can be characterised as a vector of value and attitudinal change in the individual, it has a similar effect at the organisational level. The impetus for change is likely to be mediated by the individual representing the partnering organisation in an attempt to reconcile their changed identity with their pre-partnership role within their original organisation. The tension created by this identity disconnect forces the individual and the organisation to ask themselves, “What do we value?”

The organisational representative brings these questions of identity and values to the fore, and thereby acts as a change agent within the boundaries of the organisation, especially if the initial impetus to get involved in the partnership came from the top management of the organisation. Unfortunately, most partnerships initially operate in

an organisational vacuum and such change is likely to elicit strong resistance, as patterns of cooperation, which do not fit pre-existing mental models, are distorted by human perception mechanisms and seen as threatening. There is thus a need for organisational learning to enable these new modes of cooperation to be integrated into the fabric of the organisations.

Although individual participants in partnerships operate at the fringe of the normative behaviour of their parent organisations, and are indelibly changed by the partnering process itself, this gives them an opportunity to transform the core values of the organisation. As such the progression of the individual pioneer can be the precursor for institutional metamorphosis. If the partnering organisation is a thought leader within its sector, the change may even ripple out to affect other entities.

Impact on practice

How can we facilitate a smoother partnering and change process? Firstly, by building in resilience and embedding the partnership at

several levels within the organisation. Secondly, by identifying and mentoring multi-faceted individuals with the correct sensitivity and openness, as well as authority and access to higher hierarchical levels of the organisation, to ensure continuity of involvement. Thirdly, by encouraging wider involvement in the partnering process to facilitate organisational learning by spreading partnership information across the organisation. Indeed, to avoid a premature departure of the organisation from the partnership, their representative has to ensure constant feedback to demonstrate the benefits, often intangible, accruing from involvement and the value for money of the resources being diverted to the partnership. Finally, and most importantly, if change is seen as inherent to the partnership process, the likelihood of the mutual benefits arising for the organisation, as well as society at large, is greatly enhanced.

Partnerships as a catalyst for innovative change

By placing the partnership construct into Wilber's 'all-quadrant, all-level' model,⁶ one

can infer that partnerships are but one step in the direction of further integration between the different sectors of human societies, i.e. leading to an open-ended co-evolution at both the individual and societal level. Partnerships are ultimately an acknowledgement of interconnectedness and interdependence and have the potential to realign organisational purpose towards life enhancing goals.

Partnerships are also an attempt to establish a new level within the 'holarchy' of human organisations; a new social whole formed by an organisation but shared by individuals. The interactions of these two social levels are by their very nature in a state of flux and only reach temporary states of equilibrium. Partnerships are a valuable tool for change in the social and environmental domain, but the prime pathway to such change is through the individual to the intra-organisational level.

NOTES

¹ Caplan, K. (2000) 'The Purist's Partnership: Debunking the Terminology of Partnerships'. Partnership Matters: Current Issues in Cross-Sector Collaboration 1, *The Copenhagen Centre*, pp 31–35. p.35.

² *Business Partner for Development* (2002) Putting Partnering to Work: Tri-sector Partnership Results and Recommendations, BPD, London p.3.

³ Caplan, K., Heap, S., Nicol, A., Plummer, J., Simpson, S. & Weiser, J. (2001) Flexibility by Design: Lessons from Multi-Sector Partnerships in Water and Sanitation Projects, *BPD Water and Sanitation Cluster*, London. p.17.

⁴ Maiteny, P. (2000) 'The Psychodynamics of Meaning and Action for a Sustainable Future', *Futures*. 32, 339–360. p.349.

⁵ Kets de Vries, M.F.R., Balazs, K. (1998) 'Beyond the Quick Fix: The psychodynamics of Organizational Transformation and Change', *European Management Journal*, 16(5), 611–622. p.613.

⁶ Wilber, K. (1995) *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The spirit of evolution*. Shambala, Boston.

Employee Engagement Partnerships: Can they contribute to the development of an integrated CSR culture?

By Kerri Hancock

A significant number of Australian companies have invested substantial financial resources into communities via cross-sector partnership initiatives in order to demonstrate commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles to stakeholders. There also appears to be a growing interest in cross-sector partnerships that involve employees in some form, with many employee engagement activities focused on physical activities such as conservation fieldwork or hands-on volunteering for social issues NGOs. This paper attempts to assess whether these kinds of partnerships can make a difference, not only to the community organisations that they support, but also to the way that they anticipate and put into practice, the necessary organisational cultural changes for long-term commercial viability in a sustainable development context.

Definition of terms

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is used here to describe how a company works to achieve sustainable development through both internal policies and programmes and external community investment activities that address and manage its impact on social and environmental issues.

Employee engagement partnerships are used in line with the UN's

definition of partnerships¹ and involve a significant number and/or cross section of corporate employees in a partnership programme or activities beyond the partnership manager or facilitator. Engagement is interpreted as the transfer of expertise and release of talent and skills into the community, the sharing of core competencies between sectors and the strategic use of employees' talents.² It also includes the transfer of skills, expertise and knowledge from the community back into the corporation. In this paper, 'volunteering' is also encompassed by this definition.

An *integrated CSR culture* is a way of describing a culture where the external CSR-led policies and actions used to support reputation and stakeholder engagement are matched by internal business strategies and decisions driven by social and environmental principles. A CSR culture is fundamentally values-driven as opposed to being purely financially-driven and invariably involves widespread and systemic change in the way that companies do business; from recruitment and human resources through to manufacturing processes and supplier relationships.³

Why develop an integrated CSR culture?

An authentic reputation: Many companies have stated that they

use CSR principles and cross-sector partnerships to support reputational outcomes. By building positive external relationships via partnerships they hope to gain a licence to operate from their stakeholders. However, when internal business and decision making criteria and, by inference, actions of employees, do not reflect the espoused corporate CSR values or how the community expects a socially responsible company to act, they are exposed to the risk of a non-integrated culture.

Competitive advantage:

Companies and employees will increasingly need to become more innovative and creative in how they maximise the opportunities offered by the new sustainability driven environment by, for example, developing new kinds of products in response to new challenges and restraints⁴ such as climate change. Innovation and creativity can only be nurtured in the right culture.

Key ingredients for achieving CSR cultural change

An integrated CSR culture can be promoted by:

External and internal learning:

Companies providing the tools, forums and facilitation necessary for both 'external' learning (i.e. about customer needs, markets,

and competitors) and ‘internal’ learning (i.e. self-knowledge at a personal and organisational level).⁵ Learning should have, “...cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions; it differs from training, which entails the acquisition of specific skills.”⁶ It can be promoted by values-based leadership that encourages emotional intelligence in decision-making.

Recognition of human capital:

Employees are the most affected by the instigation of a CSR-led cultural change and, in turn, are the most likely to effect real and lasting change as they are responsible for turning policies and ideas into operational reality. Employees are also vital ambassadors for any organisation. It is therefore critical that they live and believe in the company’s CSR values if they are to be credible to external stakeholders.⁷

Personal transformation:

According to Barrett, personal transformation occurs when we start to develop a stronger sense of personal responsibility and begin to look for new values.⁸ He suggests that, “Corporations don’t transform, people do”,⁹ and that once people have helped an organisation to shift its belief systems from pure self-interest to the common good, it can then attempt to evolve into the higher levels of ‘organisation consciousness’ – community and society consciousness, where integrated values-led CSR cultures are developed.¹⁰ A recent online survey suggests that Australian employees do have a socially and environmentally developed consciousness, and wish to express personal values that reflect CSR principles at work.¹¹

Personal participation:

Participation in the process of transformation, both personally, through involved learning, and organisationally, through being part of the decision-making processes around what kinds of learning forums, partnerships and processes take place. This seems to be supported by Cavill who suggests that mechanisms such as pay-roll giving and philanthropy are low on the motivation and engagement scale.¹² They do not involve any personal commitment, emotional exchange or utilisation of personal skills and are therefore unlikely to have any real effect on building a CSR culture.

Employee engagement partnerships as factors for change

Employee engagement partnerships have the potential to help facilitate the factors necessary for the change identified above by providing a framework and forums for:

- Learning (external and internal) – through the exchange of ideas and skills and exposure to new environments
- Personal transformation and spiritual fulfilment – by facilitating community service and values-driven project development and management
- Participation – through experiential learning and participatory decision making

Employee engagement can also play an important role in helping employees to develop the training and key competencies required to thrive in CSR cultures.¹³ Organisations thus need to develop activities that are

sufficiently intellectually and spiritually challenging and offer enhanced professional learning. These might include community fellowships or managed assignments in the community, mentoring, secondments, team development and non-executive roles.¹⁴

Employee engagement partnerships have been most successful when the corporate partner has, firstly, expressed an understanding of CSR beyond externally directed strategic philanthropy; secondly, openly embraced the concept of cultural development and transformational partnerships; thirdly, already has an employee orientated culture in place (i.e. innovation, creativity, empowerment) and finally, has practical mechanisms to make that work.¹⁵ Companies should not aim to use cross-sector partnerships and employee engagement as a way of ‘creating’ a CSR culture. The organisational values must already be defined and steps taken to ensure that values-based leadership and employee relations are in motion before employee engagement partnerships can be put in place. Employee engagement partnerships can be used to enhance, develop and inspire CSR cultures but they cannot work if the appropriate values are not already being expressed and lived. Employees thus need to be empowered to explore and work outside their usual departmental and skill boundaries because their employers value the CSR contribution that this can make to the future of the organisation. This kind of cultural transformation can support employee commitment, knowledge management, cross department

skill sharing and innovation outcomes – a clear example of how “soul-led” decisions developed in a “culture of participation” can be the best business decisions.¹⁶

Australian cross-sector partnerships and CSR culture

Employee engagement partnerships in Australia appear to be mainly externally, rather than internally, driven and prompted by a focus on reputation, external stakeholders and external business drivers. Staff motivation and staff retention are cited as incentives for them and could be described as internal cultural objectives because they are values-driven, but this is a fairly recent development and very few companies have explicit mechanisms in place for bringing any external learning back into the workplace.¹⁷ Value from volunteering and other employee engagement learning would be made more positive if formally linked back to internal organisational CSR cultural objectives and CSR knowledge management.

It also appears that employers generally see community engagement partnerships as a way of the organisation facilitating employee’s personal fulfilment, which will hopefully engender good feelings towards their employer, as opposed to developing employees in order to support both personal and organisational societal consciousness and transformation. Currently then, a gap exists between the external and internal connectedness of companies and their communities and their employees. This gap needs to be bridged to achieve integrated CSR cultures and

innovative employee engagement partnerships could help support that goal.

The role of NGOs

There are suggestions that the NGO sector has yet to embrace the internal cultural transformation opportunities offered by cross-sector partnerships. Many Australian NGOs and community organisations seem unaware of the transformative effect they could have on the Australian corporate sector because of perceptions that they are only interested in donations; that they duplicate each other’s efforts; appear to be uninterested (self-interested and donation focused) and by inference, unskilled, because they have not recognised this need.¹⁸ NGOs, meanwhile, assert that Australian corporate representatives still expect NGOs to behave and think around issues according to their own expected sectoral and often “status quo” norms.¹⁹ There therefore seems to be a need, before Australia can embrace the kinds of cultural transformation partnerships outlined here, for the two sectors to work harder towards increasing their level of mutual empathy, cross-cultural understanding and respect for each other’s skills and competencies.

Conclusion

Employee engagement partnerships can play a role in helping to develop a new integrated CSR culture. However, a number of key factors need to be borne in mind by all partners when developing them. They include the need to:

- Ensure that the cross-sector partnership is wholeheartedly

supported by the corporate organisation and, ideally, ensure that the right conditions exist for its success, i.e. an employee focused culture and the desire for CSR cultural change transformation should pre-exist the partnership.

- Consider cross-sector partnerships that ignite the passions and concerns of employees as well as meet key business drivers – create cross-sector partnerships that combine the two in order to support both personal and organisational transformation and learning.
- Ensure a wide range of employees are involved to support organisational transformation in order to maximise the opportunities for organisation-wide transformation.
- Ensure knowledge management processes are in place in order to translate learning from employee community engagement back into both partners’ organisations internally.
- Ensure employees are empowered to explore and test their new skills after their engagement experience is over.
- Develop meaningful engagement relationships and activities that provide transformative learning experiences for both partners.
- Ensure both partners make the cultural transformation objective explicit before they commence on any employee engagement partnership in order to make certain that the most appropriate strategies are employed.

With a few exceptions, it seems that the Australian corporate sector has not really embraced the full potential of employee engagement partnerships in achieving cultural transformation because they are still very much focused on cross-sector partnerships fulfilling

external CSR objectives. Hailey Cavill believes that employee engagement partnerships can help to support the development of a CSR culture and regards the first stage of their development in Australia as a way to start to get employees “engaged in the social

conversation”²⁰ This optimistic view is tempered by my own conclusion that, benign and commendable though the current models are, they will need to evolve quickly if they are to play a real role in corporate innovation and sustainable development.

NOTES

¹ UN (2003) ‘Report to the General Assembly’, “Partnership is commonly understood as a voluntary and collaborative relationship between various parties in which all participants (“partners”) agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share the risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits.”

² This definition was used by Amanda Bowman of ENGAGE. Engage and IBLF (2004) Engage Week: Conference On Community Engagement Conference, International Business Leaders Forum and Volunteering Australia

³ See Grayson, D and Hodges, A. (2004) Corporate Social Opportunity: Seven Steps to Make Corporate Social Responsibility Work For Your Business, Greenleaf Publishing Limited, Sheffield. p.144 and also Doppelt, B. (2003) Leading Change Toward Sustainability: A Change Management Guide for Business, Government and Civil Society, Greenleaf Publishing Limited, Sheffield. p.74.

⁴ Grayson and Hodges (2004) p.11.

⁵ See Barrett, R (1998) Liberating the Corporate Soul: Building a Visionary Organization,

Butterworth-Heinemann, Woburn. p.9.

⁶ Doppelt, B (2003) Leading Change Toward Sustainability: A Change Management Guide for Business, Government and Civil Society, Greenleaf Publishing Limited, Sheffield. p.197.

⁷ Doppelt (2003) p.71.

⁸ Barrett (1998) p. 41.

⁹ Ibid. p.3

¹⁰ Ibid. p.69.

¹¹ Cavill H (2004) PassionPeople: How Community Engagement Positively Impacts Employee Performance, Cavill + Co and Seek.Com, Melbourne, “82 percent of respondents would rather work for a company that supported good causes, if all other employment factors were equal” (p.4) and 41 percent said they’d even have taken a job that paid less if it provided the chance to make a difference to the community”. (p.5) and interestingly, 54 percent described themselves as “an activist” (p.10) which some would consider the description of a ‘radical’ or minority outsider term in Australia.

¹² Ibid. and Hancock, K. (2004) Interviews with a consultant, a corporate partnership manager and two NGO representatives, Australia.

¹³ Existing corporate programs such as PwC’s Ulysses and Boots employee development program in the UK that have moved beyond the basic “tree planting model”; have already demonstrated how innovative and strategic employee engagement partnerships can work successfully.

¹⁴ Tennyson, R. and Bowman, A. (Eds.) (2003) The Learning Curve: Building Effective Corporate Community Engagement, International Business Leaders Forum, London. p.25.

¹⁵ Hancock (2004)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. This is supported by Cavill (2004), “70 percent of respondents were interested in “volunteering with work mates on work time on a specific project chosen by the company” (p.8) and interestingly, 60.5 percent of respondents said that they “work for companies that donate money” but only 41 percent “work for a company where employees are allowed to volunteer time or specialist skills on work time” (p.7).

¹⁸ Hancock (2004)

¹⁹ Ibid.

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Reflections on Leadership and its Significance in Cross-Sector Partnerships

By Basheer Habib

“The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators.”

EDWARD GIBBON

Historian

The twenty-first century has presented formidable challenges to organisations: globalisation, finite resources, environmental sustainability, demographic shifts, diverse workforces, the information explosion and complex technologies – to name just a few. This sea-change has caused many organisations to re-assess their strategies, processes and cultures. More importantly, it has placed an enormous premium on leadership capabilities. Traditional assumptions about leadership and organisational effectiveness have been challenged, as they no longer meet the needs of the ‘learning economy’¹ and the ‘new society’.²

The purpose of my project was to explore the current thinking surrounding leadership and contrast it with the core competencies of leaders involved in cross-sector partnerships. In the project, my intention was to engage key partnership leaders (local, national and international) and capture their perceptions and experiences on the ‘essence’ of leadership that contributed to success in such collaborations.

The changing face of organisations

As the industrial world has evolved from modern to post-modern periods, there have been major philosophical and infrastructure shifts in the *modus operandi* of organisations. The modern worldview of organisations was built on notions of control, where people were managed through vertical and horizontal integration. Globalisation, technology and the mobile knowledge-based workforce changed all that. The post-modern worldview reflects inter-organisational structures and systems (partnerships, strategic alliances and networks), which call for relationships, interconnections and interdependencies.

What is leadership?

There are as many definitions as there are theories of leadership:

- Leaders do the right things while managers do things right.³
- Leaders are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and in their organisation.⁴
- Leaders are change agents, visionaries, lifelong learners, value-driven and can deal with complexity.⁵
- Transformational leadership takes the leader and led to

higher levels of motivation and morality; transactional leadership focuses on dialogue, coaching and resolving conflicts.⁶

Early research into leadership attempted to identify traits in leaders. The next stage explored the behaviour of leaders and the third and current stage focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers.⁷

In this age of corporate scandals, unethical behaviour by some individuals in leadership positions, and the need for transparency, the concept of ‘servant leadership’ has become desirable in many organisations. Servant leaders put other people’s needs, aspirations and interests above their own.⁸ The role of the heroic command and control type of leader stands in sharp contrast to servant leaders who view themselves first and foremost as stewards.⁹

Findings

Based on discussions with interviewees and first-hand observation of them dealing with leadership challenges, some of the key roles of partnership leaders are as follows:

Learning organisation facilitators

Learning organisations are structured to anticipate and

respond to changing internal and external conditions in a positive manner. According to Senge “...in a learning organisation, leaders are designers, stewards and teachers. They are responsible for building organisations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision and improve shared mental models – that is they are responsible for learning”,¹⁰

Learning is a social process based on trust and social capital. In organisations this integrated learning can also generate collective innovation through the development of social capital.¹¹ In order to build trust, partnership leaders need to have integrity and credibility so as to elicit support and commitment from all stakeholders. At a micro-level, they need to have strong convening and facilitation skills. The objective skills of facilitation involve creating an enabling context that summons and focuses the stakeholders’ insights towards specific goals.¹²

Boundary spanners

To be effective collaborators in inter-organisational theatres, partnership leaders need to have a cluster of reticulist or networking skills that emphasise a relationship mindset. They constantly search for synergies and are skilled in bridging interests, professions and organisations. Boundary spanners share the same skills as entrepreneurs, in that they are creative and lateral thinkers, who frequently combine the capacity for visionary and opportunistic thinking.¹³ According to Tennyson, partnership leaders need to be flexible and resilient,

demonstrate a high level of cultural/sectoral sensitivity and must have strong negotiating skills and a good understanding of group dynamics.¹⁴

Change managers

As change managers, partnership leaders advocate and initiate the needed changes in the organisation. They focus on how to orchestrate the human infrastructure that surrounds key projects, so that people are better prepared to absorb the implications affecting them.¹⁵ The mindset they bring to their work greatly influences the success or failure of cross-sector partnerships.

To achieve success, change managers need to have the following competencies:

- Broad knowledge-base including behavioural science and change theories; conceptual/diagnostic tools
- Operational/ relational skills and political savvy
- Sensitivity and maturity
- Authenticity
- Ability to use various forms of power to affect positive change.

Kotter¹⁶ argues that leaders must make eight things happen in organisations that need significant change:

- Instil a sense of urgency
- Pick a good team
- Create an enterprise vision
- Communicate extensively
- Empower a broad based action
- Generate short term wins

- Consolidate gains and produce more change
- Anchor new approaches in the culture.

Conclusion

When I commenced my project, I had no illusions about finding the ‘magic pill’ for the leadership of cross-sector partnerships. Although most of the individuals I interviewed talked about certain competencies that were critical to partnership success, each one had a different repertoire for applying them in their work environment. The good news is that many of these competencies can be developed by studying the foundational concepts and through reflection-in-action. The way of the new partnership leader is to lead consciously.

NOTES

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Empowerment through Cross-Sector Partnerships: A Role for Participatory Action Research?

By Stefanie Koch

Political, social and economic changes over the last decades have created a myriad of international challenges. Accelerating globalisation, regionalisation, environmental problems and rapid change in social institutions have led to the belief that no sector can address such complex issues in isolation. ‘Partnership’ has therefore become a buzzword for a variety of stakeholders. Apart from the numerous benefits that partnerships can have for all involved parties, they can, if managed by using participatory action research (PAR), be a crucial contribution to people’s empowerment, which in turn facilitates social and economic development. However, both concepts; ‘partnership’ and ‘empowerment’, are controversial and ill-defined.

Definitions of ‘partnership’ and ‘empowerment’

‘Partnerships’ are context-specific and often used as a synonym for networks or coalitions. Fiszbein and Lowden define partnerships as,

‘Joint initiatives of the public sector in conjunction with the private, for-profit sectors, (...). Within these partnerships, each of the actors *contributes resources*¹ and *participates in the decision-making process*. (...) The use of the term

partnership denotes a more *mutually interdependent nature* in the relationship among the actors than one would expect in joint initiatives under contractual, principal-agent, or governing-governed relationships.’²

Long and Arnold add another important notion to the above by defining partnerships as:

‘...*voluntary* collaborations between two or more organizations with a *jointly-defined agenda* focused on a *discrete, attainable and potentially measurable goal*.’³

Nelson and Zadek cite the Copenhagen Centre’s definition of new social partnerships as

‘...people and organisations from some combination of public, business and civil constituencies who engage in voluntary, *mutually beneficial, innovative relationships to address common societal aims* through combining their resources and competencies’.⁴

A more business-related definition is provided by Holiday, Schmidheiny and Watts:

‘Business partnerships with governments and NGOs are an important tool to help ensure that *corporate goals converge with social obligations in the developing world* ...’⁵

They further argue that partnerships lead to:

‘...*better management of risk* and stakeholders’ expectations, *development of new markets* and innovative products and services, legal and contract compliance, and business process and productivity’.⁶

If a partnership fulfils all the criteria of these definitions, the process *per se* leads to empowerment of the participants, which in turn facilitates the reaching of partnership objectives.

Empowerment, in particular the empowerment of the poor, as well as their ‘participation’ and ‘inclusion’, have become catchphrases in the development literature of the mid to late-1990s. Activities linked to these concepts are seen as an important element in improving the quality of life of marginalised groups such as the poor. As a concept, empowerment has neither synonyms nor a consistent definition. As Narayan puts it, “...empowerment most broadly is about increasing freedom of choice and action to control one’s life.”⁷ Kabeer describes empowerment as the “ability to make choices”.⁸ This ability results in gaining control over one’s life and in participation in decisions that affect households, communities, governments, and other entities.

This is closely linked to earlier definitions by Sen who defines empowerment as “...altering relations of power..., which constrain ...options and autonomy...”⁹ In addition, as these authors emphasise, empowerment always entails a process of change.

Within these definitions of empowerment words that stress basic levels of consensus emerge consistently. These are ‘control’, ‘choice’, ‘power’ and ‘strategic decision-making’.¹⁰ Linking the empowerment concept back to partnerships, these are probably the issues that need to be defined properly in order for a partnership to be empowering to its constituents.

Characteristics of empowering partnerships

Collaboration is central to partnerships. Gray defines collaboration as,

‘...a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited version of what is possible.’¹¹

Given that collaboration is at the core of any partnership, participatory action research (PAR) provides a methodology to enable all stakeholders of a partnership to reach their objectives.

PAR provides an alternative to ‘orthodox’ social research by connecting social research to social reform. In fact, it may directly contribute to the empowerment of participants. In the context of partnerships, the

end goal might be an observable outcome such as increased access to water. The process, however, might focus on building the capacities of the stakeholders to find and participate in solutions that make them independent from providers or increase their bargaining power.

The planning and management of a cross-sector partnership could benefit immensely from applying a PAR approach since it allows for empowerment of the different partners by aiming at three types of change:

- The development of critical consciousness;
- The improvement of the lives of those involved in the process;
- The transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.¹²

But in what way do partnerships involving PAR differ from those that do not do so? The major difference is probably the direct link between process and action – thus removing the traditional research dichotomy between ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’. Both the ‘knowing’ and the ‘doing’ are crucial factors for successful partnerships. The three components of a PAR process – investigation, education, and action – are collective processes. Partnership stakeholders will identify the objective of a partnership. Via collective inquiry, the participants build ownership of the information, and move from being objects to being subjects or co-researchers, and thus agents for dealing with their own problems and struggles. All participants are involved in decision-making

regarding the use and the application of their data and the actions to be taken.

Ideally, partnership leadership feels committed to the cause of the stakeholders that directly benefit from an action or intervention through the use of alternative research and planning processes. However, corporations, international organisations and funding institutions are stakeholders that desire measurable and visible outcomes. Unfortunately such institutions prefer more orthodox project implementation because it produces easily measurable results and does not interfere with existing social arrangements.¹³ The challenge for ‘new societal partnerships’ will therefore be to question and confront existing practice and establish more creative and participatory partnerships.

In practice, this could translate into corporate engagement in partnerships that aims to develop the skills of stakeholders to set up, for example, small enterprises. These enterprises could in turn provide products and services that will improve the quality of life in a particular area. The effects of such partnerships can be manifold: Firstly, individuals’ entrepreneurial capacities will be developed and they will be able to provide a livelihood for their families. Secondly, the area benefits from products and services offered by such enterprises and the empowerment of the various stakeholders leads to sustainable outcomes and societal change. Thirdly, the company may immediately benefit in intangibles such as improved

image, a general 'licence to operate' and an increased sale of their products.

Partnerships that operate on a PAR basis, however, are not necessarily straightforward and frustrations might develop over the course of the process. It is necessary that company stakeholders are willing to engage in a process where the outcomes might be uncertain. As opposed to usual business operations, the focus should be on the process

rather than on the outcome. It might prove easier to have such processes facilitated by an external consultant or researcher, which requires a certain amount of trust from all parties involved. Individuals from the corporate sector, in particular, need to give up their often times patriarchal approach to dealing with stakeholders and be open to the fact that learning will happen at all ends of a partnership. If, however, the 'partners' are able to organise their varied and often

complimentary skills and resources, the outcomes will have a significant benefit for society.

NOTES

¹ *Italics used in the quotes are the author's.*

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The Challenge of Corporate-Community Engagement: A Case Study

By Olagoke Macaulay

There are considerable socio-economic, political and environmental hazards associated with legitimate business in the extractive industry, particularly oil and gas production. Some of these include significant damage to the physical environment, depletion of forestry, fisheries and other important natural resources, distortion of traditional institutions resulting from internal political struggles as well as the slow growth of traditional income-generating activities. All of these tend to reduce opportunities for improving rural livelihoods, thus posing a major dilemma to oil companies that are genuinely interested in contributing to the socio-economic development of the communities in which they operate.

A direct implication of this situation is that oil companies require the cooperation of other stakeholders, particularly the communities and other entities that impact or are impacted upon by the oil companies' activities in order for them to be able to address the issues effectively. It is against this background that this research was conducted to identify Shell Petroleum Development Company's (SPDC's) partnership challenges as observed from past collaborations. Recommendations were made based on the lessons

learnt for enhancing the benefits of current and future relationships within the context of sustainable community development.

SPDC and its community development journey

SPDC began its exploration activities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria in 1937 but was granted a licence on November 4, 1939. It discovered Nigeria's first commercial oil field in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State in 1956. From a modest production level of 6,000 barrels of crude oil per day (bpd) in 1958, SPDC currently produces about 1 million bpd and is responsible for almost 50 % of Nigeria's total oil production.

In the 1960s, SPDC began a number of activities, particularly in the area of agriculture, as a way of contributing to the development of its host communities. At that time, the Company assisted stakeholders on an 'ad hoc' basis. By the 1990s however, SPDC had begun to adopt a more professional approach to the delivery of community development. But this second 'phase' also had its drawbacks. For instance, the huge financial investments in community development interventions did not translate into noticeable socio-economic benefits. Thus, there arose the

need for a shift in strategy. A major pivot of this strategy is a new focus on partnership which it is anticipated will help reduce the friction and challenges experienced in previous partnerships and foster efficiency and quality of programme and service delivery in community development.

Study Methodology

This study focused on three of SPDC's community level partnerships during the last ten years. These were: *Sustainable Livelihood Programme in Bayelsa State of Nigeria* in partnership with Living Earth Nigeria Foundation, an NGO; *Telecommunication Self-Employment Programme* (TELSEP) in partnership with Globacom, an indigenous private telecommunication company and *Umuegbule Cottage Hospital* in partnership with Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The author and one field enumerator administered questionnaires to generate the primary data. In addition, field observations were used to complement the data generated through interviews.

SPDC's Partnership Challenges

The challenges identified from the study were as follows:

- A fairly general perception at the community level that SPDC is not committing enough resources to the development of the Niger Delta region. This sensitivity sets major hurdles during the process of *resource mapping*.
- A very dynamic social system, which manifests in a high mobility among the youth in particular, often creating a lack of process continuity.
- The complexity and sensitivity of mainstreaming youth and gender issues in partnership negotiations (in a society which traditionally gives only *little voice* to children and women) without precipitating *unhelpful* socio-cultural disequilibrium.
- Communicating the respective roles of the communities, government and the private sector in the development process to the communities in a clear and effective manner.
- Identifying an adequate number of credible partners with sufficient expertise, human and material resources, as well as acceptance at the local level, to collaborate with in delivering sustainable development at the community level.

Lessons Learnt

Analysis of the challenges and other findings from the Study indicated the following lessons:

- Some form of mutually acceptable documentation for major agreements prior to the commencement of a partnership may enhance its effectiveness.
- Partnerships have reputation implications for SPDC, in particular. As such all efforts

should be made to ensure that parties do not default in making their resource contributions as and when due.

- Relevant and adequate capacity building is required in partnerships. Capacity building, especially for community members will enhance accountability, transparency and the overall efficiency of process and resource management.
- Credible and competent third party organisations can provide an effective platform for SPDC to deliver sustainable development at the community level and help better manage the SPDC-Community interface.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges and lessons learnt, the following recommendations were made:

- A review of SPDC's current partnerships for *process* and *resource* management evaluation towards any necessary improvement.
- Engagement in partnerships with credible third party organisations where appropriate and feasible.
- Incorporation of a Youth and Gender Dimension as a major component of any negotiation, right from the partnership *scoping* stage.
- Specification of capacity building elements (technical and financial) for accountability, technical competence, application of best practices, adequate maintenance and overall project sustainability.

- Facilitation of some form of advocacy at the community level to create awareness about the respective roles of the communities, the private sector and the government in the process of community development.
- Proper documentation and dissemination of all parties' (particularly SPDC's) partnership experiences to provide learning points for interested '*partnership practitioners*' and also serve as evidence of efforts in the area of corporate social responsibility.

Dancing the Cultural Tango: A Partnership Practitioner's Dilemma

By Sean Ansett

“Cultural context is almost always a critical success factor. Cross-sector partnerships often come down to the question of whether sufficient trust is present to allow different parties to work through the inevitable – and often quite fruitful – differences of opinion and perspective.”

ARON CRAMER

President & CEO, Business for Social Responsibility, 2004

Cross-sector partnership models are emerging as important approaches to address some of society's most difficult challenges. While there are many advantages, such as sharing expertise and resources across sectors, there are also significant challenges and risks. So why do business, governments and civil society engage in these initiatives? In his book, ‘The Civil Corporation’, Simon Zadek provides some insight into the partnership boom:

‘The world has become too complex and interdependent, and resources too scarce, for any one institution or sector to effectively respond to today's business or wider challenges and opportunities. Partnerships are a means of getting things done that individual organizations would be unable to achieve alone. Most directly, partnerships enable diverse and complementary competencies and resources to be drawn together and effectively applied.’¹

One of the key dilemmas is navigating the national, sectoral, organisational and individual cultural differences that underpin these unique collaborative models. The partnership practitioner needs to be aware of each of these levels in order to understand their dance partner's ‘choice of music’ and engage effectively in the partnership.²

National cultural differences have not been explored in great detail in relation to cross-sector partnerships. The partnership practitioner has to analyse and clearly understand these to be the most effective. Nigel Ewington,³ shared the following definition of national culture as developed by Terpstra and David,

‘Culture is a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable.’⁴

We will explore national cross-cultural differences by comparing the United States and Mexico and looking at how these differences can impact key partnership issues such as leadership, effective communication and attitudes towards risk and innovation. We will also examine what strategies

can be implemented to accommodate them when setting up a partnership framework.

Power distance and cross-sector partnership leadership

Leadership is a challenging issue in partnerships, and how partners exhibit and demonstrate leadership qualities can often lead to success or failure in the partnership. New leadership is needed in the 21st century to effectively engage in cross-sector partnerships. This requires individuals who possess attributes that include: taking personal and professional risks for the benefit of others, demonstrating personal modesty so others can flourish, the ability to create clarity in the midst of our complex, information-rich, rapidly moving, politically unstable and economically unequal world, and inspiring others with their vision of a cooperative future.⁵ These attributes are a paradigm shift from traditional leadership styles.

One area in which the United States and Mexico differ culturally is in relation to the concept of power distance and equity. Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI)⁶ measures the extent to which individuals accept inequalities of wealth or power as legitimate. A high score on this index would suggest that the

culture is accepting of these inequalities, and a low score would suggest that a culture does not accept these differences. Mexico's PDI index related to power distance scores an eighty-one and is ranked fifth out of fifty countries while the United States scores forty and is ranked thirty-eighth on the same scale.

The cross-sector partnership practitioner from the United States, coming from a low power distance culture, may be accustomed to a leadership style that is hands-off, participatory and where a good level of autonomy is given to subordinates in organisations to make decisions. They may thus have a difficult time understanding a more autocratic style of leadership, which is the norm in Mexico. For example, Hofstede notes, countries with high power distance cultures are accustomed to leaders who do not consult with others in the organisation and often do not like participatory management styles.⁷

The Mexican autocratic style of leadership may be at odds with the new leadership type that is required in cross-sector partnerships. There is great risk in high power distance cultures to fall into the "leadership trap", as noted by Kjaer,

'A tight control of the reins by one leadership figure when generating initial success has in several cases meant that other players have not been able to play an equal part. There is even talk of leaders being caught in a 'leadership trap'; hoping to be able to motivate others to take part and become active, while at the same time not being able to

let go of control...the evolution of partnership collaboration seems to demand a new form of shared decision-making and leadership.'⁸

High vs. low context culture and communication styles

Another key cultural factor that can impact effective cross-sector partnerships is the concept of 'high vs. low context culture' and how this influences the communication styles of each culture. Edward T. Hall uses context to identify the reasoning behind different communication styles in cultures,

'Context is the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event. Cultures can be categorised on a scale from high to low-context.'⁹

Harris and Moran when referring to Hall's work note that,

'...a high-context culture uses high-context communications i.e. information is either in the physical context or internalised in the person with little being communicated in the explicit words or message. On the other hand, a low context culture employs low context communications i.e. most information is contained in explicit codes such as words.'¹⁰

In the case of high vs. low context, the United States is considered low context and Mexico is high context. Mexican communication is more indirect and expressive, with more non-verbal communication playing an important role.

A partnership practitioner from a large labour rights NGO based in

the United States who has done extensive work in Mexico shared the following observation,

'Listen carefully. It can be difficult for Northern organizations to understand the subtle, polite messages coming from groups in these countries. Mexicans in particular may disagree strongly, but their way of stating it can be too subtle for U.S. comprehension. They tend to assume you will stop to consider what is not being said as much as what is being said. It is important to ask for clarity on their preference and understand that what is called preference is really the way they want to see it done.'

Uncertainty avoidance, risk and innovation

One of the key reasons for engaging in cross-sector partnerships is to identify and embed innovations into processes, strategies and/or products. The need for creative and innovative solutions to complex dilemmas often justifies the reason to engage in these complex and resource intensive models of collaboration.

'Responsiveness to the needs, interests and knowledge of stakeholders is key to effective knowledge sharing and innovation, particularly where these stakeholders offer new knowledge bases. Corporate-community engagement can provide business with a complementary knowledge base, new insights and encourage innovation.'¹¹

One of Hofstede's cultural dimensions that may be a critical factor to partnership innovation is

‘uncertainty avoidance’. Hofstede defines this dimension as a society’s tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programmes its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. On the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), Mexico scores an eighty-two and is eighteenth out of the fifty countries exhibiting a high uncertainty avoidance factor. The United States scores a forty-six and is forty-third on the list of fifty countries with low uncertainty avoidance.¹²

The differences between uncertainty avoidance can have an impact on the potential for risk taking and innovation in cross-sector partnerships or, for that matter, entering into them in the first place. Many times the most innovative of partnerships happen in a loose, unstructured environment that encourages innovation. This type of environment may not bode too well for a Mexican coming to the table with a high uncertainty avoidance index score.

The cultural tango: synchronising your steps

We have now learned some of the dance steps so you can avoid falling flat on your back when partnering with colleagues from both the US and Mexico. But what can we do on the front end of the partnership to reduce the risk of dancing with two left feet? In ‘The Partnering Toolbook’, Ros Tennyson, offers an overview of key elements that can help set the partnership practitioner up for success.¹³

Partner Selection: – Tennyson contends that the process of partner selection is a key component for developing effective partnerships.¹⁴ The practitioner needs to explore the range of potential partners, identify value-add for their organisations and choose appropriate partners for their active involvement in the partnership. Once the practitioner has chosen the appropriate partner organisation in Mexico it will be important that they identify the key decision maker in the organisation who can make decisions on behalf of that organisation or you may be spinning on your heels due to the strong power distance culture. It will be important to invest a lot of time upfront to build the relationship prior to discussing the partnership work itself.

Setting Ground Rules: Tennyson suggests that setting up ground rules is very helpful when partnerships are new.¹⁵ This helps members to avoid asserting themselves or their agendas on others in the partnership at the expense of taking the space from other project partners. She also suggests that ground rules should be written into a partnering agreement if necessary. In a high power distance and high context culture like Mexico establishing clear ground rules around the importance of transparency, ensuring that all voices are heard, and the importance of sharing your point of view, even if not popular, may be helpful. Additionally, developing a clear decision making protocol amongst members to ensure that the group agrees to a process and shifts to a more participatory approach.

Partnership Agreements:

Partnership agreements should be developed through a cultural filter as well. Tennyson found that a partnership agreement no matter how formal or informal is always necessary to avoid later misunderstandings and potential conflict.¹⁶ In a society like Mexico, historically characterised by social conflict and problems of integration within social classes, the distrust between the sectors that exists may require more formalised partnership agreements that will also provide comfort to those who feel less empowered, or those who feel that they are assuming the greatest risk, as well as reduce uncertainty.

Among the number of factors that can determine the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships one critical factor that should be assessed as part of stakeholder analysis is that of national cultural differences. If the partnership practitioner is aware that the factors that underpin how individuals within a particular culture act in different contexts they will be able to remove an important layer of complexity and reduce the risk of partnership ‘brownouts’ (mediocrity) or ‘blackouts’ (busts). Additionally, stronger and more transparent relationships can be built with counterparts leading to a better chance of delivering effective and innovative programs. The partnership practitioner should take the time to invest in a cultural assessment at the front end of the partnership and try on the cultural dance shoes of their respective partners. Based on these findings, localised strategies and partnership frameworks should be developed to reduce risks and set the partnership up for success.

NOTES

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- ² *The notion of peeling back the skins of an onion to examine the different layers of partnership is a useful one here. This idea is adapted and developed from Sathe, V. (1985) Culture and Related Corporate Realities, with Homewood, IL. and Irvin, R.D. in Francesco, A.M. and Gold, B.A. (1998) International Organizational Behaviour, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey.*
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- ¹³ Tennyson, R. (2004) *The Partnering Toolbook, The International Business Leadership Forum and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, London & Geneva*.
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- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.23.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.14.

Flexibility in Institution-Building: A Condition for Partnership Success?¹

By Elena Korf

Over the last decade the concepts of ‘partnership’ and ‘institution-building’ have gained increased importance in the new Russia as useful approaches to development issues. Initially these notions were promoted by international donor organisations with the provision of funding to partnerships to reinforce democracy, law and civil society, to address the social consequences of the transition process and to support institutional capacity.² However, partnership and institution-building are now regarded as essential in strengthening civil society, improving the public sector and carrying out social and economic reforms. The national government has recently passed a law ‘On Social Partnership’ to regulate labour relationships between employees and employers, and a series of publications and national conferences have been held on various aspects of corporate social responsibility and partnerships between the state and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector. A wide network of social (cross-sector) partnership resource centres have also been established across the country to interact between NGOs and local and federal governments with a growing interest from both the public and NGO sectors in partnering with business.

Although in most cases institution-building implies

strengthening of an institution, its capacity-building, the literal meaning of the term, can also imply setting up a new formal structure to achieve partnership goals. My research was thus aimed at the analysis of two international projects with different degrees of formalisation: informal, semi-formal (alliance) and formal (new agency), in order to identify how partnership success or failure was affected by institutional infrastructure.

Partnership Initiative 1:

Building NGO capacity to work in partnership with business and government, involving the institutional capacity-building of a St Petersburg partner organisation and overall capacity-building of the NGO sector, training in cross-sector partnership, facilitating dialogue between all sectors and the organising of large events (NGO Fairs and Corporate Social Responsibility Forum).

Partnership Initiative 2:

The *Creative Industries Development Partnership Project*, involving a study of the small business sector related to culture and creativity in St Petersburg, and capacity-building of an agency to provide support to small business in arts and crafts, based on the experience of the *Creative Industries Development Service* (CIDS), Manchester.

Comparative analysis of both partnerships has shown similarities in duration and nature. Both initiatives were designed to transfer international experience and build the capacity of the local partner; they were temporary and supported by an international donor for a finite period of time (24 months) to achieve specific goals; they involved NGOs and international partners; they had financial security for the lifetime of the project and time to attract additional funding to continue after the end of the project. They were also innovative, introducing a new methodology (cross-sector partnership), or a new development mechanism (creative industries); showed good immediate results and had an influence on government.

However, each initiative followed a different implementation route and had different degrees of formalisation. These were; **informal** (consultative council); **semi-formal** (local alliance) partnerships and a **formalised** structure (independent agency).

The research has revealed important benefits of the **informal** approach. It allowed greater flexibility in engaging additional partners and key target group representatives in the implementation of project activities and provided valuable

advice from key stakeholders. However, for effective operation of informal bodies it was vital to understand the needs and drivers of individual participants and the vibrant nature of informal partnership. Its ultimate effectiveness was largely based on the commitment of all partners.

As with the informal approach, a **semi-formal** infrastructure (local alliance), also enabled the partners to achieve its goals. However, it presented a number of difficulties. For example, the relationship between the alliance members in the studied projects soon took a contractual shape. Alliance members did not regard it as first priority and it became difficult to control and manage the process. In the end, all alliance members agreed that such alliances can only work to achieve a specific task.

The **formal** infrastructure (independent agency), although set up through the testing and trialling of a variety of legal forms, presented a number of advantages. The *Creative Industries Development Centre* was established as a result of the project with a profile as a new brand. However, this formal arrangement had serious drawbacks related to the personal ambitions of the project leader, which put off other project partners and impeded cooperation and the sharing of responsibilities among partners. Overemphasis on formalisation distracted partners from project activities and led to one-sided decision-making. The agency still has to gain credibility and recognition among target groups and stakeholders and faces a serious sustainability issue.

The agency, set up as a formal structure, unfortunately, did not emerge as a logical result of institutional capacity building. Formal by definition, it remains a personalised (in fact, one-person-centred) organisation which has not institutionalised the results of partnership.

Evaluation of the two partnership initiatives through in-depth interviews of project participants has enabled the identification of the following success factors that influenced their performance: **institutional capacity-building, decision-making, leadership, financial and psychological factors, clear goals, action plans and responsibilities, and learning.** Their importance can be summarised as follows:

Institutional capacity building in Partnership Initiative 1 has brought about positive changes in the organisational structure and culture of the partner organisation, which was restructured from a vertical hierarchy to three equal departments under the Executive Director. A new 'Partnership Department' was established, and the existing training unit was reinforced. In Partnership Initiative 2, on the other hand, without sufficient capacity building the newly established agency has limited staff skills and capacity. Although it now exists as an independent registered legal entity, its activities are dependent on other diverse activities and sources of income.

Equal participation of all partners in **decision-making** processes cemented the partnership in one case and protected the partners from hasty and unjustified actions. One-sided decision-

making processes in the second case led to tension and hostility among partners and was destructive.

Clear **leadership**, clear division of roles and mutual respect ensured the successful implementation of Partnership Initiative 1, where the Russian partner took the leadership and the British partner, the International Business leaders Forum (IBLF), played a consultative role and transferred knowledge and best practice. In Partnership Initiative 2, the over-emphasised leadership of one person, the project leader, caused psychological problems among partners and hindered the establishment and development of links with creative industries sub-sectors and networks. The lack of understanding of the importance of a shared vision and shared goals caused by a lack of recognition of the value and inputs from other partners leads to a failure in performance.

Financial factors, namely access to funding and budget control, play an important role. In Partnership Initiative 1 the institutional capacity of the local partner increased so much that eventually they opted for a non-partnership development scenario to guarantee effective implementation of the project. On the other hand, respondents from Initiative 2 stated that registration costs related to a new agency were so low and registration procedures so easy that it was very tempting to set up a new organisation. However, a newly set up agency is considered to have inefficiently spent the grant money on office rent with limited impact and already faces financial problems, having to cut

down staff. Less formal or informal structures have enabled partners to secure additional funding from other sources (the World Bank and Soros Foundation). The respondents also emphasised the importance of the issue of the budget control. Without clear and transparent accounting mechanisms, control of the budget by one partner has serious negative implications on partnership relations, quality control and management of activities.

A number of project partners and stakeholders of the studied partnership initiatives mentioned **psychological factors** as an important element in partnership. In Partnership Initiative 2 there were clear tensions and lack of understanding among partners on various occasions. In Partnership 1 trust and mutual respect greatly contributed to overall effectiveness.

According to respondents **clearly set goals and agreed action plans** were crucial for the successful implementation of the project activities. In Partnership Initiative 1, if changes were made at different stages of the partnership, they were discussed and agreed by all partners in due course. In Partnership Initiative 2, due to the complexity of tasks and lack of leadership, the goals kept changing so often that, when interviewed, the Russian partner could not even recollect what the goals were. Although action plans were continuously discussed at various project team meetings, they were not followed in practice.

The respondents emphasised the importance of **clearly-stated**

responsibilities for both initiatives, irrespective of the degree of formalisation.

Internal evaluation, reporting and **learning** were mentioned as significant factors that helped partners to reshape activities, make the necessary adjustments and build better working relations in Partnership 1. In Partnership 2 reporting requirements were put forward by the donor. They therefore lacked internal evaluation procedures; project management was difficult and overall performance limited.

Thus, the study of the two partnership initiatives of a similar nature and type of funding, but with different degrees of formalisation and levels of institutional capacity-building, has highlighted the following findings:

- Institutional capacity-building is essential for the development of an organisation into an institution to be able to generate wider impact. Formalised partnerships may seem desirable and may be expected to last longer and operate with more stability. But if an organisation is set up without sufficient prior institutional capacity-building it has limited impact, may remain 'personalised' and face performance and sustainability challenges.
- The success and efficiency of the partnership initiatives under review, as well as their impact on target groups and overall outcomes, are not directly related to or determined by the level of formalisation and type of institutional infrastructure in partnership. Other factors such

as decision-making, leadership, trust and mutual respect, as well as finances, clear goals, responsibilities and clear implementation procedures have proven to be more important.

- Partnership involves very complex processes. The study did not aim to identify the most suitable degree of formalisation for specific types of partnership projects. However, it has shown that flexibility in the selection of partnership support infrastructure is important.
- Informal structures ensure more flexibility and can increase the scope and reach of activities, but they are effective due to clear goals, shared vision, understanding of needs, and commitment of partners.
- Semi-formal arrangements are widely used and can be effective in achieving short-term goals. However, their over-formalisation (e.g. contractual arrangement) may undermine the innovation and enthusiasm of partners. The relationship may be difficult to manage and the quality difficult to control. 'Free will groups', to be effective, need sustained motivation and a clear understanding of common interests and goals.
- Less formal partnerships (although shorter in terms of existence) have proved to be creative and effective.
- The flexibility of an institutional infrastructure is determined by partners with respect to local conditions, the type of partners and partnership, as well as partnership goals.

The main lessons from the study show that for NGOs, public officials, and any organisation which enters partnerships for practical purposes, especially when seeking EU funding, it is important to develop a clear understanding of institution-building and what it can help achieve in partnerships in view of overall goals, partner integrity and sustainability. Most NGOs aim for long-term and more formalised partnerships as a way of guaranteeing their own financial security and sustainability. However, without a clear (shared) strategic vision this

approach may lead to an extremely narrow understanding of partnership and have poor results. Development of the institutional capacity of a key partner may be sufficient to ensure sustainability and does not require the setting up of a separate institution to achieve the partnership goals as this may be too personalised and actually limit collaboration. The research has demonstrated that flexibility in institution-building is an important factor in partnership success and is determined by local conditions and partnership goals.

NOTES

¹ *The author would like to thank Basheer Habib, a fellow PCCP course participant, for a most insightful discussion over lunch at Cambridge during the second residential which prompted the title for this research project.*

² *For example, UK Department for International Development (DFID) Partnerships in the Not-for-Profit Sector Programme, the EU PHARE Programme, and Tacis' 'Institution-Building Partnership Programme'.*

Findings from a Learning Partnership

By **Andrew Bone, Andrew Donnelly, Cynthia Goytia Krzysztof Kwatera, Irene Mutalima and Salma Sadikha**

In March 2004, six participants on the PCCP course developed a 'learning partnership'; a vehicle through which they would share their broad and diverse experiences to better understand the nature and implementation of cross-sector partnerships. The partnerships they represented included:

De Beers and the Kimberly Process

A partnership with a global span and with multiple partners aiming to address humanitarian issues created by trade in conflict diamonds. De Beers and the Kimberly Process galvanized and embarked upon a strategy of fully engaging all stakeholders, including the NGO community, in order to eradicate trade in conflict diamonds.

Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation – Forum for Nowa Huta

A partnership within the confines of a city with multiple partners seeking to integrate the initiatives and activities undertaken by public, private and NGO sector partners for the sustainable development of a particular area of Krakow: Nowa Huta. The Forum for Nowa Huta is supported by the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation (PEPF).

Bangalore Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Master Plan Project (BWSESMP) – Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) pilot projects

Another city partnership facilitated by a donor agency with partners from different sectors aiming to provide sustainable water and sanitation services to the slum dwellers of Bangalore in India.

Local Economic Development Partnership

A cross-sector partnership working at municipal level in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to improve the quality of life of the population after an unprecedented economic crisis.

Australian Museum – Rio Tinto Partnership

A regional partnership comprising The Australian Museum and the mining company Rio Tinto working together to increase Australia's knowledge of biodiversity and develop new ways to apply this information to natural resource management.

Christian Enterprise Trust of Zambia (CETZAM) Opportunity Microfinance

A country partnership between local business people in Zambia

and Opportunity International, a global microfinance institution. The partnership aims to establish a microfinance institution that will help poor people through provision of credit for enterprise development in order to alleviate poverty.

The diverse cultural backgrounds and varied geographical locations of the partners imposed the prerequisite of ground rules for communication and the sharing of materials, tasks and resources. The partnership examined each individual's partnership experience in depth. In order to ensure comparability a template was adopted including sections on information, history, activities, roles, accountability, challenges, resources, the future, achievements and contact details.¹ At the same time a partnership-phase analysis approach allowed an exploration of the nature and characteristics of the stages of the partnerships outlined in the different case studies.

Group findings

In almost all cases, the partnerships shared by members of the group were conceived as innovative ways of addressing difficult issues which could not be resolved by one partner alone. They were essentially voluntary in nature, arising out of a shared concern and desire to find

appropriate solutions by working together. A need for synergies thus underpins the process of partnership-building and, while partnerships face a range of problems, which can at times overshadow their more positive elements, they also have demonstrable benefits as common problems are addressed.

Incentives: Partnership-building is motivated by a variety of different sector drivers i.e. in terms of the need for values, experience or profits. These partnership ‘drivers’ are usually identified by an individual/organisation in the role of a facilitator, co-ordinator or broker. In the learning partnership incentives for partnering included: the desire for innovation in service delivery to the urban poor (BWSEMP-AusAid pilot projects); a wider acceptance of strategies through the involvement of the public sector and civil society (De Beers and the Kimberley Process); the expansion of business activities with more involvement in social issues (Australian Museum-Rio Tinto Partnership); local leaders needing partnerships with other sectors as a way of obtaining experience and financial resources (Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation); community organisations and small enterprises choosing to implement partnerships as part of a search for international funding for their projects (CETZAM Opportunity Microfinance); and the broader goal of working across sectors to address socio-economic development problems which could not be overcome by one sector alone (Local Economic Development Partnership).

People: The group found that personal relationships are an

important aspect of partnership success. Partnerships appear to thrive where particular individuals have made commitments to the partnership and are prepared to persevere until understandings are reached and a process evolved that leads to its intended goals. However, the Kimberly Process also suggests that cohesion does not hinge solely on individual commitment but on collective engagement between organisations. In this particular case, the group wondered if UN participation had also ensured a high level ‘must do’ commitment. The active organisational involvement of all partners was found to be far more important than is generally acknowledged. Key ‘silent’ stakeholders were identified and the group noted the importance of including them in the partnership process. For example, in poverty alleviation programmes, it is necessary to look upon the poor not just as beneficiaries but as partners, in order to create trusting and proactive engagements.

Agreements: Without agreements to ensure buy-in, partnerships often suffer from individuals getting frustrated and ‘wanting out’. ‘Getting it right’ is cardinal, particularly where there is internal organisational resistance to collaborating with other sectors e.g. between NGOs and business. Partnering agreements (both formal or informal) stating goals, deliverables and underpinning principles should be seen as valuable resources for avoiding potential conflicts on different issues

Roles and responsibilities: These need to be agreed upon and

clearly understood and accepted by all. It is useful to incorporate and detail them in a Partnering Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding or contract document.

Resources: Resources need to be clearly understood so that there is an appreciation of both financial and in-kind resources. From a sectoral perspective, funding is a general issue of concern when involving civil society as partners. Other kinds of resources, such as information and links with the community or region, are valuable assets that civil society partners can bring to partnerships with the private and public sectors. One of the sectoral benefits for public partners is improvement in governance. Meanwhile the private sector offers business logic and structured success.

Processes: The need to identify and agree on an equitable process by which the partnership will develop is crucial. Cross-sector partnerships are not easily implemented. There is always some combination of operational and strategic challenge which may offset potential benefits, hence the need to clarify internal management structures and leadership roles which might cause implementation difficulties, failures of responsibility, and partners not feeling obliged to carry out certain tasks. In relation to this, the importance of reviewing/monitoring cannot be underestimated. Enough time must be allocated to reviewing programme or project outcomes as well as the partnering process itself. All partners should understand this as important and not view it as simply a routine

exercise. Partnerships should not end up providing an illusion of progress while failing to achieve concrete results.

Conclusion

This learning partnership was in itself a unique confirmation of some of the conclusions outlined above. The challenges of distance, communication and time differences were to a large extent surmounted by initial agreements made at the first residential of the PCCP course. This step provided for comprehensive articulation and agreement of objectives by all partners from the beginning, with defined roles and responsibilities that were clearly understood and accepted by all. Commitment to these shared objectives and agreed values was essential for achieving success in the learning objectives proposed.

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¹ *Outlined in Tool 7 in Tennyson, R. (2004) The Partnering Toolbook, The International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), London & Geneva.*

Updates from Cohort One

In March 2002 participants from a variety of institutions around the world gathered at Clare College in Cambridge to embark upon the first year of PCCP. The months that followed were exciting ones as course organisers, tutors and participants sought to ground the new course within a framework that was both creative and academically rigorous. It was also important to develop the foundations for learning that could be built upon in future years. As one participant put it, “It was a time of new ideas and new initiatives...” When, a year later, Cohort One graduated from the course, the strong feeling of all involved was that a challenging and pioneering period of work had been rewarded.

Upon completion of the course some of the graduates changed their lives dramatically by leaving their jobs and moving into new organisations and sectors. Their stories are exciting ones and demonstrate the opportunities that PCCP afforded them in developing their thinking and gaining the confidence to take new directions. Most participants from Cohort One, however, continued to work with the same institutions and returned to apply learning from the course to their day-to-day work. It is these stories that we have chosen to profile here. We do so by drawing on the experience of five PCCP graduates from Cohort One; Clare Verberne of Rio Tinto Australia;

Jonathan Stacey of BirdLife International; Maria Bobenrieth of Nike’s Europe, Middle East and Africa region; Mounir Kleibo of the United Nations Development Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) and Karolina Myzk from UNDP’s Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Since participating in Cohort One, Clare Verberne has continued to work for Rio Tinto’s corporate partnership programme in Australia. The programme seeks to engage with key community and interest groups and consists of relationships with national environmental, Indigenous and science organisations.

“Fundamentally, the key theme behind the programme is building knowledge, capacity and skills both for Rio Tinto and the broader community.”

As well as the importance of the programme and activities, strong emphasis is also placed on the health of the partnership relationship itself.

“Understanding the value and benefits of the relationship is not always apparent in new partnerships, but what we have learnt, and continue to learn, is that the more that is invested into developing the relationship between partners, the better equipped the partnership is to

deliver programs and identify new opportunities to work together.”

Clare points out that the challenges for Rio Tinto’s partnership programme in Australia are largely around evaluation and review. Central to this is the need to develop tools and mechanisms that assist with,

“...measuring and understanding the impact and achievement of both the relationships and programmes – as well as managing issues of sustainability, ensuring, where appropriate, partnership programmes can continue to grow and deliver beyond the life of the partnership.”

Rio Tinto has participated each year in the Cambridge programme, sending representatives from both its businesses and partner organisations. Jonathan Stacey of BirdLife International, a global network of biodiversity conservation non-governmental organisations, was one such representative. He now manages the Rio Tinto-BirdLife International Programme which has grown steadily since 2002.

“Rio Tinto birdwatching activities now take place at forty-eight events with nearly two thousand participants; both an expression of, and a vehicle for, developing partnership with BirdLife NGOs and twenty-three mining businesses in thirteen countries

around the world. These relationships have seen the development of eleven collaborative projects worldwide, between Rio Tinto business units, BirdLife NGOs and other key stakeholders, delivering targeted outcomes on objectives that have significance for local conservation agendas identified within a framework for global priority-setting. Further projects are currently under development.”

The programme has seen the development and growth of a number of international projects. These include The Richards Bay Avitourism project in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, which is now into its fourth year. This seeks to establish sustainable livelihoods that build community-based constituency support for Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and other Protected Areas, integrating conservation values into socio-economic development. In Madagascar, meanwhile, BirdLife is working closely with QMM – the Rio Tinto subsidiary – to establish an integrated framework for environmental and social imperatives that will ensure that mining development has minimal negative impacts while setting the scene for enhanced biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

Six collaborative projects are also promoting biodiversity conservation agendas in the United States under National Audubon Society programmes that realise biodiversity and sustainable development objectives for Rio Tinto companies in Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada and Arizona. Some of these projects relate to biodiversity action planning for mines, others seek to raise awareness of environmental issues

within local communities and some do both. Further south, a High Andes project is addressing trans-national Andean Flamingo conservation in the high altitude wetlands of the Puna and Atacama of Argentina, Chile and Bolivia.

In Australia itself, Rio Tinto and Birds Australia are developing a national programme for establishing IBAs. This involves identifying a network of sites that are globally important for birds and bringing Australia into the Global IBA programme.

Jonathan is extremely positive about the future of the Rio Tinto-BirdLife International partnership:

“Rio Tinto and BirdLife International are currently engaged in extending the partnership for a further five years. The programme is active in communicating the nature of this practically-oriented relationship to both the wider conservation and extractive industry sectors, seeking to demonstrate that such cross-sector partnership can deliver projects that have positive local and, cumulatively, global impacts.”

Rio Tinto believes that partnerships such as the one with BirdLife International must be based on “mutual respect, active partnership, and long term commitment.” These are values that Maria Bobenrieth, who has recently been appointed as Corporate Responsibility Director for Nike’s Europe, Middle East and Africa region, would no doubt endorse. Maria was a member of the first cohorts of both PCCP and the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS). She says:

“I think many of the concepts from these experiences have started to embed themselves into

the way that Nike approaches Corporate Responsibility – we see it as central to executing our CR objectives.”

Nike’s Corporate Responsibility programme aims to use sport as a catalyst for social inclusion, particularly focusing on the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged young people. Maria believes that partnerships are integral to the linkage between sports programmes and social integration. She has been instrumental in promoting Nike’s ‘Case for Partnerships’ which centres on a belief that,

“...programmes that start at a grassroots level build into transformational change when combined with strong multi-sectoral partnerships, research demonstrating impact, and policy that is enabling rather than restricting.”

An illustration of this approach is provided by Nike’s work with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The ‘Together for Girls’ partnership works at grassroots level in Dadaab Refugee camp in Kenya to reinforce and enhance sports as a tool to promote girls’ integration in education. Nike has committed product and cash involvement to the project until 2007 and is keen to bring other partners to the table. At policy level, meanwhile, the company is one of the founding members of UNHCR’s Council of Business Leaders launched in January 2005 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The Council advises UNHCR on its strategies to best catalyse innovative public-private partnerships, and help the agency find new sources of private-sector funding in order to improve opportunities for refugees.

UNHCR's engagement in partnership activities is symptomatic of the growing shift towards working collaboratively with other sectors, particularly business, across the United Nations system as whole. Two of Cohort One's participants; Mounir Kleibo and Karolina Myzk, who work with UNDP in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Regional Centre for Europe and CIS respectively, have been closely involved in promoting and developing partnering strategies and activities as part of this process.

Through his work in charge of Governance Programmes with the United Nations Development Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) and the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNVP), Mounir Kleibo is in no doubt about the benefits gained from attending PCCP,

“The programme provided me with a wealth of knowledge and the experience gained is being reflected in my cross-sector partnership performance; it offered me a unique opportunity to further investigate my personal and institutional capacities.”

Learning to better use and identify a selection of tools and techniques in order to support cross-sector partnerships has been of specific importance to Mounir in promoting good governance anti-corruption activities. The Unit which he manages is working with AMAN (Coalition for Accountability and Integrity), a coalition of several NGOs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories that aims to enhance a social system against corruption by raising Palestinian awareness on the issue and encouraging the fight against it. This contributes towards

the building of accountability and integrity in systems within Palestinian institutions; enhancing transparency within the function of the different bodies of the Palestinian National Authority, civil society and international organisations working in Palestine, and facilitating access to correct and reliable information to develop a strategy for coordinating local, regional and international efforts in combating corruption. Further work in this particular field is being cemented through joint efforts between UNDP/PAPP and TIRI (the governance-access-learning network).

Mounir has applied the skills developed through this work to a major project entitled *Cross-Sector Public Administration support for Palestinian Authority Institutions and Civil Society* which endeavours to strengthen social capital by encouraging creativity and cooperation among previously divided social groups. The spin-offs from this have been profound and are now having strategic impact at policy level,

“The benefits of being part of this programme were reaped whilst contributing to *The Arab International Forum on Rehabilitation & Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Towards an Independent State*. The Forum, held in Beirut in October 2004, was co-sponsored by Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Palestinian Ministry of Planning, UN sister agencies and the League of Arab States. It succeeded in projecting development plans based on cross-sector partnership and ensured an on-going co-operation between the Arab

League and Palestine under the umbrella of ESCWA.”

Karolina Myzk sees her participation on PCCP as having helped shape the development of her career path within UNDP. While studying on the course she had a national role with UNDP in Poland where she supported the Global Compact network and worked on projects with the private sector promoting local economic development.

“Since last year my partnering work has gradually become more regional. Currently operating from the UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and CIS, my responsibilities involve the strengthening of management skills and the capacities of UNDP practitioners in field offices to be able to broker and work effectively in partnerships.”

The focus of Karolina's work led to her linking up with The Partnering Initiative (TPI) to develop a six-month Business Partnership Training course, beginning in April 2005. The course aims to support UNDP staff across Central and Eastern Europe in developing the knowledge and skills to broker partnerships with the business sector.

This group of Cohort One participants are joined by many others in different organisations and environments who have been working over the last three years to promote, develop and support the adoption of cross-sector approaches to tackle development issues. As the short updates we have outlined demonstrate, it is these committed individuals who, through their drive and determination, are ensuring that the impact of partnership activities is being felt internationally at the levels of both policy and practice.



Developing the art and science of cross-sector partnership

with

Alcan
Prize
for Sustainability



In association with the
International Business Leaders Forum



The Case Study Project

– Exploring and developing partnership case studies as tools for change –

Introduction

Cross-sector partnership as a sustainable development paradigm is at something of a crossroads. The idea itself has reached a considerable level of acceptability and endorsement and there are increasing numbers of examples of good partnership-based sustainable development initiatives. But is this enough?

We need to get better at understanding and communicating what does (and what does not) work if cross-sector partnership is to achieve its potential and make a serious contribution to the sustainable development challenges the world faces.

This is not a case of replicating existing **models** – indeed evidence suggests that this approach hardly ever works – rather it is a case of replicating successful partnering **processes** to ensure the smooth transition from a locally appropriate idea to a successful and sustainable project that ultimately achieves policy impact and scale.

If our hypothesis is correct, we face a critical question: How do we better analyse and share the process of successful partnering? It is this challenge that the CASE STUDY PROJECT has been created to address.

Project objectives

- **Provide** insights into the process of successful cross-sector partnering
- **Create** better case study collection and dissemination methods
- **Build** professional competencies and skills in this area
- **Establish** a benchmark for good practice in case study work
- **Deepen** understanding how case studies may be used more effectively as tools for change

Outputs

1. Twelve original, detailed case studies – that focus on the **process** of partnering – available for distribution and training purposes
2. Publication produced and disseminated *MAKING THE CASE: USING PARTNERING CASE STUDIES AS TOOLS FOR CHANGE* – this will include a review of different case study approaches and research methods as well as tools to enable others to undertake similar case study work
3. Network of practitioners involved in case study work established and actively engaged in new case study initiatives

* *The Partnering Initiative is a collaboration between the International Business Leaders Forum and the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. The Case Study project is a one-year programme developed by The Partnering Initiative in collaboration with the Alcan Prize for Sustainability and SEED (Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development).*

Working Together: A Critical Analysis of Cross Sector Partnerships in Southern Africa

**Publisher: University of Cambridge Programme for Industry,
September 2005**

The research for this publication was carried out between October 2003 and April 2005 under the project leadership of the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. The project partners were The International Business Leaders Forum, the Partnership Forum of Zambia and the Leadership Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The project was financed by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) under the EC-PREP funding scheme.

The research set out to examine the phenomenon of cross-sector partnerships and their impact on poverty eradication. As a development model, cross-sector partnerships are being used in policy formulation as well as for the structuring, management and implementation of projects. They are of research interest because of (1) the role they are playing in development and (2) the complex dynamics which operate both *within* the partnerships themselves and *between* the partnerships and the projects they help to shape. The issues raised by these partnerships not only affect the organisations, individuals or groups involved in partnerships, but, in the wider context, they also impact on the sectors within which they operate and on policy at both local and national levels.

The research had three main objectives:

1. To identify how far a cross-sector approach has been effective in addressing development challenges;
2. To capture and disseminate lessons learned which could be of use to others in establishing and adapting similar models;
3. To make recommendations for companies, governments, civil society organisations and donor agencies working in Africa to assist them in establishing successful cross-sector partnership initiatives for sustainable development.

Research data were gathered from two major and four lesser case studies of ongoing partnerships in South Africa and Zambia seeking to address development issues in the areas of agriculture, health and education. The two major case studies, which provide the richest data, examine the work of the Chamba Valley Partnership Project (CVPP) in Zambia, which aims to increase small-scale farming income, and Amangwe Village, a holistic healthcare centre, set up through a partnership mechanism, which works with and for people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The remaining studies are: the Small-scale Sugarcane Farming Communities' Partnership and the Mthashana Further Education and

Training College partnership programme in South Africa; and, the Sharing Responsibility for Higher Education (SRHE) partnership and the cross-sector work of the Zambia Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (ZBCA) in Zambia. The primary production of research data was carried out by country resident research teams working in close consultation with the various members of the partnerships under study.

The research found that major factors involved in the effectiveness of the partnerships included: the context in which the partnership is operating; the partnership's stage of development; partnership governance, organisation and accountability; replication from one context or situation to another; partnering roles and skills required at particular stages; the engagement and participation of different sectors, partners and stakeholders; whether, and why, extra financial resources are needed to assist the partnership and its work; how the partnership has adapted to internal and external change; and the monitoring and evaluation processes which are in place to review and measure the outputs and outcomes of the partnership.

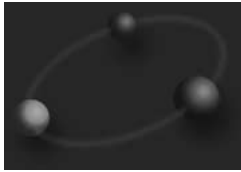
It was concluded that, although the issues and processes which emerged from the research were

based within particular African contexts, they are nonetheless being played out on a global stage where structural challenges and systems create inequities and obstacles to development in Africa as a whole. Partnerships, though by no means a panacea for addressing development issues, appear to offer the possibility, at the very least, of giving voice to a wide range of different stakeholder interests and providing a platform for awareness-raising and the articulation of strategies for change.

The report begins with a review of the literature pertaining to cross-sector partnership and explores issues of the definition, usage and value of partnership as a concept in sustainable development. The research methodology employed by the research team is described and discussed in Chapter 2, including an explanation of the criteria for the selection of the six case studies on which the report is based. Prior to the case studies themselves, more general material is presented, in Chapter 3, to describe the socio-economic context of Southern Africa within which these partnerships were formed and operate. This broad contextualisation is supplemented by sector-specific data at the beginning of each case study. Discussion of generic partnership issues within the cases is limited but is addressed fully in Chapter 7. The final chapter consists of the main recommendations which might be utilised by other researchers, policy-makers and partnership practitioners. At the time of going to press, full details of the price and availability of the publication had not been finalised

but enquiries for copies should be made to Stuart Reid, Project Director, EC PREP, University of Cambridge Programme for Industry, 1 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA.

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The Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership 'Unlocking Potential through Collaboration'

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United Nations Volunteer Programme (Germany)
Course participant

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The Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership, is run by The Partnering Initiative, a collaboration between the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry and the International Business Leaders Forum.

The Brokering Guidebook

Published: August 2005

The Brokering Guidebook is authored by Ros Tennyson, Co-Director of The Partnering Initiative (TPI). It is designed as a companion to Ros's earlier publication, *The Partnering Toolkit*. Published by TPI, it explores both the skills and responsibilities of 'brokers' in the partnering process, whether such brokering is provided by individuals or, increasingly, by organisational mechanisms.

The Partnering Toolkit

Published: January 2004

The Partnering Toolkit offers a concise, step-by-step overview of the essential elements that make for effective partnering. The Toolkit was written by Ros Tennyson and produced by the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) in co-operation with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In addition to the original English version, the Toolkit is also available in Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swahili with further versions due in a range of other languages in the near future.

Both books are available on the TPI website.

Partnership Brokers Training

A key outcome of PCCP Cohort One was the establishment of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS), jointly run by The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The Scheme includes intensive skills development during a one-week residential course; submission of a detailed Logbook capturing experiences from a three-month period of professional practice; and a Final Project looking in detail at a specific aspect of the partnership brokering process. All written work is assessed by internal and external examiners. Those who successfully complete all parts of the programme and all elements of assessed work are awarded accreditation to the Scheme. Participants for the four PBAS cohorts that have taken place since 2003 have come from all over the world to attend a residential course in the UK. Because of demand PBAS is now expanding regionally, with residential programmes taking place in 2005 in Australia for the South East Asia and the South Pacific region, and in Poland for the Central European region.

For further details see the PBAS website: www.odi.org.uk/pppg/PBAS/scheme.html

For more information on TPI activities see:

The Partnering Initiative

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Information about the partner organisations of The Partnering Initiative



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The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is an educational charity, based in the UK, set up in 1990 to promote responsible business practices internationally that benefit both business and society, and which help to achieve social, economic and environmentally sustainable development, particularly in new and emerging market economies.

IBLF encourages continuous improvement in responsible business practices in all aspects of company operations; develops geographic and issue-based partnerships to take effective action on social, economic and environmental issues; and helps to create an 'enabling environment' to provide the conditions in which such partnerships can flourish.

IBLF retains its distinctive character by combining its understanding of the social dimensions of business; its leading edge understanding of cross-sector partnering and development of generic partnership-building methods together with practical action in more than thirty countries undergoing political and/or economic transition.

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