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THE SDG PARTNERSHIP GUIDEBOOK

A practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals

Second Edition



PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATOR

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATOR 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Lead authors: Darian Stibbe, Dave Prescott, with significant input from Ruth Findlay Brooks and Julia Gilbert (The Partnering Initiative, TPI), and Ola Goransson (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN DESA).

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2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator

The 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator is a collaborative initiative of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and The Partnering Initiative (TPI), in collaboration with United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, United Nations Office for Partnerships, UN Global Compact, and the UN Development Coordination Office. The initiative aims to significantly help accelerate and scale up effective partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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In this guide

PART ONE: Setting the scene 5

1 **Using this guide** 6
2 **Partnering to maximise SDG Impact** 10
3 **Business as a key development actor and partner** 14

PART TWO: Defining terms, understanding the landscape 22

4 **Defining and categorising partnerships** 23
5 **Understanding different stakeholders** 25
6 **How do partnerships create value?** 34

PART THREE: Designing and implementing a partnership 37

7 **The partnering process** 38
8 **The partnership formation journey** 40
9 **Building Blocks of effective partnerships** 44
BB1. Fundamentals 46
BB2. Partnership relationship 49
BB3. Structure and set-up 54
BB4. Management and leadership 57

PART FOUR: Annexes 64

Annex 1: **Institutional capacity to partner** 65
Annex 2: **Some implications of country context on partnering** 78
Annex 3: **Partnerships for transformational development** 70

Tools 79

Tool 1: **Stakeholder mapping** 80
Tool 2: **Partnering agreement template** 81
Tool 3: **Internal prospective partnership assessment** 82
Tool 4: **Value assessment framework** 84
Tool 5: **Troubleshooting** 86
Tool 6: **Managing power imbalances** 88
Tool 7: **Partnering healthcheck** 91

About the Partnership Accelerator



Partnership Enabling Eco-system

The 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator is a collaborative initiative of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and The Partnering Initiative (TPI), in collaboration with United Nations Office for Partnerships, UN Global Compact, and the UN Development Coordination Office.

The Partnership Accelerator aims to develop the **partnership-enabling ecosystem** (see above) which can support the engagement of business as a partner in sustainable development and **accelerate the number and effectiveness of partnerships towards delivering the 2030 Agenda.** Its aims are to:

1 **Raise understanding and build the partnering skills and competencies** of UN and government staff, alongside NGO and business counterparts; this will result in far faster partnership development and the creation of more robust, effective partnerships;

2 **Support the organizational change required for our institutions to become 'fit for partnering',** enabling them to optimize the way they work and thus deliver more through far more efficient and effective partnering;

3 **Draw out good practice and support the development of efficient SDG partnership platforms** around the world, thereby creating the mechanism through which governments and the UN can systematically engage, and partner, with business and other development actors.

Guidebook leads

The Partnering Initiative

The Partnering Initiative (TPI) is a leading international NGO, dedicated to unleashing the power of partnership for a prosperous and sustainable future. TPI has been a pioneer in the development of the theory and practice of multi-stakeholder collaboration since it was founded in 2003, when it published its first, seminal partnering toolkit, translated into eleven languages and republished three times.

TPI continues to drive and codify the state-of-the-art of effective partnership practice while building up the partnership-enabling eco-system through: training individuals; supporting organisations to become institutionally fit for partnering; supporting the strategy, development, evaluation and best practice guidance for partnerships; building in-country platforms to catalyse partnership and inputting into international policy development.

UN DESA

UN DESA is a vital interface between global policies and national action in the economic, social and environmental spheres. Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the universal and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global agreements, UN DESA responds to the needs and priorities of the global community.

1 Setting the scene

MODULE 1 Using the guide 6

MODULE 2 Partnering to maximise SDG impact 10

MODULE 3 Business as a key development actor and partner 14

"It is the long history of humankind that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed." **Charles Darwin**

Using the guide

Introduction to the Guidebook

The aim of this Guidebook is to convey the magic of how multi-stakeholder partnerships at country level can deliver extraordinary results towards the Sustainable Development Goals and provide clear guidance on how to build the most robust, effective collaborations.

The Guidebook sets out the **key Building Blocks of successful partnerships** and the underlying processes – from initial stakeholder engagement to partnership review – necessary to develop and keep those Building Blocks in place and to maximise partnership impact. Along with frameworks to help organisations understand, identify and select the most appropriate forms of collaboration, the Guidebook includes a series of tools that support organisations through each step of partnership development and management. It also provides guidance on the more in-depth, trickier, but essential, partnering aspects – including trust, power imbalances, and the frustrations and challenges of working across different organisational cultures.

From experience, the more knowledge the relevant individuals from all the partners have of the **process of partnering** (including the inevitable roadblocks and challenges that will come up), the faster a partnership can be developed, and the more likely it is to overcome rockier times. By 'process' we mean the ways of developing and managing partnerships, with a constant eye on engagement, on inclusivity, on relationship and trust building, and on co-creation.

The guidebook brings together the best of the experience of TPI and its partners from more than seventeen years of working in multiple regions and contexts, with all societal stakeholders, and with all kinds of partnership: from small-scale, one-of-a-kind community partnerships to global partnerships operating across over a third of the world's countries.

Of course, all contexts are different and all partnerships are unique. You will need to adjust and adapt what you read here to your own situation.

Multi-stakeholder partnership for the SDGs

"An ongoing collaborative relationship among organisations from different stakeholder types aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximise value creation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver benefit to each of the partners."

About you, and why you want to partner

This guidebook is designed to be valuable to individuals and organisations with varying degrees of familiarity with working in partnership, and in a wide range of contexts. However, you can approach the material in different ways depending on your specific circumstances. Specifically:

- **If you're starting a partnership from scratch:** the guidebook will help you confirm that working in partnership is the right approach, and take you through a systematic process to develop and manage a partnership through distinct phases. We suggest starting with the 'Building Blocks' section.

- **If you're already involved in a partnership:** if you are already working in a partnership, or in a number of different types of partnership, and you just need some quick advice about how to make it work better,start with the 'Partnership Healthcheck Tool'.

- **If you're a partnership sceptic:** perhaps you have heard a lot about working in partnership and you are unconvinced of its value. Believe it or not, we share your scepticism! Most partnerships fall short of their promise. But we believe that partnerships can create enormous value, *if* they are set up and managed effectively. Have a look at the 'value creation' section.

- **If you're a development specialist working in partnership with the private sector for the first time, good luck!:** in this guidebook we include a long introduction to working the private sector since this is where there seems to be least experience. Start with 'Business as a key development actor and partner'.

- **If you're from the private sector working in partnership with the development sector for the first time, good luck!** The guidebook aims to provide accessible ways to understand how large international development institutions operate and view the world, especially large NGOs and the United Nations system. Start with 'A new era and a new approach to international development'.

- **If you are required by a donor to work in partnership as a condition of receiving funding, OR if you've been told to work in partnership as a way to raise money for your organisation:** while financial flows *can* be generated through working in partnership, raising money is not a good starting point. Read the 'value creation' section to find out why.

- **If you already know a lot about partnership and consider yourself an expert:** you may already be very experienced in partnership, either as a practitioner or as a broker/facilitator; in which case you can use the guidebook as a refresher and, indeed, to challenge our findings; we are always in learning mode ourselves! You might also consider using it to bring less experienced colleagues up to speed, either by highlighting certain sections and tools, or simply recommending the guidebook to them.

There's a great deal of rich material in this Guidebook and it may seem overwhelming at first.

We've split it into modules to try to make it as accessible as possible.

We suggest you take a module at time, and reflect on how it relates to your experiences and context.

Some first principles

"Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."
Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi

Joining the dots

Most of us work in operating environments that encourage a sense of competition and separation, rather than collaboration and cooperation. We are often told that there is a scarcity of resources, and that our job is to secure for ourselves, and for our own organisations, as much of the available resources as possible, and that if others lose out in the process then that's too bad.

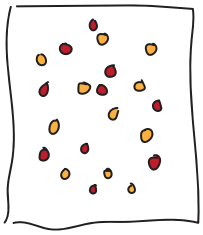
This is a way of thinking that can have some merit in certain arenas – for example, when it comes to highly competitive industry sectors whose survival depends on keeping costs down. But for the most part it is a reductive way of thinking, because it limits the scope of what can be achieved together. It makes collaborative working difficult, especially if we have been told to work in partnership as a way to help an organisation to compete with others for funding opportunities.

Rather than starting from an assumption of competition and scarcity, what happens if we start with a different assumption:

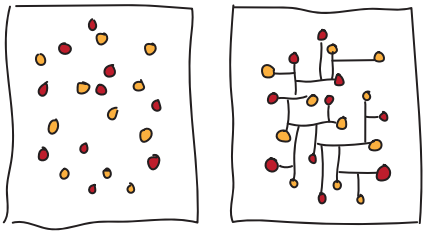
All of the ideas, people, technologies, institutions and resources that are required to achieve the SDGs are already available, and the task is how do we engage them and combine them in new and transformational ways?

This cardinal premise – of sufficiency rather than scarcity of resources – runs through this guidebook, and through TPI's 'value maximisation' approach to partnering. It is a very liberating thought to join the dots between resources in new ways – including thinking differently about what the word 'resource' even means – and this requires creative capacities which most of us have in abundance but rarely draw upon.

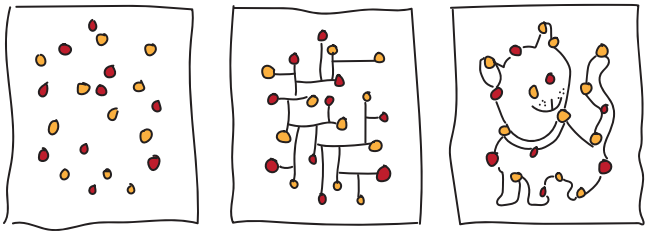
In the pictures below, the dots represent all of the resources that are potentially available to achieve the SDGs. For most of us, for most of the time, these dots are separate. It rarely occurs to us to even think about the possible connections between, say, an industrial development strategy and infant nutrition, or between a musical composition and algae farming.



Sometimes, however, these connections are made, and we draw some tentative lines between seemingly disparate fields and areas. This begins to move us beyond our silos and comfort zones – we are heading in the right direction:



But what if we gave ourselves the permission to completely redraw the connections between the 'resources' available to meet the SDGs? What if we approached every single one of our encounters as opportunities to create new ideas, and what if the best and most interesting ideas emerged from the most unlikely sources? What new connections might emerge then?



Source: Fabio Moioli

Context is everything

The central design challenge with any guidebook of this nature is to be sufficiently generic to cover a wide range of collaboration, while still remaining sufficiently applicable to any specific context. We have gone as far as we can to be accessible in our approach but, ultimately, there is always a leap between the Guidebook and your personal experience. To put this another way, context is everything. There will be all kinds of reasons why the material will need to be adapted to your particular situation: your own personal educational and professional background, ways of learning, experience and interests; your personal and professional relationships and communities of practice; the strategic focus of your organisation; and the society that you live in, with its national political and cultural contexts. And not only is this context specific to you (and to your partners), it is dynamic and constantly changing. An effective partnering practitioner is highly attuned to their context in the broadest sense.

You are at the centre

For all of the material that follows in this Guidebook, there are (at least) three levels at which to engage: You can think about how it relates to **you as an individual** and to your professional practice; you can think about how it relates to **your organisation**, and how your organisation collaborates; you can also think about how it relates to **existing or new partnerships** that you might be involved in. Effective partnering calls for great personal leadership: brave, risk-taking people able to operate in ambiguous situations while remaining outcome-focused.

One of the issues partnership practitioners face when developing partnerships is the challenge thrown up by their own organisations' systems, processes, and even culture. Very few organisations are institutionally optimized to support partnering and, in most cases, there are considerable blockages that slow down or even prevent partnership development. The guidance includes a section to help individuals understand their institutional environment from a partnering perspective and identify potential blockages in order to put in mitigation actions as early as possible to prevent them from slowing their partnership. To sum up, effective partnering appears to depend on the following things:

1. **Self-awareness:** knowing what you are good at, your patterns of behaviour and tendencies, and areas for further growth;
2. **Contextual awareness:** knowing what is happening in your immediate environment – both professionally and socially – in your organisation, that of your partners, and beyond; and
3. **Awareness of the complex interplay** between yourself and your context.

Reflective practice

When it comes to partnering, no guidebook or training event can ever be a substitute for the learning that comes from the experience of actually doing it.

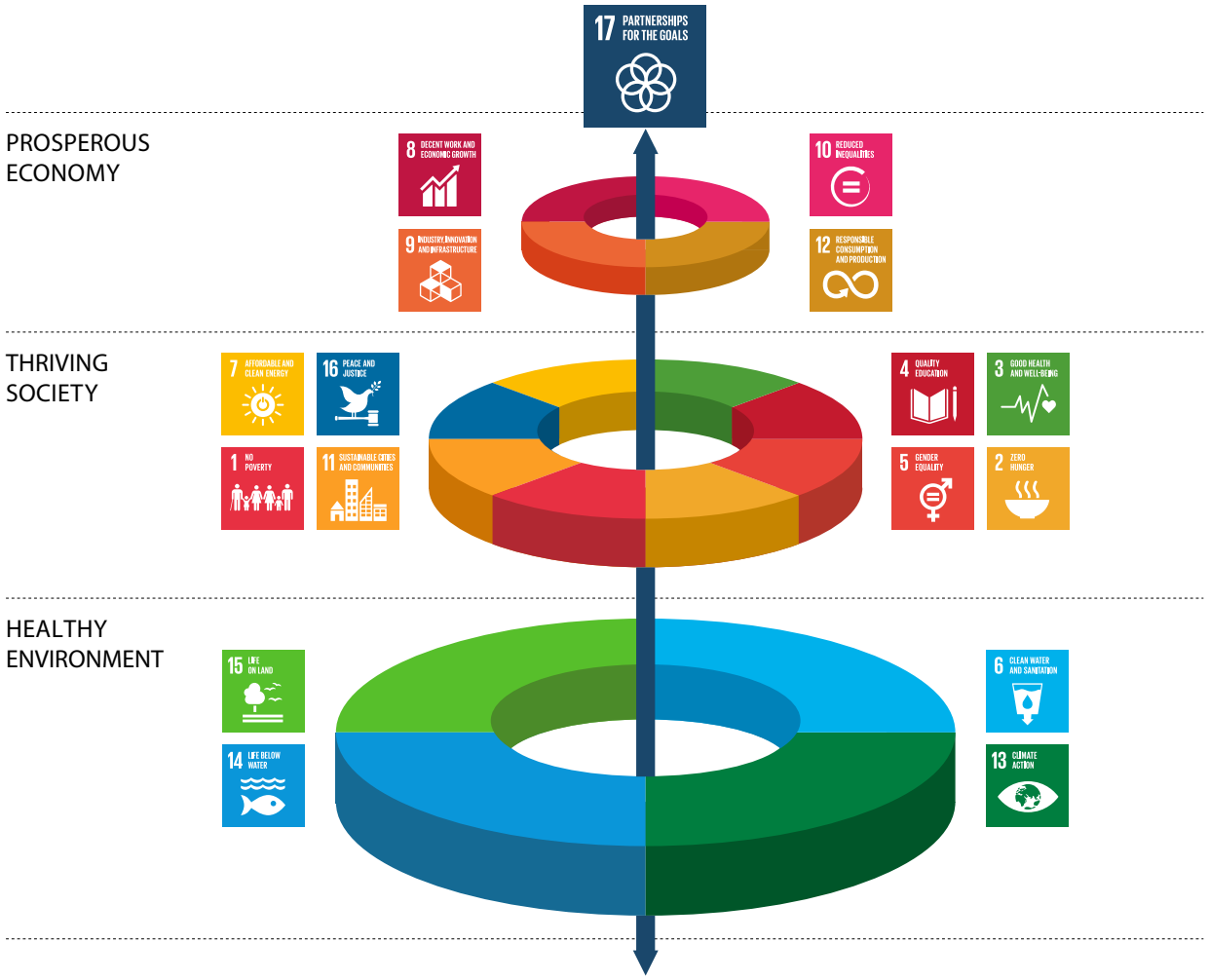
We highly recommend a reflective approach across the whole partnering cycle. In practice this means careful consideration and planning before any engagement event with partners (phone call, meeting, roundtable discussion), to consider in advance the issues from your partners' as well as your own perspectives, and to think through how to approach the meeting to help advance the partnership while continuing to build the necessary trust and relationships (particularly when there are tricky issues to be dealt with).

It also means, following such events, the need to think through how they went, again from both your and your partners' perspectives: what worked well, where did you get pushback, did the meeting result in improved relationship and equity or the opposite? And then to consider what you could have done differently, and what you might need to do moving forward.

Keeping a logbook and having an opportunity to discuss with colleagues or a mentor can help accelerate your own partnership-learning journey.

Partnering as an essential approach to SDG impact

The 2030 Agenda is based on an interconnected economy, society and environment



The 2030 Agenda and the essential role of partnerships

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a fundamental shift in thinking in international development, recognising the interconnectedness of prosperous business, a thriving society and a healthy environment. The Agenda names all three sectors as key development actors and requires an unprecedented level of cooperation and collaboration among civil society, business, government, NGOs, foundations, academia and others for its achievement. In other words, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are the result of – and a call for – a new collaborative way of working.

The 2030 Agenda sends a powerful signal that old ways of thinking and working – often tackling symptoms rather than root causes and focusing narrowly on single-issue goals – simply do not deliver the fundamental shifts our planet requires: for countries to deliver a sufficiently high quality of life to all their citizens, while operating within sustainable natural resource limits.* No country is currently able to achieve this.

When it comes to the 2030 Agenda, we are all developing countries.

Source: Redrawn from Rockström and Sukhdev (2014) as presented at the 2016 EAT Forum (http://eatforum.org/event/eat-stockholm-food-forum-2016/#program).

* See the brilliant work of Kate Raworth on Doughnut Economics https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/ for further details.

Contrasting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and SDG eras of international development

 MDG Era	 SDG Era
Focus more on 'treating symptoms' rather than tackling the underlying issues	Built on an understanding of the interconnectedness of the prosperity of business, society and the environment
Governments / development community responsible for 'delivering' development	All societal sectors (including business) recognized as key development actors and part of the solution
Each societal sector playing its role in a siloed way	Essential need for collaboration across societal sectors
Focus on specific issues in specific geographies in order to achieve sufficient concentration of effort and achieve impact	Need for holistic approaches across issues and geographies to tackle systemic challenges
Most funding linked to the achievement of short term outcomes	Longer term investment required for transformational change
Requirement to demonstrate impact and low tolerance of risk leads to using familiar linear approaches to achieve development outcomes	Need for innovative approaches with greater long term potential to tackle complexity but greater risk of failure
Top-down planning, 'development by design' approach	Emergent planning based on the coalescing of interests and local resources around particular issues

A new era and a new approach to international development

Societies, in general, develop organically, over hundreds or thousands of years, adapting to the availability of natural resources, of knowledge, of technologies, of human capital, of trade routes, of financial capital, and of leadership. 'Progress' tends to happen both through the coincidence of the availability of the right set of resources to solve problems or take advantage of opportunities, and through positive feedback loops (e.g. improvements in workers' skills lead to higher productivity, which leads to higher taxation, which leads to more spending on education). At times, where both the political and natural environments are stable, a virtuous cycle of progress can emerge, and development accelerates. Unstable politics and conflict (national or cross-border), inequality, corruption, colonialism and human or natural disasters result in setbacks to the natural advance.



Alignment of interest across societal sectors

What does this mean for international development in the SDG Era?

Top-down, short-term, single-sector approaches generally cannot deliver long-lasting impact – the system is too complex. The 2030 Agenda, through engaging and working with all societal sectors in a bottom-up approach (informed and supported by 'top-down' experience, technology, finance and coordination globally), is a way of being far more deliberate and targeted in accelerating a society's 'natural' organic development process towards sustainability.

There are three major considerations for the new era of international development:

1. Business, society and the environment are strongly interconnected and must move together to ensure progress and long-term sustainability. Business or the environment prospering at the expense of people results in civil unrest; business or society prospering at the expense of the environment leads to pollution and climate chaos. **Sustainable development can only happen if we progress all three strands together.**

2. Our world has limited resources – whether financial, technological, natural or human – and, as a society, we must optimise the use of such resources to deliver sustainable development for everyone's benefit. Building on the intrinsic alignment of interests among the holders of those resources (business, governments, civil society, academia etc.), **all actors must play their unique roles and utilise their unique resources, with partnerships an essential means to maximise the collective impact of available resources.**

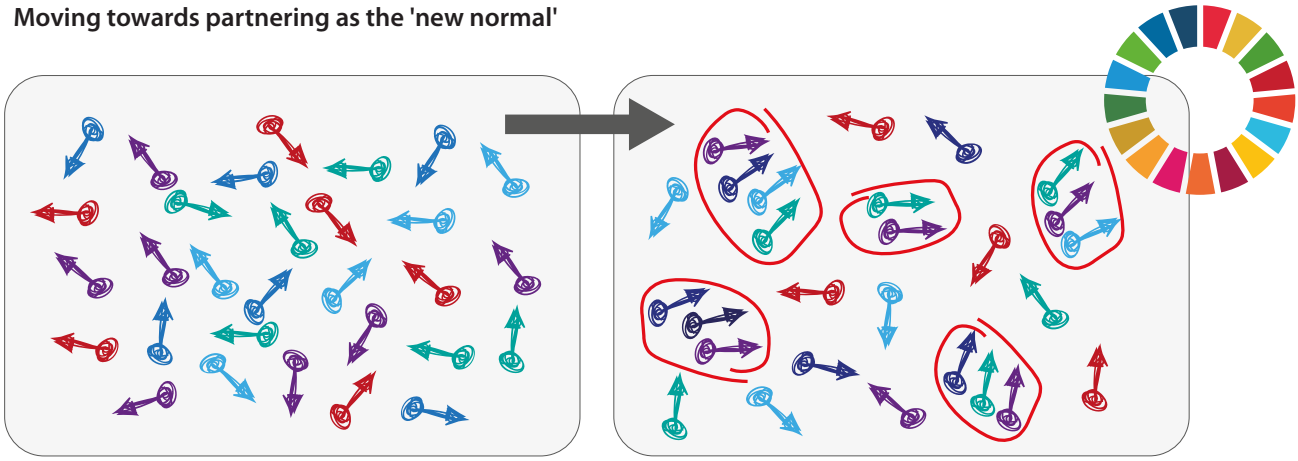
3. Further, the goals are highly interconnected. Water, clearly, is an essential component of health, sanitation and agriculture. Malnutrition can never be tackled without also engaging around agriculture, the food industry, health and education. **This move to system-transformational development requires acknowledgement of the interconnections between the SDGs and the need for holistic approaches that engage with, and cut across, issues.**

Partnering as the 'new normal'

While Goal 17 of the SDGs explicitly talks about a 'global partnership for development', and has a target (17.17) specifically related to multi-stakeholder collaboration, the reality is that all of the goals necessarily require the involvement of, and significant collaboration across, all societal sectors.

It is partnerships at the national, sub-national and city level – those that can **best harness and optimize the resources available** – that will drive forward the real change required to deliver the SDGs and impact people's lives for the better. The challenge for all stakeholders is thus: how can we systematically collaborate across different societal sectors toward delivering the shared vision of the SDGs? How can partnerships genuinely become 'the new normal'?

Moving towards partnering as the 'new normal'



Current situation: Little collaboration or coherence across business, government, civil society, academia, UN etc.

The New Normal: Systematic collaboration across societal sectors wherever value can be created towards the common goal / polar star of the SDGs

Traditional vs transformational development

This is a hugely important distinction with major implications on how partnerships are developed and run.

In this Guidebook, we make a distinction between 'traditional' and 'transformational' development. It is important to appreciate that much of current development practice can be classified as transformational, and often a hybrid of the two.

Traditional development

As discussed above, **traditional development** requires an ongoing flow of external resources in order to continue to improve people's lives (e.g. through better health provision, education etc.) or to preserve the environment.

Transformational development

Transformational development, in contrast, aims to transform the **unsustainable** (in economic, social or natural resource usage terms) situation to a **sustainable** (or at least more sustainable), ongoing situation. In other words, it attempts to tackle the underlying causes and leave behind a self-sustaining, resilient legacy where little or no further action, and no ongoing external inputs, are necessary.

The Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* prepared by an independent group of scientists, presents an objective assessment of where the world is falling short and what needs to be done. The Report highlights central entry points for transformation across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Traditional development will often be focused on delivering to 'beneficiaries' – those who receive the benefits of development practice. In transformational development, people and organisations are seen as an essential part of the intrinsic system to be transformed, and hence are considered as **critical partners** in the transformation, and certainly part of the overarching solution. For example, a partnership that helps to deliver more sustainable supply chains through improvements in the quality, yield and livelihoods of smallholder farmers benefits every component of the value chain, from the consolidators to the manufacturers to the retailers. In the SDGs, we are all partners and we are all beneficiaries.

Not a value judgement – both are required

Not all development could or should be transformational in nature. In humanitarian or fragile situations, transformational development may not be apt or even possible. Elsewhere, some issues will often be too complex for transformational approaches, or the immediate need can be too great and too urgent to wait for what is a longer-term solution. Certainly the 'leave no one behind' thread running through the SDGs will often require more traditional action to support the most deprived or vulnerable in the immediate term.

It's also worth noting that these are not two distinct buckets labelled 'traditional' and 'transformational'. Indeed, many development programmes will fall across the two, incorporating elements of both.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) have the potential to support both types of development. They can help traditional development be done better, be more effective and innovative, be realised at greater scale, to exploit synergies and use the latest technologies and, thus, to deliver more. In the case of transformational development in particular, multi-stakeholder partnerships are likely to be an essential ingredient in any form of system shift.

Take a look at page 24 for further information about the different types of MSPs: partnerships for better traditional development and partnerships for transformational development.

* See: *The future is now: science for achieving the sustainable development goals* (UN DESA, 2019)

Business as a key development actor and partner

One of the major paradigm shifts of the last 10 years has been an increased understanding of the essential role of business in society and an ever-increasing engagement of business as a key partner in development.

Business as an important actor in development

As we've seen, when businesses operate indifferently to – or, worse, at the expense of –society or the environment, this invariably leads to inequality and/or the destruction of the environment. Business doing business responsibly, inclusively and sustainably is positive for societies and for development: It creates and sustains livelihoods; reduces poverty; generates taxes; delivers essential products and services efficiently and affordably; catalyses technological innovation; reduces reliance on imports and/or brings in essential foreign currency revenues through exports. Indeed, business has been one of the lead drivers in every country which has come out of poverty.

That is why governments, donors, the UN and NGOs are engaged with companies both to help catalyse business investment and to improve the responsibility, sustainability and inclusivity of business.

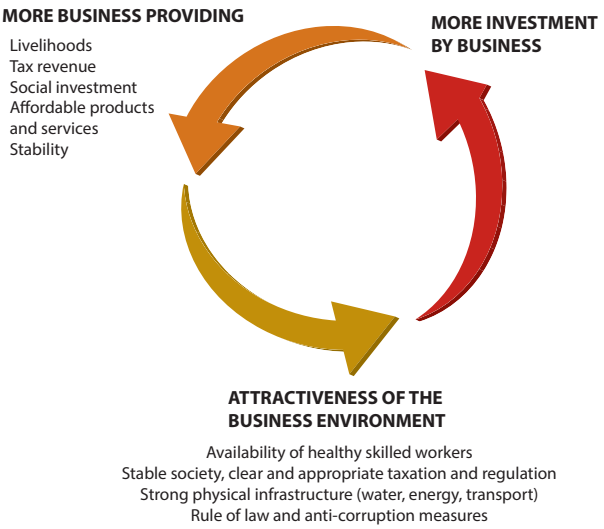
Business has a considerable environmental, economic, and societal footprint due to the wide reach of its activities and the multiple relationships that it maintains across its supply chains. Business has direct and indirect influence and impact on several levels

Each level of influence and impact presents an opportunity for business to take specific action to mitigate risks or to actively promote environmental, economic and social wellbeing.

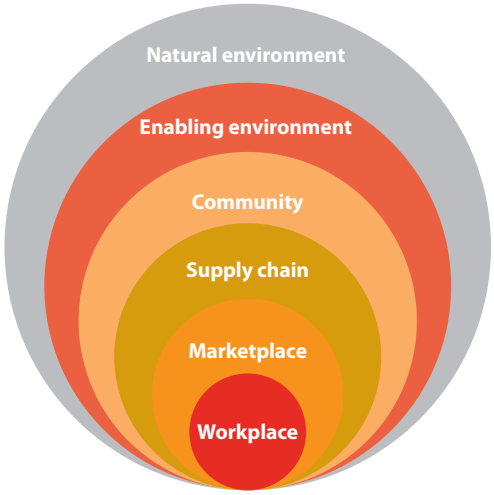
Examples of mitigating actions include addressing environmental degradation arising from their operations and preventing human rights infringements, such as child labour and trafficking.

Examples of business actively promoting positive impact include working on environmental sustainability, investing in preserving and restoring biodiversity, participating actively in community welfare projects, ensuring fair wages and promoting gender equity and a healthy workplace.

Virtuous circle between business activity, investment and the enabling environment



Business Footprint – through its operations and networks, business has a direct or indirect influence and impact on many levels



Credit: Jane Nelson



No country, as far as we're aware, has reached level 3.

For more on this, check out: Unleashing the Power of Business: A practical Roadmap to systematically engage business as a partner in development

TPIglobal.org/roadmap

Increasing convergence between goals of business and of development

Business as a partner in development

Business becomes a 'partner in development' when it looks beyond immediate short-term financial gain and towards building longer-term business and societal value instead. In practice, many companies are still most focussed on short-term financial considerations but there is a growing movement of purpose-driven or 'SDG-aligned' business activity which takes a broader view of the company's operations.

In August 2019, for example, the Business Roundtable – a US-based alliance of 181 CEOs signed a new Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, in which they committed to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders – customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders.

The Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), the roll-out of the UN Global Compact in 2004, the Rio+20 WSSD, and the UN Summit in 2015 that launched the 2030 Agenda, are four significant milestones in a decades-long and still ongoing shift by companies towards responsible and sustainable business practice.
At the same time, within traditional development communities there has been an increasingly more sophisticated understanding of the role of business in society and the opportunities offered by positive engagement.

A representation of the evolution can be seen in the diagram above, moving from Base level (business at a minimum complying with laws and regulations, while government regulates business and often with NGOs advocating against business); through Level 1 (business undertakes old-style, philanthropic CSR, with NGOs and the UN seeing business as a source of funding); through Level 2 (the emergence of 'shared value' thinking, with business becoming far more strategic in investing in their social and environmental sustainability, and with donors co-investing and NGOs partnering with them); through to Level 3 (systematic collaboration between business, government and other development actors to deliver prosperous business, a thriving society and a healthy environment). Of course, business is not a cohesive entity any more than a government or other development actors are cohesive entities, and different parts of the business community within a country will be at quite different stages.

Nevertheless, this does provide an important path of evolution as governments, the UN and other development actors attempt to drive more systematic engagement with business towards the SDGs.

Understanding business incentives

There are clear drivers for business to engage with sustainable development and to do so in partnership with multiple stakeholders. These can be mapped on a spectrum from indirect, non-core business incentives through to core business incentives:

In many countries there is a shift - particularly by multi-national companies - away from pure philanthropy towards more strategic, 'shared-value' investments.

1. ***Philanthropic engagement*** *('old style' CSR), unrelated or only tangentially related to a company's core business, aimed at achieving* ***reputational benefits****, notably by demonstrating* ***corporate citizenship*** *to customers and employees alike.* Companies are facing increasing consumer and community scrutiny around the impact of their practices, and employees are increasingly considering their potential employer's CSR credentials in their decision to accept a position.

2. ***Strategic social or environmental investment****, usually related to a company's operations or value chain, and aimed at* ***improving a company's social licence to operate*** *and to help build a stable long-term business, societal and ecological environment in which it can thrive.* Companies are increasingly aware that their own licence to operate depends on their ability to demonstrate they are responsible entities that contribute positively to the communities in which they have a footprint.

3. ***Investments to tackle more direct business risks*** *(including the skills, availability and wellbeing of its workers) and to* ***ensure sustainability in its value chain****.* Companies need stable, transparent and secure environments to operate at their full potential, and so it is in their interest to contribute directly to, or influence, an enabling environment. Having rule of law, respect for property rights or having access to a skilled pool of talent, for example, all affect their ability to operate. Conflicts with communities over impacts on health and livelihoods, or protests over labour rights, can damage their reputation and affects operations. Business are increasingly working with others to tackle systemic issues that present business and human risks – such as corruption and climate change – and co-creating codes of conduct and standards can influence and shape the practices of entire value chains.



Spectrum of business incentives to partner, from philanthropic to strategic core business

Partnership opportunities at the interface between business and development

Business outcomes	Partnership opportunity	Development outcomes
• Increase access to sufficiently qualified and skilled talent	Education and workforce development	• Increase employment rate • Increase individual income
• Increase reliability and efficiencies • Reduce cost of products and services	Strengthen the supply chain	• Increase suppliers' (e.g. farmers) income • Improve access to markets
• Increase access to new markets • Development of new products in existing markets	Affordable products and services	• Increase access to affordable and high quality goods and services that provide a development benefit
• Improve business enabling environment • Mitigate risk of market entry	Government capacity building	• Improve democracy and increase political stability • Reduce corruption

Adapted from US AID

4. ***New markets, new investments, or new business opportunities.*** The Business and Sustainable Development Commission's report, *'Better Business, Better World'*, estimated the investment opportunities for business in 60 key areas generated by the SDGs at $12 trillion. Among the top 10 opportunities identified were: mobility systems, new healthcare solutions, energy efficiency, clean energy and affordable housing, agriculture solutions and urban infrastructure. A recent PwC report looking at how ready business is to support governments to achieve the SDGs makes the point that "businesses that align their strategy with national priorities will most likely be given their licence to operate, by governments and citizens alike – those that do not, or that struggle to demonstrate alignment with the national interest, cannot expect equivalent treatment, so creating competitive disadvantage", particularly as governments begin to align their national policies and regulations with the SDG frameworks and priorities.

Partnership opportunities with business are possible wherever there is an alignment of interests between business and development outcomes.

Concerned about conflicts of interest when working with companies? Go to page 21 to learn more about when you should be concerned, and when in fact, making a profit can be harnessed to drive scale and impact.

Business and development partnerships

Below we set out in more detail a wide range of opportunities for partnerships with business, including the role of business, the types of companies, and the benefits they would gain from partnership.

	Business role	Impact on the 2030 Agenda	Which companies and why?	Role of development partnerships
1	**Business doing business** **Business doing business responsibly, inclusively and sustainably**[4]	Creates and sustains livelihoods; reduces poverty; generates taxes; delivers essential products and services efficiently and affordably; catalyses technological innovation; reduces reliance on imports and/or brings in essential foreign currency through exports	All that are operating, or aim to operate, responsibly, inclusively and sustainably. **Why:** To deliver long term business value.	Donors, NGOs, development banks and governments working with business to improve business environment, support economic growth / private sector development, develop new sustainability standards and run responsible business initiatives. Government can additionally regulate to level the playing field and drive out irresponsible / unsustainable business. Partnerships to support the development of the circular economy.
2	**Standards setting** **Collectively setting standards to raise overall sector practice** **E.g. Marine Stewardship Council setting industry sustainability standards for fishing**	Improved standards should increase the sustainability of business operations and so contribute towards environmental and social goals.	Potentially any industry sector. **Why:** To improve a company's own practice	Standards setting intrinsically requires partnership both to ensure that the standards developed are as informed by experiences on the ground as possible as well as to ensure both legitimacy and buy-in.
3	**International commercial investment** **Companies investing in building / developing new manufacturing / agriculture / extractive industry infrastructure**	Economic growth leading to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction (where done responsibly and sustainably – as above)	Any company developing their manufacturing or other supply base or extraction business. **Why:** Delivering core business.	De-risking of investment through blended finance with donors providing loan guarantees or underwriting risk; governments creating supportive tax incentives; development banks and donors supporting complementary infrastructure development.
4	**Inclusive business 1: People** **Companies deliberately targeting the under-privileged as suppliers / employees / distributors** **E.g. Coca-Cola's engagement of underprivileged people as distributors through the village entrepreneur model**	Improved human opportunities and livelihoods for the underprivileged	Companies with operations, suppliers or distributors in a country. **Why:** Delivering core business in a shared value approach.	Donors providing funding or technical support to new inclusive business opportunities; NGOs, UN providing technical support and capacity building; government supporting through tax breaks, capacity building etc.
5	**Inclusive business 2: Products** **Companies / social entrepreneurs providing pro-poor or pro-environment products and services** **E.g. micro-banking, low-cost access to water, solar powered lights**	Technological innovation and market-based approaches that can contribute to any development goal	Companies with existing markets or those wishing to create new markets. **Why:** Building new products / markets.	NGOs providing technical advice, access to communities, support; donors providing funding through challenge funds etc. Governments changing regulations / policy in order to help commercial viability (e.g. taxing non-recycled plastic, thereby making plastic recycling commercially viable).

* The domains of inclusive business, responsible business and sustainable business are vast. An excellent recent overview in relation to the UN: private sector nexus can be found at the Harvard CSRI website: https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/programs/cri/files/Brussels%202019%20Final.pdf

	Business role	Impact on the 2030 Agenda	Which companies and why?	Role of development partnerships
6	**Value chain sustainability / market transformation** **Companies investing in making markets efficient or their value chains to be more environmental and/or socially sustainable.** **E.g. SABMiller investing in the sustainability of its value chain to produce beer with locally-sourced sorghum in Uganda**	Improved human, economic and environmental sustainability and prosperity	Companies involved in the specific value chain / market. **Why:** Develop new or make existing markets more efficient; ensure sustainability of value chain.	Requires a range of partners acting collectively, e.g. capacity building from NGOs, technical support from government / development agencies, government tax and regulation, loans from development banks, other companies up and down the supply chain; donors supporting the platform required for implementation.
7	**Strategic social / infrastructure / environmental investment** **Business supporting business competitiveness and the fabric of the society in which it operates to ensure its own long term sustainability / opportunity** **E.g. Partnerships to build skills in the manufacturing industry in Zambia**	Any societal or environmental issue which also affects business, from availability of skills to anti-corruption, from access to energy to equitable use of natural resources.	Companies that operate in or source from a particular country and have a long-term interest. **Why:** Ensure long term business success; good corporate citizenship.	Most interventions of this kind require partnering with NGOs, communities or government, and often with other companies for collective action on issues affecting multiple businesses.
8	**Philanthropy** **Building reputation as a good corporate citizen** **E.g. Companies giving money or in-kind contribution to the arts, schools or humanitarian appeals**	Any development issue. Potentially local giving with direct benefits to local communities or global giving distributed more widely.	Any. **Why:** Reputation, employee motivation / skilling, good corporative citizenship.	Philanthropy usually delivered through NGO / UN / community partners
9	**Innovative finance** **Financing mechanisms to mobilise private sector capital in tackling social / environmental problems** **E.g. impact bonds to reduce Malaria in Mozambique**	Provides funding for development programmes, potentially with the cost borne by government / donors only where there is proven impact	Investors and financial institutions. **Why:** To deliver (ethical) financial returns.	Investors provide investment capital, with NGOs often delivering the social programmes, and governments / donors providing a return on investment where the social programmes are successful.
	NOTE: The final category below is included for completeness. However, these regulated, contract-based PPPs are different to the other forms of development partnership and are more akin to a procurement-based service-delivery relationship.			
10	**Investor in/operator of public infrastructure / services** **Companies make an upfront investment to deliver public infrastructure or services, to be repaid with profit over time by government or user fees.** **E.g. High speed *Gautrain* between Jo'burg and Pretoria, South Africa**	Provision of public infrastructure / services where the public sector does not have the upfront resources to build / deliver.	Limited business sectors: e.g. construction, energy, water supply, health services. **Why:** Delivering core business.	Regulated PPPs are a specific, regulated financial core business arrangement that goes through a full government procurement process. Increasingly they are including civil society partners to advise the projects and try to maximize the development benefit.

Understanding the private sector as a partner

The private sector is not a homogeneous entity

The private sector includes the full range of commercial entities, from smallholder farmers, through small and medium-sized businesses to vast multinational companies. Companies can be owned – and influenced – by individuals, families or cooperatives, as well as being publicly-traded.

At one end of the spectrum companies might be part of the 'real economy': the part of a country's economy that produces goods and services, which will require people and factories and value chains. Or on the other, they might be pension funds looking to invest significant sums of money.

Business may be consumer-facing (selling directly to individuals, e.g. supermarkets, or have products sold to individuals), or 'business-to-business', making up part of a value chain (e.g. in agriculture, a supplier of seeds sells to a farmer, sells to a consolidator, sells to a factory, sells to a supermarket).

While the private sector may appear to be dominated by multinational companies, in fact 90% of the world's businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises and provide 50% of global employment.

IMPLICATIONS: It is important to be aware of the considerable variation in the focus, size and constituency of companies in order to focus efforts appropriately. For example, businesses that are consumer-facing may be incentivised by consumer pressure. They may also be able to use the power of the brands (e.g. a fashionwear company) and their direct access to customers (e.g. supermarkets) as an important resource – for example in trying to influence behaviour change.

The private sector doesn't only think about making money

Successful, responsible companies all understand their markets and societies extremely well and are aware that their long term prosperity is interlinked with the prosperity of the society in which they operate.

While no company can survive without healthy financial returns, no company can survive if it makes decisions purely on short-term financial considerations either. Leading companies thus balance financial considerations with wider social, economic and environmental factors, and invest in their own sustainability.

In general, companies that are more mature, larger and financially stable will have more resources (both in terms of people's time, skills and money) to focus on their long-term sustainability and their impact within society. A fast-growing number of leading companies are moving well beyond the concept of 'corporate social responsibility' (doing no harm/philanthropy) and towards an agenda of 'shared value', 'purpose-led' business, or 'stakeholder capitalism' – which integrates value creation for society along with their own financial value creation.

There are also a growing number of 'social enterprises' with an explicit mandate to deliver societal benefits through a commercial business approach.

However, we need to be realistic in our expectations of companies. While there are more and more companies out there that understand their responsibilities and/or the longer-term business value gained through shared value investments, the reality is that the majority – particularly among smaller companies – do not have sufficient incentives, time or resources to engage in partnerships for development.

IMPLICATIONS: When looking to partner with a company, understanding their interests and capacities with respect to sustainability and social responsibility can help shape the initial approach and conversation.

Multinational companies are complicated entities and can be difficult to navigate

While companies have a reputation for efficiency, any major international organisation has its own bureaucracy and internal dynamics, both in operational and geographic terms. The nature of any given activity will determine which business unit or units within the company need to be involved – for example: marketing, product development, human resources and public affairs.

Geographically, headquarters may have a varying degree of influence over a company's operations in different countries, depending on its corporate structure, degree of decentralisation and level of autonomy. In practice, in most cases this means that building a partnership at global level with a multinational company does not guarantee commitment from the company at country-level.

IMPLICATIONS: It is helpful to have a well-placed champion from within the company to make the necessary connections and undertake the navigation of internal company dynamics to the right entry point.

"If you have **not** *got a potential conflict, you probably should not be at the table."*
Jon Pender, Vice-President Government Affairs, GSK

Companies have limited resources and have (in general) a clear objective to maximise profit

The ultimate incentive for most companies is to generate profits for their shareholders. Some companies may operate recklessly, looking only to make money, even at the expense of society or the environment. Others may want to do the 'right' thing but feel too much pressure from shareholders towards prioritisation of short-term profits to focus their resources on longer term societal investment.

The sweet spot for multi-stakeholder partnerships is where there is both a clear societal/environmental benefit and a clear business case for engagement, i.e. one which will result in companies making more money now or support their future money-making potential, for example through ensuring the long-term sustainability of their businesses.

Other partners can sometimes help make the business case to the company to help them justify participation and buy in, and to jointly explore the tremendous additional resources that companies can bring beyond cash. Technology and data are emerging as significant areas of exploration for partnership, sometimes involving no exchange of money at all.

IMPLICATIONS: Companies are not an ATM, willing simply to hand over money to other development actors. The more critical an issue is to them (including directly making profit), the more strongly they will engage on issues and bring resources far beyond money (see table on understanding the different stakeholder resources on page 33).

Conflicts of interest, alignments of interest

As discussed above, companies – like all of the partners in a multi-stakeholder partnership – must benefit from their involvement. This benefit may well result, directly or indirectly, in the company making money. While this may make some traditional development actors uncomfortable, this is not in itself a conflict of interest but rather an alignment of interest; a profit motivation and commercial viability can allow for scalability and hence for hugely increased development impact.

There are a number of situations in which a conflict of interest, however, can arise:

1. If the company gains undue reputational benefits or illegitimate influence or access to privileged information that gives it an unfair commercial advantage;
2. If the partnership results in significant distortion of the market (unless such distortion of the market, for instance towards sustainable sourcing, is the very purpose of the partnership);
3. If the company's products conflict with the overarching development aim (e.g. a confectionery company wishing to support healthy living);
4. If the operations of the company include damaging practice (e.g. poor employee rights, or negative impact on the environment), unless changing to more beneficial practice is an aim of the partnership;
5. If the commercial gains from the partnership are disproportionate to the societal/environmental benefits, or the commercial interests begin to outweigh the public interest.

Any conflict of interest can be considered as ***potential*** (there is the risk it might happen), ***perceived*** (there is a perception that it might or has happened) or ***actual*** (a conflict has actually occurred).

All multi-stakeholder initiatives that bring together different societal interests are at risk from conflicts of interest. However, most initiatives that involve the private sector sit within a pre-competitive space (e.g. improving overall sustainability of a sector), with any financial benefits to companies being more indirect and longer term.

While there is no-one-size-fits-all solution for managing conflicts of interest (COI), the following offer some emerging principles for management:

- Clearly **establish the key principle behind COI**: no partner (or other stakeholder) should gain undue, illegitimate or disproportionate benefit from their involvement in the initiative, and harm to or by partners should always be avoided;
- Appreciate that **potential** conflicts of interest are inevitable and not inherently negative, and keep an **updated, non-prejudicial COI risk register** to clearly identify *potential* COIs;
- Put in place **approaches to track and reduce the risk** of *potential* COIs becoming *actual* COIs, and **robust mechanisms to identify** when/where they do;
- Have **clear procedures** for dealing with COIs that do arise;
- **Communicate extensively internally** across all partners, staff and stakeholders to build awareness and help **develop an anti-COI culture and behaviours** (including updating the risk register).
- **Use transparency to reduce unwarranted perceptions of COI:** communicate externally as much of your internal decision-making as possible, as well as your full COI approach.

2 Defining terms, understanding the landscape

MODULE 4 Defining and categorising partnerships 23

MODULE 5 Understanding different stakeholders 25

MODULE 6 How do partnerships create value? 34

Defining and categorising partnerships

Definition

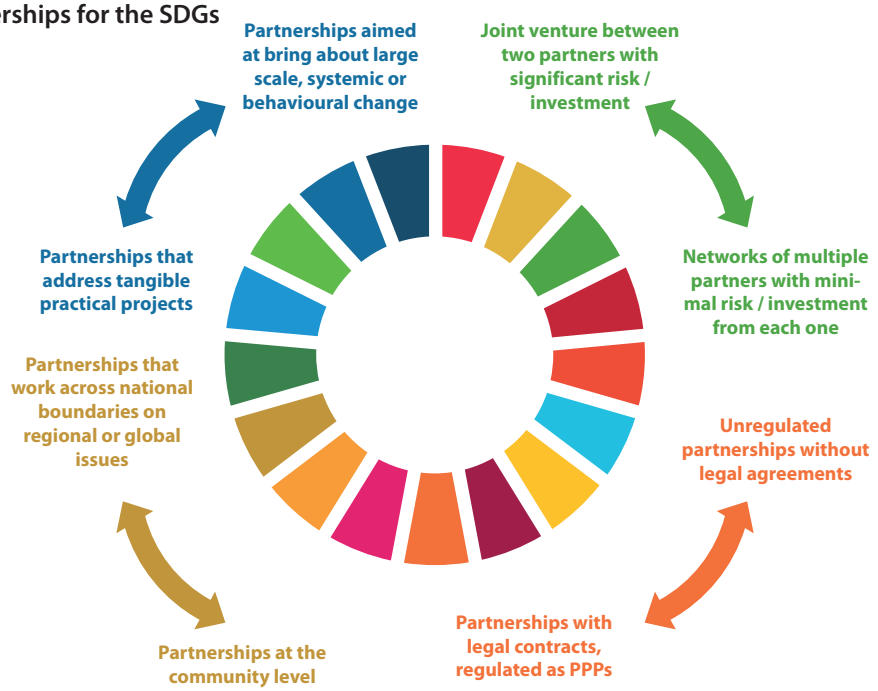
In this Guidebook, we build on the United Nations' definition[5] of a multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) for the SDGs as follows:

> *"An ongoing collaborative relationship between or among organisations from different stakeholder types aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximise value creation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver benefit to each of the partners."*

- *"Ongoing collaborative relationship between or among organisations …"* Partnerships are more than a quick one-off project. They usually require considerable time and effort to develop and commitment from all partners to work together.
- *"…from different stakeholder types, aligning their interests around a common vision…"* MSPs can only happen where there is a clear alignment of interests.
- *"…combining their complementary resources and competencies…"* MSPs are able to deliver more, including greater innovation, through the complementarity and diversity of resources the different sectors are able to bring to the table.
- *"…and sharing risk…"* Sharing risk within MSPs helps to ensure engagement and build equity and trust among partners.
- *"…to maximise value creation towards the SDGs…"* MSPs are all about value creation – being able to deliver benefit and impact far greater than the sum of the parts.
- *"…and deliver organisational benefit to each of the partners."* For partners to remain engaged, all partners must gain value from their involvement.

Within this definition, there is a myriad of different forms of partnership working at different scales, geographic levels, levels of formality etc.

Range of partnerships for the SDGs



5. The UN System defines partnerships for the SDGs as: Partnerships for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organisations, major groups and other stakeholders, which efforts are contributing to the implementation of inter-governmentally, agreed development goals and commitments. Many UN legislative documents have stated basically the same language, so many possible references, for example: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2257Partnerships%20for%20SDGs%20-%20a%20review%20web.pdf

Types of Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) can range from networks made up of hundreds of organisations through to joint ventures between two or three organisations. This broad definition encompasses a multitude of types of collaborative arrangement with quite different qualities. It is therefore useful to identify some basic types of partnership and to differentiate them in terms of their aims and outcomes. This will make it easier to talk about partnership in a meaningful way and to analyse the different ways in which partnerships can generate value.

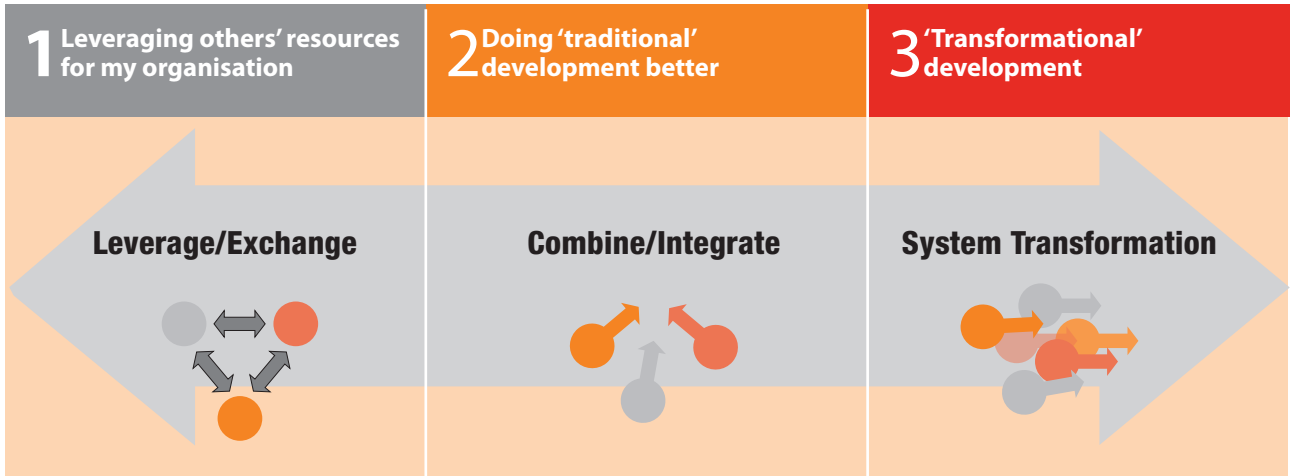
The figure below shows a 'Partnership Spectrum' – a way of visualizing the range of different collaborative arrangements that fit within the partnership definition.

In the spectrum, for consistency with other publications, we have included 'leverage / exchange partnerships' in which the partners are the main beneficiaries. The focus of this Guidebook are the two types of MSPs to deliver:

2) **Better traditional development:** partnerships that deliver more than the sum of their parts and thus increase the impact of 'traditional' development

3) **Transformational development:** Partnerships which undertake system transformational development.

Partnership Spectrum showing the range of different types of partnership for the SDGs



One partner donates to another, or partners exchange resources of all kinds to deliver benefits to each of the partners, enabling them to deliver more or deliver better.

For example, an NGO receiving funding from a company towards a programme, the company receiving reputational gains; an exchange of technical experience among NGOs builds knowledge to develop better programming.

Multiple partners **combine their complementary or similar** resources in ways which directly or indirectly **deliver traditional development** impact more effectively, efficiently, innovatively, or at greater scale. **Together the partners are able to deliver more than the sum of their parts.**

For example, multiple organisations coming together around an advocacy campaign, creating sufficient critical mass to deliver change.

Multiple actors bring together **essential complementary resources** that together create the levers required to **deliver system transformation**, which could not have been achieved by any one actor working alone.

For example, bringing together suppliers, farmers and major purchasers to together transform a food chain to use bio-fortified, more nutritious crops resulting in improved health.

For multiple examples of 'better traditional development' partnerships and how they create value, go to page 35.



Understanding different stakeholders

Roles and contributions of the different stakeholders

The nature of the 'core business' of each type of stakeholder leads to quite different priorities, values and attributes. In addition to these general attributes, each stakeholder brings different resources, competencies, and aspirations that can potentially – through successful partnering – be brought together around a common vision.

We provide below a general description of each of the main types of stakeholder: their societal role, what they might potentially bring to the table, how they are organised, some considerations when working with them as partners, and how to connect with them.

Since no two countries are exactly alike, this can only be indicative and, as with much of the information in this guide, you will need to adapt to your own context.

To learn more about how a particular country context - including the nature of the relationship between stakeholders - impacts on partnering go to Annex 1, page 74

GOVERNMENT (HOST COUNTRY)

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation*	Considerations
• Ensure democratic representation of the people • Deliver national defence • Maintain law and order • Provide a stable, regulated environment for trade • Collect taxes • Provide public services • Provide public infrastructure	• Democratic legitimacy • Convening ability • Mandate for long term development planning • Public budget / spending • Public services delivery infrastructure • National 'hard' infrastructure (roads, rail, water, power etc.) • Policy, taxation and regulatory framework • Education / skills and capacity building (e.g. agricultural extension services) • Provision of land • Ability to operate at scale and integrate approaches to deliver sustainably	At the top, an elected national government, led by a prime minister or president, and with a cabinet made up of ministers heading departments (ministries) across every area of government responsibility. Depending on the size of the country, a similar structure, with separately elected officials, may be repeated at geographic levels (e.g. State and County) or within major cities. Depending on the level of decentralization there will be different levels of autonomy and responsibility for collecting and spending budget at each geographic level. Each department is staffed by civil servants, with the top layer or layers usually being political appointees.	In most countries, if you don't engage governments and secure their buy-in it will be difficult create a scaleable partnership. Their "sanction" or implicit endorsement is required since ultimately they are responsible for all their citizens. When a small level partnership or pilot works well and government embraces it, the partnership can be massively scaled in short amount of time - and therefore generate huge impact. Governments are generally risk averse and necessarily have bureaucracy and regulation in place which might stifle (or even prevent) innovation or slow down decision-making and implementation. The role of high-level champions can make a major difference in helping to drive non-traditional approaches (for example, by engaging directly with Mayors at city level). Governments generally have a macro outlook on the country, and will have trouble dealing with "niche" social issues. The public sector ability to develop and commit to partnerships is strongly affected by both political and public spending cycles. It is therefore important to be aware of, and sensitive to, such cycles and, wherever possible, use them to best effect. Much of the public sector around the world has limited resources, often with over-committed capacity, making it challenging for the government both to engage and, in some cases, to fully deliver the resources it might commit to a project. Also, depending on the country, political circumstances and levels of concentration of power may all cause significant challenges to partnership development.
How to connect	Connecting to the right people in government can be tricky. As with all stakeholders, the best approach is usually through an existing contact. Alternatively, a formal approach / letter from the highest person in your organisation to someone at the appropriate level, should hopefully cascade down to someone willing to meet who may then take it further up.		

* Please note that for the purposes of this categorisation we consider 'donors' separately, even though many significant donors are of course government agencies.

GOVERNMENT (DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION DONORS)

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation	Considerations
• Providing funding to a country: directly to government; through funding (usually) NGO or UN-delivered programmes; or through co-investments with the private sector.	• (Catalytic) funding • Political connections and influence • Technical assistance • Convening and facilitation (due to networks with government, civil society and private sector), especially in early stages of partnership formation	There are two types of donor: **Bi-lateral donors:** individual governments providing grants directly to recipient governments or funding development programmes (with funding going mainly through NGOs and the UN system) **Multi-lateral donors:** Institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, that combine resources from multiple donor governments (and, more rarely, foundations) to fund programmes or provide loans or other assistance to government. (Note: the UN is described separately above.) Bi-lateral donors may run their programmes through their foreign ministry or through a specific international development ministry, and in some cases also through their environment ministries. They each have focus countries on which they concentrate their activities. Depending on the country, they may work through their embassies, through their own local offices (e.g. USAID, DFID) or through an implementing agency (e.g. Germany working through GIZ). While the overall focus of funding might be set at global level (e.g. a commitment to greater spending on climate change), for most donors, spending decisions are usually devolved to country level. However, many donors do have global programmes with specific calls for proposals that would then be applied to the country level.	Most bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors have signed up to 'aid effectiveness' principles which include both a commitment to country ownership and to coordination among themselves. Each donor develops (usually) annual plans with each partner country, setting out agreed areas of cooperation towards delivering the country development plan. These plans will usually define the envelope of the focus of activities they are able to fund. Within funded projects implemented by NGOs or consulting firms, donors sometimes set up grant or innovation funds that can be applied to facilitate partnerships. Different donors will have quite different levels of flexibility in their funding. Some can only fund through specific modalities defined globally. Others may have higher appetites for risk and innovation, particularly when it comes to smaller grants.
How to connect	Bi-lateral donors at country level may usually be contacted through their embassies or through their implementing agencies. An introduction from the home country can be helpful. Multilateral donors may be contacted through their country or regional offices. In both cases, it is important to be aware of existing funding modalities, particularly where larger sums of money are desired.		

CIVIL SOCIETY

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation	Considerations
• Communities are at the heart of many programmes, both as beneficiaries and as partners • Promotion of rights, equity, social and environmental development • Providing support and services for those in need and/or excluded from mainstream of society • Acting as guardians of the public good including holding government to account and ensuring the proper representation and upholding of rights of the under-privileged	• (Particularly international NGOs): Access to international knowledge and resources • Technical knowledge / delivery capacity • Deep knowledge of, and reach and access to, communities and people • Legitimacy / social capital / influence (can be particularly strong in faith-based organisations) • Ability to organise and engage people (e.g. around advocacy) • Affected communities will be the ones with deepest knowledge / lived experience and can also bring social and human capital	Civil society operates at multiple levels, including local Community-Based Organisations, tribes, faith-based organisations, local and national NGOs, and international NGOs (INGOs) operating in-country. The catch-all term also includes a huge variety of types of organisation which represent or bring together women, youth, disabled, elderly, professional associations, trades unions and more. Most civil society is self-organised, with different levels of formalisation, different levels of capacity/resources, and with funding (where required) from a variety of means: philanthropy, member contributions, government or donor grants. INGOs are usually a coalition or federation of fundraising/programming entities in traditional donor countries and country-level entities focused on implementation. The different entities are generally semi-autonomous, with an international entity (e.g. World Vision International or Oxfam International) to help co-ordinate action across the network. INGOs will usually be supported by a mix of grant funding (given by donors to deliver specific programmes) and 'non-dedicated' funding (e.g. from public donations) which they can assign as they wish. There is a strong trend towards INGOs working with or through local and national NGOs, rather than providing direct implementation themselves.	The strength of civil society – including the capacity to organise, mobilize and implement – is highly country-specific. In some cases the most vulnerable or affected populations are not really part of "civil society". In certain contexts, there may be very limited numbers of community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs, and those that are there may lack sufficient delivery capacity or operate in ways that make it difficult to fulfil the accountability requirements of donors (for example, non-compliant financial systems). This may mean that in order to partner it may be necessary to build the capacity of such organisations, including potentially providing funding early on to support their inclusion in partnership development. NGOs in general have very little non-dedicated funding. This means that to partner with an NGO will likely mean aligning with an existing funded programme or providing funding to that NGO to allow it to bring its resources to the table in a new partnership.

How to connect	NGOs will usually be relatively accessible via contact information that can be found on their websites. However, personal introductions to specific contacts are usually the most effective. For a large or complex organisation, it is helpful to engage a staff person to help to navigate the internal system. Other forms of civil society – community groups, tribes, faith groups, trades union – will range greatly in terms of public accessibility and formality, anywhere from having a website with easy contact information, to needing to make a personal visit in order to find the right connections.

BUSINESS

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation	Considerations
• To produce and distribute goods and services (directly, or as part of a value chain) to satisfy a public need or demand; • To make a financial profit for investors / owners.	• A market-based / value creation approach • Brand power • Marketing, advertising and communications expertise • Direct access to, and influence with, customer base and employees • The products and services they deliver, including financial products such as micro-lending • Technical innovation / efficiency / management • Direct influence within its value chains, including purchasing decisions • Infrastructure / logistics • Financial and in-kind contributions • (Generally) an appetite for risk • A 'solutions' mindset and a focus on results • Access to customers, employees, suppliers, peer companies, investors, training providers	Business is made up informal (unregistered, not paying tax, typically individuals or microenterprises market trading or very small scale production) and formal (registered) business. Some economies have high levels of informal business, some of which may be organised locally, for example, through market trader associations or farmers cooperatives. Formal business includes every size of company from registered micro-enterprises up to multi-national companies. Business may be organised through business councils (e.g. UN Global Compact local network, World Business Council for Sustainable Development), industry associations or chambers of commerce which advocate for their interests with government, as well as helping to improve industry standards or tackle issues affecting the industry.	As described above in greater detail, the private sector brings far more, and potentially far more important, resources than money. Given its significant footprint on people (employees, customers), on the environment, on society (including through taxes), the way business operates can have a significant impact on sustainable development. Further, the greatest value of engagement can be through unleashing the power of business's resources (its technical innovation, reach and brand value) along sides its investment and value creation approach – finding commercially viable solutions that are scalable, products and services that are affordable, value chains that are sustainable.

How to connect	In general, because they are small and less organised, it is usually challenging to engage with informal business, except where there are strong associations or membership bodies to go through. Larger national and multi-national companies will usually have sustainability, corporate social responsibility or public affairs units that can be a useful first port of call. The business organisations can be an invaluable resource for making connections into companies, as well as to engage as partners themselves potentially. Some organisations, such as the UN Global Compact local networks, are specifically designed to help make connections with companies and with the UN system.

UNITED NATIONS

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation	Considerations
• To support the government in building and strengthening national capacities and delivering the national development agenda: • Promoting sustainable development • Delivering humanitarian aid • Upholding human rights • Upholding international law and maintaining peace and security	• Legitimacy and independence; • Extensive technical support, knowledge and capacity • Political connections and influence • Global network and access to knowledge and solutions from around the world • Norms and standards-setting • Convening power • (In certain cases): funding	The UN works through a range (10 to 20 in any one country) of different specialised agencies and programmes (e.g. UNICEF, World Food Programme) to build capacity and deliver tangible results in support of the national development agenda*. The work of the UN is coordinated by the UN Country Team (UNCT), led by the UN Resident Coordinator, the designated representative of the UN Secretary General in the country. While each UN entity has its own set of activities, programmes and relationships with ministries, donors and other stakeholders, the UNCT aims to ensure the UN works as a team, formulating common positions on strategic issues, ensuring coherence in action and advocacy. In each country the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or 'cooperation framework' aims to align with a country's development plan and brings together all the UN activities into one overarching document. It is signed by the government and the UN agency heads. In most countries, achieving this more cohesive approach is still a work in progress, although the UN is investing significantly in this area, including through efforts to ensure each UNCT has a partnership specialist on staff.	At country level, there are often significant overlaps in mandate and even competition across UN entities. This has in the past made it challenging to identify the best UN entity to engage with. It is important to appreciate that the UN is limited in the partnerships it is able to engage in: not only must the partnership contribute to the country's development plans, the UN has rules about the organisations, particularly companies, it can engage with. The UN system itself has in general very little unallocated funding or resources it can put towards new programmes and may need funding – either through donors or from other partners – in order to engage fully.

How to connect	It has traditionally been quite challenging to find the right entry point into the UN system. Having a UN insider who can assist with navigating the system and making connections can be extremely helpful. The UN Resident Coordinator Office in country should be able to help make the connections into the right entities. Further, if there is a UN Global Compact local network, they may well also be able to make direct connections within the UN system.

* Adapted from: https://mw.one.un.org/un-agencies-and-country-team/

FOUNDATIONS

Role and interests	Resources brought to the table	Organisation	Considerations
• Providing funding and/or technical assistance and/or running programmes using its own sources of funding* to deliver the foundation's goals.	• Funding (often with fewer restrictions attached than other traditional funding sources) • Networks and connections • Brand and influence • Convening power • (Potentially) technical assistance • (Potentially) linkages to 'parent' organisation (company, family)	Foundations in general are of two types: corporate foundations (such as the Mastercard Foundation, Shell Foundation), philanthropic or family foundations (such as Gates Foundation). They may be international, national or sub-national, depending on the interests of the founder(s) and the resources they have at their disposal. Corporate foundations receive their money from companies. The extent to which the foundation is connected with the business can range widely from one foundation to another. For instance, a foundation associated with a health company may invest or even co-invest with the company on health issues in countries that are markets for the company. Other corporate foundations may invest in the communities in which the company operates in ways unrelated to the latter's core business. Philanthropic foundations usually receive their money from an endowment (cash or company shares) often set up by a wealthy family. Such foundations are completely free to spend their money how they like, often related to the interests of the original founder or current generation, if a family fund. Foundations vary to the degree to which they take a hands-off approach (donating funding to NGOs) or are actively involved in implementation.	In general, as they are neither charities funded by individuals, nor are they public funds, foundations have considerable latitude over how they spend their funds. This means they may potentially be willing to invest in quite innovative and risky approaches. Foundations, however, get approached constantly for funding and prospective projects must clearly contribute to foundations strategy aims for them to be considered.

How to connect	Some foundations have open calls for proposals within their areas of interest. Others may invite you to apply, based on an existing relationship. Outside of open calls for proposals, it may be quite challenging to find the right people with the right interests and, most vitally, with the time to properly consider the opportunities.

* Note: while the term 'foundation' is sometimes used for an implementing NGO that accepts money from others, here we are explicitly meaning organisations which have their own sources of funding.

When looking to tackle a particular issue, undertake a stakeholder mapping to understand who is affected by the issue and who may be able to bring something to the table. See page 48 for more.

Other stakeholders

There are multiple other stakeholders that may potentially play significant roles in partnerships, including:

Academia has a number of potentially important roles in multi-stakeholder partnerships:

- Playing a trusted convening role early on and/or hosting the partnership or providing the secretariat;*
- Undertaking context analysis, providing key information and essential data to the partnership;
- Undertaking monitoring and evaluation;
- Drawing out learning and developing partnership case studies;
- Empowering citizens to understand SDGs;
- Teaching to ensure skills for the new economy, etc
- Teaching (as well as research), including teacher training
- A breeding ground for innovation / leadership
- Evidence-based policy advice for joint advocacy
- Open data collection and sharing
- Strong regional and global networks

The media – newspapers, TV companies, social media, 'influencers' – bring a unique set of resources that can be particularly helpful for advocacy and/or behavioural change:

- Direct and (depending on country) trusted access to large numbers of viewers and listeners;
- Strong understanding of their 'customers' and ability to tell a story in the most engaging way;
- Marketing and promotion skills.

Tribes play a significant role in many societies, which can range anywhere between that of a community organisation and a local government. In addition to the resources mentioned under 'civil society' above, tribal leaders may have decision-making authority, and the ability to set local laws, that would go well beyond influence over their members. For example, in Andavadoaka, on the South West coast of Madagascar, in order to conserve the fish stock, it was essential to establish a 'no-take zone'. The Vezo tribe leaders, engaged as partners in a major transformational programme, decreed a tribal law which regulated fishing in the no-take zone.

Parliamentarians – members of parliament may carry significant influence within their constituencies, and may play an important role as champions of partnerships. Opposition leaders – as potential future heads of government – can be hugely important to engage in partnerships which will need political support beyond the terms of an individual government, to ensure that a partnership is maintained even if there is a change of government.

Trades union, in addition to the resources brought as a civil society organisation (including representation of its members), it may bring a range of unique resources including, in some cases, special consultative status with businesses and with government, as well as a dual mandate to simultaneously ensure businesses are successful and that workers benefit fairly from business success. In other words, they are, in the main, already set up to try to deliver simultaneous business-societal win-wins.

* An overview of the role of higher education in SDG partnerships is available at the following link: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21822HESI_Global_Event_2018_Summary.pdf

Stakeholder resource map

Civil Society

Communities

- At the heart of programming with deepest knowledge / lived experience / most affected
- Social and human capital

NGOs / organised groups

- (Particularly international NGOs): Access to international knowledge and resources;
- Technical knowledge / delivery capacity;
- Knowledge of, and reach and access to, communities and people;
- Legitimacy / social capital / influence (can be particularly strong in faith-based organisations);
- Ability to organise and engage people (e.g. around advocacy)

Academia

- Research and analysis
- Trusted neutral convenor
- Monitoring and evaluation capacity
- Partnership learning and knowledge development
- Evidence-based policy advice
- Open data collection
- Teaching / capacity building
- Innovation development

Business

- A market-based / value creation approach
- Brand, marketing, and communication experties
- Direct access to, and influence with, customer base and employees
- The products and services they deliver, including financial products such as micro-lending
- Technical innovation / efficiency / management
- Direct influence within value chains, including purchasing decisions
- Infrastructure / logistics
- Data
- Financial and in-kind contributions
- Commercial investment



United Nations

- Legitimacy and independence;
- Extensive technical support, knowledge and capacity
- Political connections and influence
- Global network and access to knowledge and solutions from around the world
- Norms and standards-setting
- Convening power
- (In certain cases): Funding

Government

- Democratic legitimacy and convening ability
- Mandate for long term development planning
- Public budget / spending
- Public services delivery infrastructure
- National 'hard' infrastructure (roads, rail, water, power etc.)
- Policy, taxation and regulatory framework
- Education / skills / capacity building
- Provision of land
- Ability to operate at scale and institutionalize approaches
- Data

Donors (development coop.)

- Funding and financing
- Political connections and influence
- Technical assistance

Foundations

- Funding
- Catalytic capital (blended finance to de-risk investment)
- Capacity building
- Technical assistance
- Connecting and convening, power
- Brand and influence
- For most corporate foundations: link to company parent

How do partnerships create value?

Given the time and challenges involved in partnering, the primary driver for working through MSPs must be that, by combining our resources, we can deliver far more than we could alone: i.e. the partnership must be able to deliver more than the sum of its constituent parts. Additionally, every partnership must create net value for each partner – otherwise there is no incentive for their continued involvement.

While this may seem obvious, too many partnerships have formed where insufficient consideration has been given to these basic premises, resulting in partnership designs that fail to create enough value to be worth the effort.

In order for partnerships to be a success, it is essential that all partners focus on:

1) **Value-add of the partnership as a whole.** How by working together they can create significant added value towards the partnership's objectives;

2) **Benefits / value created for each individual partners.** How each individual partner can gain the most from the partnership – not at the expense of other partners, but through win-win, mutual benefit (i.e. the more one partner benefits, the more the others benefit).

1. Value-add of a partnership as a whole

We define two concepts for partners to consider in their partnership design:

- **Collaborative Advantage** is the extra power, alchemy or 'magic' – that allows a group of actors to collectively deliver more than the sum of their input parts i.e. 1+1>>2. It is the intrinsic reason why a partnership approach can deliver solutions and impact beyond that of a single actor, or actors working independently. **Q. How is it that by working together we'll be able to deliver significantly more?**
- **The Partnership Delta** or Partnership Difference (ΔP) is the additional impact a partnership delivers compared with single actor approaches, as a result of the Collaborative Advantage. **Q. What specific extra impact will be able to achieve?**

Partnerships that focus on doing traditional development better

There is a whole series of different Collaborative Advantages from innovation to standard setting, delivering at scale to exploiting synergies (see next page). Often partnership will deliver on several Collaborative Advantages at any one time. The Partnership Delta is the differential impact that results from those Collaborative Advantages.

Partnerships that focus on system transformation

The Collaborative Advantage is that the partnership facilitates the combining or aligning of multiple different resources from different sectors into levers that together have the power to transform a system (see Annex 3, page 69 on transformational partnerships).

The Partnership Delta is the ongoing value generated by the new system in comparison with the old (for example, the transformation from an unsustainable to a sustainable palm oil value chain results in the saving of millions of acres of virgin forest which would otherwise have been destroyed over time).

It is important to appreciate that many of the Collaborative Advantages that can be used in better development partnerships can also provide levers for system transformation (e.g. critical mass of organisations can lead to effective advocacy and hence policy shift, a key lever in system change).

For more on system transformation, including the powerful set of levers multi-stakeholder partnerships can use to transform systems, go to Annex 3, page 69.

Note: The Collaborative Advantage Framework presented here was originally developed jointly with World Vision.

Value-add of a partnership as a whole



Collaborative Advantage and Partnership Difference (ΔP) for traditional development partnerships

1	2	3
COMPLEMENTARITY	**LEGITIMACY / STANDARDS**	**DIVERSITY / INNOVATION**
Bringing together essential complementary resources	**Creating collective legitimacy and knowledge**	**Combining diverse resources, thinking, approaches**
ΔP		
Impact delivered by a complete, workable (and potentially sustainable) solution, impossible without the full set of key resources.	**Developing and disseminating norms, standards and policies to raise standards / create a level playing field across a whole sector, enabling ongoing impact.**	**Creating new, more effective approaches, technologies, services and/or products with the greater impact they will deliver.**
EXAMPLES		
Banking on Change, East Africa Barclays Bank bringing its banking knowledge and access to the formal banking system, Plan and Care International bringing its experience of communities and its social capital to develop popular community-level, micro-savings and loans groups with a formal bank account for security.	**Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh** After a fire killed over 1,000 people in a garment factory in Bangladesh, companies and trade unions created the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, an independent, legally binding agreement designed to work towards a safe and healthy Bangladeshi ready-made garment industry.	**GSK and Save the Children** GSK and Save the Children are working together, combining GSK's scientific expertise and resource with Save the Children's on-the-ground knowledge to develop medicines, and delivery mechanisms, adapted to the ailments and local conditions of children in the poorest countries.

4	5	6
CRITICAL MASS	**HOLISM**	**SHARED LEARNING**
Collectively providing sufficient weight of action and/or emboldening of actors	**Convening holistic range of actors across traditional silos**	**Creating a mechanism for collective learning and capability-building**
ΔP		
Combining / coordinating resources to create the critical mass needed to deliver otherwise impossible outcomes / impact; embolden actors to take a stance.	**More workable, context-appropriate, cross-cutting and implementable approaches increasing the quality and breadth of impact.**	**Raising the level of knowledge, expertise and capacity widely, leading to more effective practice and greater impact.**
EXAMPLES		
NCD Alliance While it may be easy to ignore the voice of one organisation, a collective of organisations all with the same message can deliver advocacy messages at sufficient scale to force change. The NCD Alliance has 2,000 members: civil society organisations and NGOs, professional and scientific associations, academic institutions, patient groups, media and journalists, and multilateral agencies. Together they lead global civil society advocacy for governments to fulfil political commitments on prevention and control of non-communicable disease.	**Marine Protected Areas** Creating 'no-take' zones in marine protected areas are essential to increase depleted fish stocks. However, many fisherman and their families rely on fishing for their income and, with no alternative, ignore a government-mandated ban. Bringing in the local fishing communities as partners to both plan and monitor the no-take zone, along with agencies that can work with the communities to develop alternative livelihoods results in a holistic, implementable and viable solution.	**Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)** PMNCH has a mandate to engage and align multi-stakeholder action to improve the health and well-being of women, newborns, children and adolescents using new evidence and building on experiences and lessons-learned from across its membership.

Collaborative Advantage and Partnership Difference (ΔP) for traditional development partnerships (cont.)

7	8	9
SHARED / REDUCED RISK	**SYNERGY**	**SCALE**
Collectively sharing risk of major investments / implementation	**Aligning programmes / resources, sharing resources and cooperating to exploit synergies**	**Combining delivery capacity across geographies**
ΔP		
Companies, banks, donors are willing and able to make large investments or loans jointly, or NGOs willing to co-deliver major scale programmes, which otherwise would have been too risky.	**Increasing the degree of impact from the input resources available (or achieving the desired outputs with lower input).**	**Taking successful programmes and approaches to scale to multiply the impact.**
EXAMPLES		
Blended finance Blended financing in which development finance and philanthropic funds are used strategically to mobilize private capital flows to emerging and frontier markets.	**Everyone Counts** Everyone Counts is a social accountability partnership between Care International, World Vision and Kwantu, a software firm. It allows the combination of data from community scorecard processes to enhance the provision of statutory services. The partnership has developed a common ICT platform to co-ordinate the use of social accountability tools and combine citizen-generated data to provide essential inputs to SDG monitoring.	**End Violence Against Children** End Violence Against Children is a global partnership with the vision of a world in which every child grows up free from violence. By creating a network of partners throughout the world, it is able to deliver towards its vision at a scale far in excess of that of any single organisation.

10
CONNECTION
Networking, connecting, building relationships
ΔP
New collaborative action and partnerships by convening multiple organisations, building trust and social capital, and catalysing collaborative action to deliver additional impact through the means below.
EXAMPLES
SDG Partnership Platform, Kenya The platform brings together executive leadership from government, development partners, private sector organisations and civil society, initially to explore and then to develop partnership opportunities for accelerating universal access to primary healthcare services.

2. Benefits / value created for an individual partner

Benefits to each partner might be of two types:

1. Mission value

Direct or indirect achievement of strategic objectives

For an NGO this could include delivery of specific programmatic or advocacy objectives, with direct or indirect impact on intended beneficiaries. For a company it might be gaining commercial value through new business opportunities, or to ensure the sustainability of a supply chain.

2. Organisational gain

a) Leveraging resources
Resource gains can include financial gains in the form of funding or cost savings that can be made (for example through sharing services). Organisations might also receive non-financial material gains such as in-kind contributions of goods, services or volunteers.

b) Indirect and intangible gains
Organisations may also enter partnerships to achieve a number of non- tangible benefits. These might include, for example, social or political capital; networking and connections; increased legitimacy; reputational benefits; influence and positioning; knowledge and capacity building; innovation in thinking and employee morale and retention.

In order to ensure NET benefit, each partner must also assess the cost of their involvement, including the full cost of staff time, in-kind contributions etc. and financial contributions.

See the value assessment tool, page 84 for further information.

3 Designing and implementing a partnership

MODULE 7 The partnering process 37

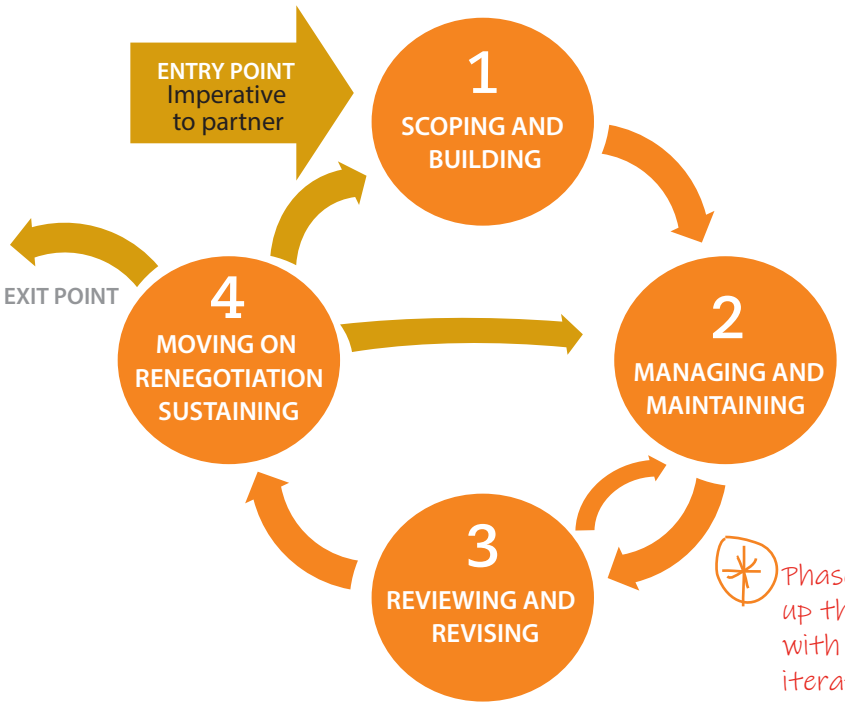
MODULE 8 The partnership journey to action 40

MODULE 9 Building Blocks of effective partnerships 44

The Partnering Process

In this guidebook, we set out two interlinked concepts: the partnering lifecycle – **the process** that a partnership follows and the different stages that it goes through, and the four interconnected **Building Blocks** of effective partnering that need to be built up across the lifecycle of the partnership in order for it to deliver as effectively as possible.

The partnering lifecycle



Phases 2 and 3 together make up the implementation phase, with ongoing review, revision and iteration of the partnership.

The diagram shows the lifecycle of a 'typical' partnership (we use quote marks because all partnerships are unique!).

The starting point or **imperative to partner** may come from a number of places:

- Failed attempts to solve a problem or meet a need using conventional approaches, or a feeling of collective frustration with the status quo, leading to the determination to do things differently;
- The vision of an influential individual who can see an opportunity, and knows they can't achieve it alone;
- A national plan with political backing which cannot be delivered through traditional government approaches;
- Exchanges between individuals in informal settings (e.g. CEOs meeting at Davos), or in more intentional settings such as innovation labs or platforms for partnership
- Organisations which have previously been working in partnership, looking to do something new or different.

Partnerships in general tend to work best when starting with the need / problem / opportunity and with partners gathered around that issue based on the key resources and insights they might bring to it. What is usually less promising as the basis for a partnership is when an organisation is acting in a self-focussed way, for example, looking to cover organisational costs or to improve its reputation after previous poor performance.

Generally speaking, solid and value-generating partnerships are more likely when all partners come to the table with an attitude more focussed on giving rather than taking – i.e. thinking "what can I bring" to a partnership and "what can we do together" rather than the first thought being "what can I get out of it".

The origins of the Roll Back Malaria global partnership

A group of public health professionals sat together and agreed half a dozen ideas about what needed to happen in the world in order to reverse the rise of malaria. They developed a really clear problem statement. They faxed these points to about twenty of the world's leading scientists and asked if the list looked about right. That was the basis of one of the world's most successful and enduring partnerships. They didn't start with the thought: what can we do together? They started with the problem. Then they asked themselves, what needs to be done about it and who needs to be involved?

1

Stage 1: Scoping and Building typically involves mapping the landscape of relevant stakeholders and initiatives (see stakeholder mapping), engaging key stakeholders to together build a full understanding of the issue (including of the system for system transformational partnerships), identifying those stakeholders likely to be partners, and then undertaking the process of engagement and negotiation to collectively develop a value-creating partnership, set out below in the 'Partnership Formation Journey'.

See page 48 about finding the 'right partners'

2 3

Stages 2: Managing and Maintaining and **3: Reviewing and Revising** represent the **implementation phase** of the partnership. At the beginning of stage 2, partners establish the governance, operational and management structures, allocate human resources and financial resources (or mobilize resources from an external source) and start to deliver together.

A well-maintained partnership includes a culture and constant process of review and iteration (stage 3) – monitoring progress towards goals, reviewing the health of the partnership, and making the changes necessary to keep a partnership on track, including continuing to strengthen the Building Blocks.

4

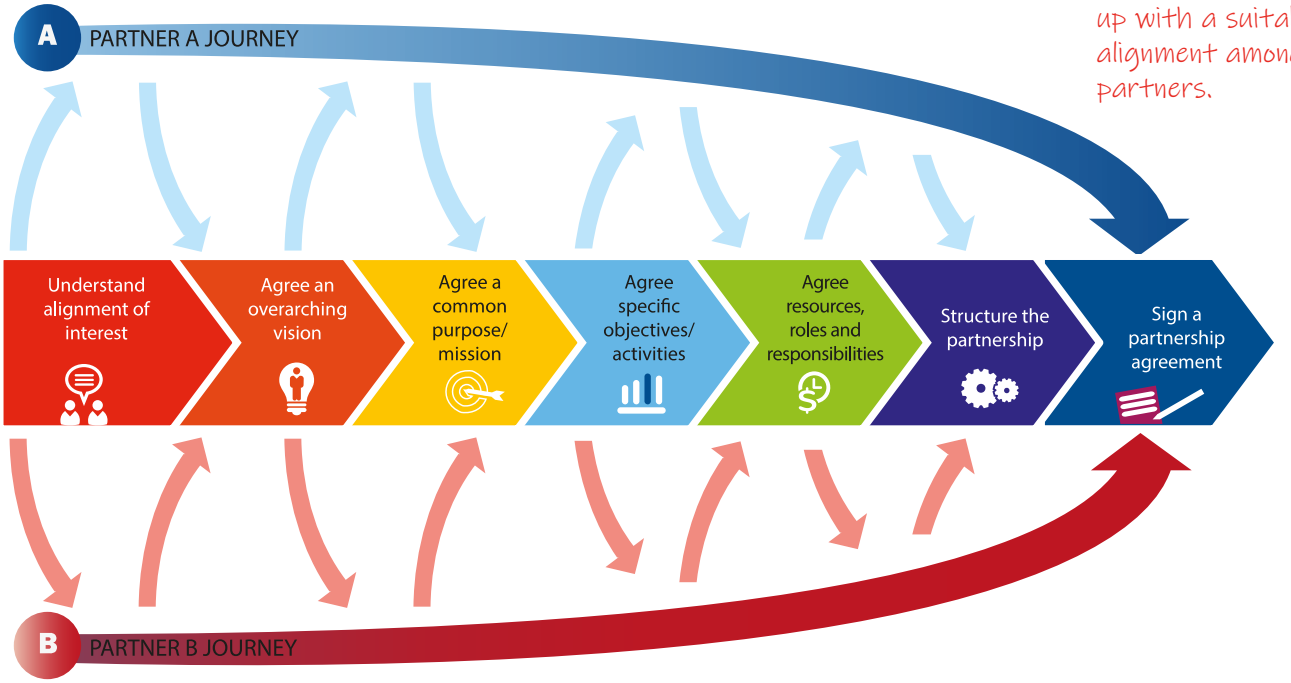
In the final **Stage 4: Moving On**, depending upon how the experience of the partnership, the partnership might decide to close (either because it has completed its tasks or is not delivering sufficient value), continue on, institutionalize its activities into one of the partners or a new organisation, scale up its activities, redirect its efforts, or reimagine itself with a change of partners.

The Partnership Formation Journey

A recognisable journey can be seen within Stage 1: Scoping and Building after the initial identification of an alignment of interest among potential partners, through the engagement and formation of a partnership to the point of signing a partnering agreement (see **Building Block 3** for more discussion of partnering agreements). This journey – which can take anywhere from two-eighteen months depending on the complexity of the partnership – represents a gradual shift from 'talking' to 'doing'.

Partnerships rarely follow a linear, regular path, but move in fits and starts, often circling around, before eventually ending up with a suitable alignment among partners.

The Partnership Journey to Action



The diagram above demonstrates the central core pathway the identified potential partners will take collectively in the development of the partnership, as well as the individual organisational journeys each partner must take to be confident and ready to partner (in the diagram above we talk about Partner A and Partner B but of course there may be multiple partners).

It is when the partnership pathway, and the individual partner journeys converge that an agreement can be made and the partnership can move into the action phase.

Partnership development pathway

The development pathway usually involves a series of meetings over time in which partners gradually develop, negotiate and shape the partnership, starting wide (agreeing an overall vision) and understanding the resources they are able to bring to the issue, and then focussing down to get more and more specific and detailed (the exact objectives, activities, commitments, roles and responsibilities of each of the partners).

The plan should evolve iteratively, brining in additional partners where there are gaps in resources.

Depending on the complexity of the partnership and the number of partners, the meetings may involve anything from bi-lateral discussions, to major multi-stakeholder dialogues requiring the support of a partnership facilitator*

Setting out at the beginning the clear process, along with an agreed set of principles and expected behaviours when partnering (see page 53) will significantly smooth and speed the partnership formation.

If well managed, the development process should involve ratcheting up the quality of relationship, engagement, commitment and agreement among the partners over time, maximising the creation of value and putting in place the Building Blocks of effective partnerships.

* In reality, for partnerships involving many partners, there will often be a core group of partners that drive progress forward initially, bringing in additional partners over time.

True story: A blockage to partnership

One partnership involving a large NGO entailed some difficult internal discussions with the communications department, who insisted that it was organisational policy to place the NGO logo at the head of any effort in which it was involved. The partnership champion engaged in a series of discussions to point out that the partnership would only succeed if the issue being championed (a partnership to combat deforestation) was placed front and centre, not the organisations behind it. The partnership champion persuaded his colleagues so successfully that the NGO changed its own internal policy to allow for much more discretion in the use and placement of its logo.

*Having someone who can guide the process - a neutral partnership facilitator or broker - can make a huge difference to help partners work systematically through issues and challenges and build up the essential Building Blocks.**

Individual partner journeys

Each partner must complete its own internal journey to get to a point where it is ready to commit to the partnership. This might include, for example:

- Assessing the strategic benefits it hopes to gain and the resources it must invest;
- Undertaking due diligence of the other partner(s);
- Understanding and sufficiently mitigate any risks;
- Building up the internal case for engagement;
- Securing internal resources;
- Get management / legal sign off.

Interplay between organisational and partnership journeys

For an organisation's partnership representative, the development of the partnership will necessarily be a complex interplay between the external negotiation with the partners, and the internal negotiation within their own organisation, as represented by the arrows in the diagram.

Experience suggests that, proportionally, more time and effort is spent on internal negotiations within organisations, than in discussions with partners. So if you find yourself spending a lot of time focussed 'internally', it should not come as a surprise. If you are working within a large organisation, there is likely to be a lot of work required to 'sell' the idea of the partnership to your colleagues, particularly if your own organisation does not have the systems and processes in place to support the development and management of partnerships (see **Annex 1: Fit for Partnering** for more on organisational capacity to partner).

For example, you may have to bring the senior leadership along with you, and they may be less interested in the details of the partnership, even though those small details may be what are essential to other partners. Or you may have to persuade your legal or procurement teams that the partnership is worth taking a non-standard approach. Or your colleagues in communications and marketing may insist in certain placement of your organisational logo, which you know will be inappropriate for your partner organisations.

These internal discussions – or approaches to navigating internal politics – will vary according to your internal organisational culture and decision-making processes. You may be operating in a culture that recognises, incentivises and celebrates partnership approaches, and not only allows but positively encourages flexibility and risk taking. Or you may be in an organisation that is, in principle, supportive of partnerships, but in practice does not provide the internal space or flexibility needed to work collaboratively with external actors.

In the best case, you will be able to demonstrate very strong alignment between your organisation's strategic objectives and those identified by the partnership. In this case, significant organisational resources will become available to you in order to help make the partnership a success. *During a recent evaluation of a large partnership, the tiny internal team that was leading on it seemed to be achieving far more than could reasonably be expected from the tiny staff team. They said, matter of factly: "Well, of course our executive director supports us, and our fundraising team writes us into bids, and the legal team knows what we're up to – everyone knows this partnership and why it's important."*

Taking a systematic approach

Appreciating that the pace of the individual partner journeys often slows down the partnership development, we recommend all partners to take a systematic approach to navigate and

* See PartnershipBrokers.org for a wealth of resources on the role of a partnership facilitator.

accelerate their own journeys, for example through the use of **Tool 3 Internal prospective partnership assessment**, page 82. This tool allows an organisation to continuously assess where they are along their partnership journey and what specific issues (e.g. risks, internal commitment, due diligence) still needs to be resolved, as well as quickly identifying deal breakers that mean a partnership should not take place.

If all partners use the tool, they can compare notes and clearly see where they all stand at each partnership meetings, and support each other in helping to move faster along their journeys.

Just get going!

In many cases, where the case for partnering is overwhelming or there is a reason for urgency, it may be entirely appropriate not to wait for all partners to have completed their organisational journeys, or for the partnership to have completed its development pathway, and instead to simply get going and start delivering together. This does not mean that the journeys can be ignored, that the Building Blocks do not need to be put in place, or that a partnership agreement is not required. But rather that they can be completed at the same time as the partnership is delivering in earnest – building the plane while flying it.

Indeed, in general it is important not to end up overdesigning partnerships, but better to start small, learn from the experiences of working together, and then design the scale of activities.

Make sure all partners are aware of the ups and downs of partnering!

It is important for all partners to appreciate from the beginning that partnering is rarely 'plain sailing'. It is entirely typical in partnerships for there to be moments of tensions among the partners, and for the partnership to feel messy and uncomfortable from time to time.

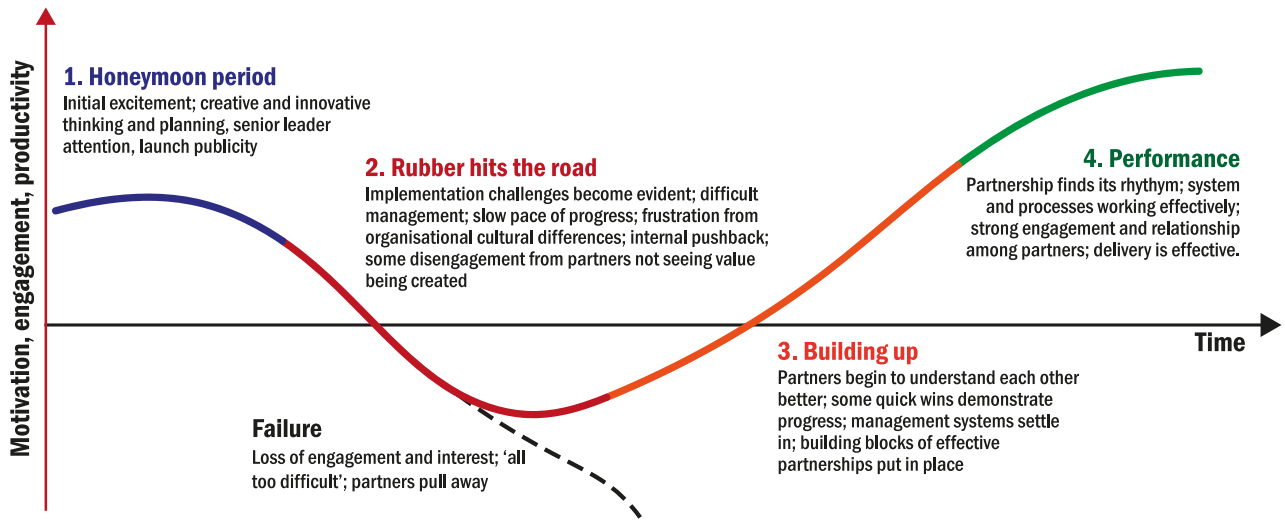
If handled well that is normal and healthy. The stronger the relationship among the partners - and the greater the willingness to bring up and discuss issues - the easier it is to get through difficult periods. And partnerships will usually end up much stronger after sensitively working things through together as partners.

Challenges may be particularly hard to deal with when the relationship is quite new, in the early implementation phase. Partnerships tend to follow a very similar cycle to the "forming–storming–norming–performing" model of group development, first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. A typical cycle of the level of engagement and productivity of a partnership is shown below.

The cyclical ups and downs will continue throughout a partnership.

If partners are aware in advance of the natural rhythms of partnerships, that it's normal at times to feel frustrated or demoralized, it makes it much easier to take the steps and encourage the right behaviours and commitments that will take partnerships through the difficulties to a point of high performance.

Typical early cycle in partnerships



Value maximisation negotiation

Partnership negotiation is not a classical, zero-sum negotiation in which you are trying to get the most for your organisation (sometimes described as adversarial negotiation: attempting to secure the biggest slice of pie). Instead it is a far more co-creative process, identifying both how working together can deliver significant additional value towards collective objectives, and how it can deliver the greatest value for your organisation and the others involved. I.e. it is an exercise in how to collectively grow the pie to generate the greatest value for all. The form of negotiation required to do this is coined 'value maximisation' negotiation.

The table below provides a brief explanation of the different forms of negotiation. Adversarial negotiation should rarely, if ever, be used in partnering as it suggests that partners' interests are insufficiently aligned (i.e. you win at the other's expense).

Interest-based negotiation is useful in mediation and troubleshooting as a way to ensure that all partners' interests are met, but it tends to lead to minimal win-win solutions.

Value-maximisation negotiation is an approach to really deliver the maximum wins for all the partners, and the maximum impact of the partnership as a whole. The Collaborative Advantage framework provides a useful starting point to begin value-maximisation negotiation. The first question to be collectively asked is: by coming together, in which (usually several) of the multiple Collaborative Advantage mechanisms do we think we could create additional value? Understanding where the power of collaboration can most effectively deliver results can shape and focus the discussions in that direction.

To achieve the maximum value-add, start by thinking big. Be ambitious in your early brainstorming, welcoming rather than discarding what might at first seem like crazy ideas – they may contain nuggets of gold which, with a bit of lateral thinking, can become highly innovative (rather than crazy) approaches. The different ideas will continue to be developed, assessed and refined in an iterative process, based on the whole range of resources the partners – and new partners filling in gaps – can bring to the table.

Tips on value maximisation negotiation

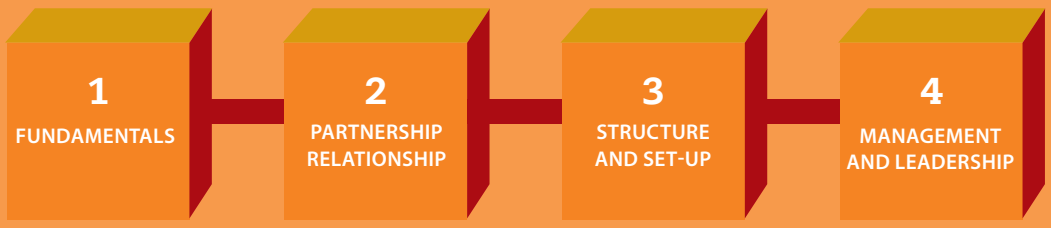
- **At the beginning of negotiations, try to build a collegiate spirit and be explicit about using value maximisation as the basis for discussion; Role model it by making suggestions for how the partnership could create more value for others;**
- **Build understanding of the multiple types of value and success – for the partnership and for partners;**
- **Widen the boundaries of the negotiation beyond the specific issue at hand;**
- **Creatively brainstorm the widest set of opportunities that could create additional value for you, your partner(s), and the overall partnership objectives;**
- **Reach agreement that maximises the value for all (while remaining open to continuously adjusting the partnership to optimize value creation).**

Spectrum of negotiation approaches

	ADVERSARIAL	INTEREST-BASED	VALUE-MAXIMISATION
Goal	**Maximising the value to my organisation at the expense of the other:** **WIN – LOSE**	**Ensuring all parties in the negotiation gain sufficient value to have their interests met:** **MIN WIN –MIN WIN**	**Maximising the added-value, collaborative impact of the partnership along with the value gained by all parties:** **MAX WIN – MAX WIN – MAX IMPACT**
Focus	**Focuses on individual self-interest**	**Focuses on all parties' stated interests**	**Focuses on the Collaborative Advantage of the partnership, along with the widest set of partner interests towards which the partnership could contribute**
Style	**Argument**	**Conversation and enquiry**	**Brainstorming and co-creation**
Effect	**Negative effect on relationship**	**Positive effect on relationship**	**Highly positive effect on relationship**

MODULE 9

Building Blocks of effective partnerships



Introduction

For partnerships to deliver as effectively as possible, there are a set of four key Building Blocks that need to be developed and continuously maintained. The Building Blocks are distilled from the success factors for partnership highlighted by multiple organisations over many years:

1. Fundamentals (the basis for a partnership in the first place)
2. Partnership relationship
3. Structuring and set-up
4. Management

In practice, they are not a series of separate items to tick off in a sequence. Rather they are a set of connected ideas, to keep returning to during the partnering lifecycle. Just as a physical building needs to be maintained through regular attention to different parts that can go wrong at any time – the drainage, the windows, the roof – so a partnership should be maintained through paying regular attention to these critical ideas. And, of course, it is easier (and cheaper!) to fix a problem before it occurs.

While in a world of infinite time and resource, all the elements of all the Building Blocks would be put in place from the beginning, a pragmatic balance is essential.

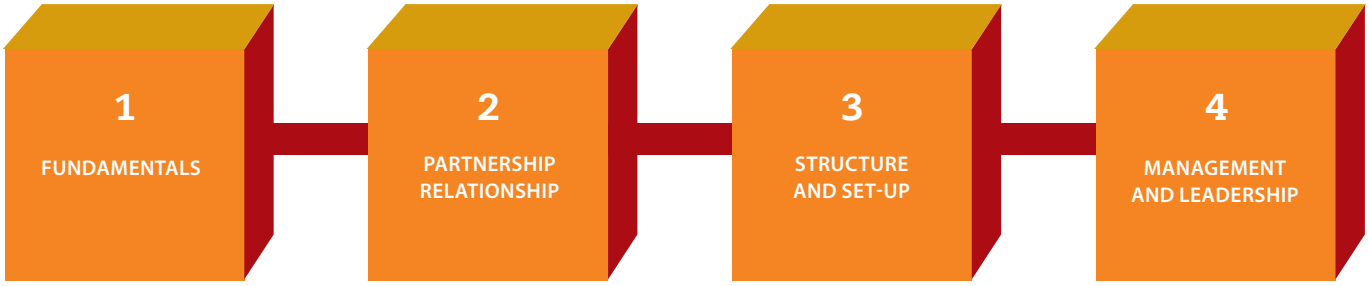
What's important is for all partners to be aware of the Building Blocks, agree which are the most essential depending on the level of complexity of the partnership, and commit to continually monitoring and improving on them as the partnership continues to develop and iterate.

In some cases, you may be working with a partnership that is already under way and not considered one or more of the Building Blocks. In these cases, they will need to be retrofitted, with partners collectively working to assess the current situation and put in place measures to build stronger foundations for the partnership.

While the Building Blocks are presented separately for the sake of clarity, they are strongly interconnected and all refer to the same central challenge of working with, and within, a complex, changing and often ambiguous operating environment.

Making partnerships work

- The ability to lead with a vision and bring people with you along the way
- The dedication to drive partnership forward, despite the challenges
- The courage to take risks and push your organisational boundaries
- The commitment to continuously solve problems and not take 'no' for an answer
- And the bravery to have difficult conversations both with your partners and inside your organisation.



THE BOTTOM LINE:
Partnerships must be able to create significant value and the 'right' partners at the table must be included to be successful.

While partnerships are key to the delivery of the SDGs, partnerships are not appropriate in all circumstances and contexts:

The fundamentals for partnership need to be in place:

- **1.1 Significant added value in comparison with the resources required;**
- **1.2 Inclusion of all key stakeholders holding essential resources;**
- **1.3 Compelling shared overarching vision, with sufficient alignment of interests to deliver net benefit to all partners;**
- **1.4 Sufficient compatibility of values in relation to the closeness of collaboration**
- **1.5 Partners are sufficiently empowered and enabled to be able to contribute to the partnership;**
- **1.6 Senior-level commitment and representatives have a partnering mindset and skill set.**

THE BOTTOM LINE:
The complex, multi-faceted dynamic relationship among partners must be kept strong

Partnerships are driven by a complex and ever-changing relationship among the partners. Strong, trust-based relationships can overcome the inevitable challenges of partnering, help partners to go 'the extra mile' and deliver extraordinary results.

Partnerships where the relationship is poor will deliver sub-optimally or fail.

The key elements of the partnership relationship are:

- **2.1 Trust and transparency**
- **2.2 Power balance and equity**
- **2.3 Mutual benefit**
- **2.4 Accountability and commitment**

THE BOTTOM LINE:
The partnership's structure should be fit for purpose.

Every partnership has its own unique structure and set-up: the governance, management, operational and reporting arrangements to deliver effectively.

The key elements of the structure and set up are:

- **3.1 Legal / fiduciary arrangement**
- **3.2 Governance, management and operational structures**
- **3.3 Partnership documentation**
- **3.4 Theory of Change**
- **3.5 Funding and resourcing**

THE BOTTOM LINE:
The partnership should be well managed, and requires the application of leadership at multiple levels.

Managing partnerships goes well beyond typical project management, requiring the ability to manage the contributions of multiple organisations, without line management control, as well as managing the relationship between partners. It also requires different forms of leadership to ensure partnerships are successful.

Partnership management and leadership includes the following elements:

- **4.1 Leadership**
- **4.2 Results-oriented project management**
- **4.3 Risk reduction and troubleshooting**
- **4.4 Monitoring, review and iteration**
- **4.5 Communication**
- **4.6 Learning and knowledge sharing**
- **4.7 Relationship management**

Sounds like far more than you can cope with? Don't worry.

Firstly, if your partnership is quite simple or informal, you only need to apply a subset of these Building Block elements, and it's good practice - and good for the relationship - to go through with your partners to decide which ones you think should apply.

Secondly, you don't need everything in place all at once. Get the fundamentals in place, build the rest up over time.

1 Fundamentals

THE BOTTOM LINE: Partnerships must have the potential to create significant value and the 'right' partners must be included to be successful.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is, by definition, a challenging and complex task. If single-sector or single-stakeholder approaches could provide a solution, these issues would not be as intractable as they have proven to be. It is therefore almost inevitable that finding solutions will need the combined resources, skills and efforts of multiple stakeholders.

However, it is important to appreciate that partnerships are not appropriate in all circumstances and contexts: the fundamentals for partnership need to be in place.

A partnership is likely to be the right approach if:

1.1 The partnership is likely able to create significant additional value (either by helping to deliver traditional development more effectively, or through delivering system transformation) in comparison with the resources required;

1.2 The partnership is able to include all key stakeholders holding essential resources;

1.3 There is compelling shared overarching vision, and sufficient alignment of interests for that vision to deliver net benefit to all partners;

1.4 Sufficient compatibility of values in relation to the closeness of collaboration

1.5 Partners are sufficiently empowered and enabled to be able to contribute to the partnership;

1.6 There is senior-level commitment and representatives have a partnering mindset and skill set.

1.1 Significant net value creation

Partnerships are time and resource-intensive, and should only be undertaken when the likely results significantly outweigh the resources (including the often major transactional and friction costs) that are involved.

When considering the development of a partnership, **in the case of 'better traditional development'** partnerships, the key questions to be answered by all partners are: i) can we clearly identify the collaborative advantages (see section on **value creation**), and therefore the expected additional impact that the partnership would create beyond all players working alone? And ii) is that extra value creation significantly greater than all the transaction costs of partnering?

If the goal is 'system transformation', the key questions are: i) what is the ongoing differential impact of running a sustainable vs a previously less sustainable system?; ii) is that ongoing impact worth the energy and resources required to deliver the transformation?

If the answer is 'yes' to the questions, then it is worth investing the time and resources to explore and develop a partnership. If 'no', the partnership is not appropriate to the context.

Whether developing or in an existing partnership, the key is to work together **to try to maximise the value creation of the partnership**. With better development partnerships, this might mean the partners going through each of the Collaborative Advantages in turn and seeking to see if there other ways the partnership could deliver further value. For example, a partnership using the Collaborative Advantage of 'Critical mass' to deliver more effective collective advocacy, might additionally use the partnership relationship and structures to add an additional value-creation mechanism of 'Shared learning', to exchange good practice.

For system transformation partnerships, it's about being aware and constantly being creative and open to (sometimes minor) adjustments to the approach that could create additional long term value.

1.2 Inclusive of key stakeholders

A partnership brings together the complementary or additive resource of a set of organisations. If a key resource is missing – whether funding, a change to the law, or access to a community – the partnership will fail.

In the case of system transformation partnerships, if transforming the system goes against the interests of a particular stakeholder that is sufficiently powerful, they may prevent the transformation from being effective. As set out in the system transformation section, it may be the case that the partnership will need to engage and incorporate the interests of such stakeholders in order to be successful – for example, including processed food manufacturers in efforts to reduce salt consumption, or ensuring to create alternative livelihoods for people currently reliant on environmentally destructive jobs.

1.3 Alignment of interests towards a shared vision

Partnerships are based on an alignment of interest across the partners, allowing a clear, collective vision that partners can fully commit to. This is essential since if the interests of the partners are sufficiently aligned, the achievement of that vision will then deliver clear benefits to each of the partners – the key reason they would be involved in the partnership in the first place.

It is important to appreciate that partners do not have to have the **same** interests or objectives in a partnership. A company, for example, may wish to increase its profit through developing and selling a new low-cost water filtration system. A development agency or NGO may want people to live healthy lives. By coming together in a partnership with a vision of people having access to clean water, the partners will be able to deliver on their own objectives.

1.4 Sufficient compatibility of values for the context

Organisational values are the unseen underlying, deeply ingrained beliefs and precedents that drive priorities, decision-making and how an organisation behaves.

While it is often said that partners need to share the same values in order to partner together effectively, the reality is that, particularly when working across stakeholder groups, that is likely neither a pragmatic nor a necessary requirement. The level of **compatibility of values** required for a partnership to be successful will be determine by, among other things, the particular form of partnership, including the closeness and intensity of engagement required between partners.

An 'arms-length' partnership – for example, a partnership between government, NGOs and businesses around sharing of market price data to help make a market system more efficient – does not require the partners to share values. (Of course, if the values of the partners are completely antithetical to each other, there will be problems.)

On the other hand, a partnership between, for example, an environmental NGO and a business known to be an irresponsible polluter, will almost certainly fail, unless that company can demonstrably show a shift in its values and approach towards the environment.

Only through deeper discussions and engagement can partners ascertain if indeed there is sufficient compatibility of values for the specific partnership that is being proposed.

1.5 Partners are sufficiently empowered and able to contribute

In many partnerships, there may be certain stakeholders essential as partners, but who, without assistance, are not in a position to engage. For example, in system transformation partnerships, what may traditionally have been seen as beneficiaries, now become an essential partner (e.g. cocoa farmers within a sustainable supply chain partnership). Such partners may need significant support to be fully involved – for example, assistance to organise and ensure effective representation, funding to support the costs of travel to meetings etc.

Similarly, NGOs and civil society organisations may have very significant resources to bring to the table – for example, their knowledge and experience, access to communities, technical assistance etc. However, unless they come as part of an already funded programme that can be aligned into a partnership, the NGO will usually need funding to be able to mobilize those resources – after all, salaries have to be paid. And it is important to appreciate that simply because an NGO receives funding to enable it to bring its resources to the table, that should not diminish its status as a full partner.

Particularly in complex partnerships which will take a significant time to develop, such organisations may well need financial support even in the development phase of a partnership, so that they can fully contribute as an equitable partner.

1.6 Senior-level commitment and a partnering mindset and skill set

Partnering, inevitably, requires working in different ways and taking a risk. Having the commitment of senior-level champions within each partner, with the vision and willingness to drive forward a partnership, as well as to make the case and overcome the internal obstacles to push forward their own organisation's engagement, is essential. In addition, senior level commitment helps to ensure that the organisation as a whole is buying into the partnership – i.e. it begins to institutionalise the partnership – rather than it being a pet project of an employee.

Partners coming to the table with a partnering mindset, as well as a strong understanding of the process of partnering, will hugely increase the chances of the development of an effective partnership. A partnering mindset[13] includes the following attributes:

- Humility to realise others may have more appropriate knowledge / resources
- Openness to share organisational knowledge
- Willingness to share decision-making
- (Measured) risk taking
- Propensity for creativity and innovation to maximise value
- Ability to work for the benefit of the partnership as a whole, including helping other partners to achieve their own benefit

While some people are natural collaborators with an instinct for acting towards the common good, for others, a partnering mindset is something that may need to be actively cultivated.

13. A partnering mindset is part of the 'MUST-have' competences for effective partnering. See page 70.

Partnering in practice: Finding the 'right' partners

Ensuring the right organisations are involved in a partnership is particularly important during the design phase, although attention, and potentially changes, should be made during the implementation phase as well. A systematic stakeholder analysis will help to identify:

- Those whose interests are affected by the issue or those whose activities strongly affect the issue;
- Those who possess resources of all kinds (financial, influence, expertise) needed for delivery of the partnership;
- Those who control relevant implementation processes (usually the public sector).

These questions can be addressed quite systematically. The idea of stakeholder mapping is well established in many organisations and some common approaches include:

- using a **Boston Square** to map interest against influence (see **Tool 1: Stakeholder Mapping**, page 80)
- **power mapping**, an approach used by campaigning organisations to identify which individuals hold most power and influence on a particular issue
- a **political economy analysis**, an approach used by large institutions to assess the political dimensions of a given context, including the key players.
- **system mapping,** understanding the entirety of how a system operates, including all of the above and the interconnections between them.

Insights from the stakeholder mapping will make it possible to identify and prioritise key potential partners and begin sketching out the roles each might take in the proposed partnership. It can also help to uncover the potential motivations of different stakeholders to become involved (or, in some cases, actively oppose the partnership), and establish where there are pre-existing relationships.

There are multiple levels of granularity of stakeholder mapping process:

- **Initial sweep:** as many organisations and individuals from across the sectors are identified and mapped, with details of their specific interest (how they are affected by the issue and how they affect it) and influence on the issue (including resources and implementation process).
- **Mapping influence against interest:** Ideal partners will have both a strong influence over and high interest in the objectives of the partnership. However, it is rarely so clear cut. By classifying stakeholders in this way, one can determine cases where: 1) significant awareness-raising is required to turn a highly-influential but low-interest stakeholder into an interested potential partner or 2) significant capacity development is required to turn a stakeholder with high interest but low influence into a stronger potential partner. At this point, collaboration with certain organisations might also be ruled out based on exclusion criteria set out by one or more partner, or by the partnership itself.
- **Role and degree of engagement:** Multiple different organisations and individuals might play roles in a partnership project, but not necessarily as partners. This mapping of stakeholders begins to outline the roles and level of engagement of the various stakeholders. As the partnership is developed and relationships are built, stakeholders might well change their roles. Typical partnership roles include: partner, contractor, influencer, champion, disseminator, funder, informer, critic.

The information yielded by a stakeholder mapping process – even a sophisticated one – is always subjective; conditional on various factors according to who has undertaken the mapping, and the parameters they are using; and only ever a snapshot in time. Knowing which organisations should, on paper, be involved is also not the same as actually engaging with specific organisations and the individuals within them.

Hence it is important to keep an open mind about the outcomes of stakeholder mapping exercises, and to be aware of assumptions underlying them. At best, mapping can help distinguish who the key stakeholders are – those who will be both interested in engaging constructively and also most influential or best positioned to make essential contributions towards the partnership either as partners or in some other capacity.

Beyond stakeholder mapping

One partnership supplemented its stakeholder mapping process with a series of informal conversations with trusted individuals to gain a further level of detail about potential partner organisations. These revealed that one potential partner organisation which, on paper, looked highly promising, was led by an individual with a highly competitive and self-seeking mindset. The connection was made anyway, but with a much greater degree of caution and awareness.

2 The partnership relationship

THE BOTTOM LINE: The complex, multi-faceted dynamic relationship among partners must be kept strong

Partnerships are driven by the complex and ever-changing relationship among the partners. The complexity is increased by the interplay between the personal relationships between individuals representing the partners (where interpersonal chemistry will play a role), and the institutional relationships.

Where the relationship is strong, the partnership should be able to deliver efficiently and effectively, overcoming the challenges that inevitably arise along the way. Where the relationship is weak, the partnership will struggle, commitment may drop, and the partnership will become unbalanced, or fail to deliver altogether.

There are multiple, interconnected elements that together build up that relationship. They can ebb and flow as the partnership develops and as it moves around the partnering lifecycle, based on shifts in context, changing priorities of the partner organisations, changing personnel, and success or failures of the partnership.

The key elements of the relationship are:

2.1 Trust and transparency
2.2 Power balance and equity
2.3 Mutual benefit
2.4 Accountability and commitment

'Good' and 'bad' discomfort in partnering

While potentially hugely rewarding, partnerships are, almost without exception, challenging to implement and there will be times when discomfort and even irritation and anxiety will creep in.

It is important to distinguish between 'good discomfort' and 'bad discomfort'. 'Good discomfort' is the natural tension that comes from working with diverse organisations that each work, operate and think in different ways and have different interests they wish to fulfil. The tension can be used positively to innovate and come up with better value-creating solutions than any one organisation could deliver. 'Bad discomfort' may arise when there is a problematic power dynamic or a fundamental lack of trust between two or more partners.

In order to help diagnose what is working well, and what is working less well, and where 'bad discomfort' might require some urgent attention, we have developed a Partnership Healthcheck Tool based on these Building Blocks. (**See Tool 7,** p 91**)**

2.1 Trust and transparency

We sometimes say that partnerships 'move at the speed of trust'.[14] By this we mean that high-trust partnerships significantly reduce transaction costs; facilitate rapid knowledge exchange; provide mechanisms to flag upcoming challenges (such as the departure of key personnel); and enable rapid course correction when problems do arise. By contrast, operating in low-trust environments is inefficient and costly, as well as being bad for morale.

Investing time and effort in building relationships between the key people involved in partnerships pays many dividends during the implementation phase. This can be done through multiple settings and via multiple forms of communication which will be unique to each partnership.

When dealing with partnership challenges, the higher the degree of trust and the strength of the relationship, the more commitment there will be to finding solutions and moving forwards.

What is trust?

The single word 'trust' covers multiple concepts. Four elements of trust in particular are relevant for partnerships:

1 **Competence:** is the partner capable of doing what they say they will do?

2 **Reliability:** will the partner do what they say they will do?

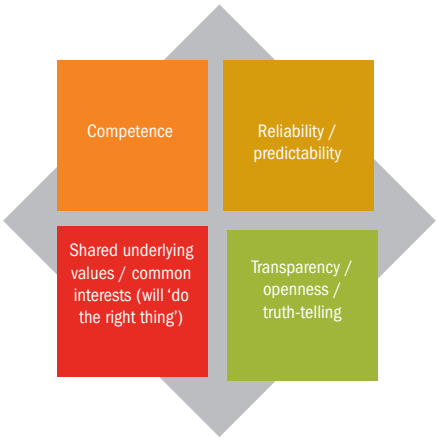
3 **Doing the right thing:** will the partner act in the best interests of the partnership? Will you give them the benefit of the doubt, even though you may not have 100% clarity on their actions because you trust that they are pulling in the same direction as you?

4 **Transparency / honesty:** is the partner being open about their motivations? Are they being honest?

When developing a new partnership, there may already be a pre-existing level of trust between partners. For example, they may have a previous positive history working together, resulting in high level of existing trust. Or they may have poor previous history, and therefore low levels of trust. Even if there is no direct prior history, the reputation,

* Leading companies have recognised the impact on their bottom line, if they can increase the levels of trust between employees, between the company and its suppliers, and more broadly across stakeholder networks. The phrase 'speed of trust' comes from a concept developed by the Franklin Covey Institute which advises companies on strengthening trust across their operations.

demonstrable track record or referral by a trusted intermediary will influence the level of trust.



Trust within a partnership, as within any relationship, takes time and effort to build up, and can be lost very quickly with one inconsistent action or lapse in transparency or reliability. Behaving consistently, fulfilling obligations and meeting deadlines, communicating openly, and sharing doubts and challenges rather than trying to hide them, will all help to maintain trust as the partnership continues.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, experience shows that while extremely helpful, trust is not a pre-condition to get a partnership started. Trust is not built in theory, or through rhetoric, but through successful joint action. By taking the risk and working together – albeit starting on small things that don't require significant commitment – that trust can be built and allow the partnership to take on bigger, more challenging actions.

Some symptoms of a low-trust partnership:

- Everyone wants to be included in every decision, no matter how trivial;
- People are not taken at their word, and there are constant demands for hard evidence, no matter how unrealistic;
- New ideas are treated with cynicism and suspicion;
- When things don't go perfectly to plan, or mistakes are made, there is a blame culture.

Some indications of a high-trust partnership:

- A spirit of curiosity or enquiry, rather than suspicion;
- There is tolerance for mistakes rather than jumping to blame;
- The default mode is collective problem-solving, rather than partners 'covering their backs';
- There is good humour and energy in discussions.

Treating each other as human beings

It is important to continually appreciate that partnering is challenging, and individuals in a partnership are torn between multiple, sometimes competing priorities including their own organisation's imperatives (sometimes manifested in direct orders from a boss that is not well informed) alongside their desires to work in the best interests of the partnership. Additionally, they are working with imperfect knowledge in often complex situations, usually without direct control over what their colleagues do, and almost certainly without nearly as much time and other resources as they would like to commit to the partnership.

A helpful approach to take in partnering is always to assume the best intentions of everyone involved. If things goes wrong, we need to be willing to have what may be difficult conversations, to understand the deeper reasons, including the context in which each person is operating, and then collectively find pragmatic solutions.

2.2 Power and Equity

Addressing power imbalances and maintaining equity within your partnership is important to ensure effective functioning. Left unaddressed, power imbalances can:

- **Result in poorer decision making.** Partnership decisions should be made based on the best information and experience available. Power imbalances may result in the advice of a less empowered partner with the best knowledge not being sufficiently considered.
- **Reduce commitment**. If a partner feels disempowered, or feel that others are making decisions about how the resources they bring to the table are being applied, their level of commitment to, and willingness to invest in, the partnership will be reduced.
- **Risk unsustainable partnerships.** Partnerships are about creating value for all the partners. If power imbalances during negotiation, or during implementation, result in a partner not gaining sufficient net value, that partner will eventually withdraw. Or if one partner is unfairly and disproportionately benefitting, it risks ongoing bad feeling within a partnership.

Large organisations used to being the ones in control, may never have considered power dynamics and the issue of addressing their own power can be an uncomfortable area to explore. For smaller organisations, perhaps accustomed to deferring to larger organisations, the issue of empowerment is also likely to involve some discomfort.

Power dynamics are healthy in a partnership when there is a strong sense

of **equity**: that is, when all partners have sufficient resources to, and are engaged fully in, decision-making and key activities.

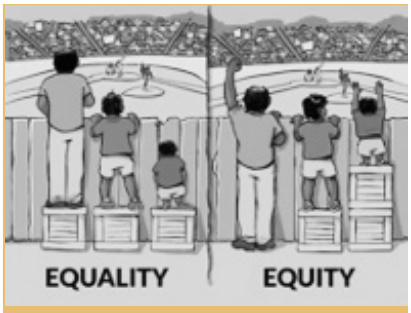
While typically we may consider money as the critical source of power, the reality is that power comes from a variety of sources (see table). Even the smallest civil society organisation will have power if it brings a critical resource - for example the trust of a local community - to the table. Without that critical resource, the partnership may fail.

One major challenge to equity in partnerships is around perceptions of power. 'Weaker' partners not appreciating the power that they actually have (including in most cases, the ability to walk away) and so feeling underconfident in discussions. And 'stronger' partners not appreciating how critical all the partners are to the partnership, or understanding the voluntary nature of partnerships, and continuing command and control style behaviours.

In order to help ensure more equitable partnering, it's important that all partners understand the sources of their own power. Those that feel disempowered should be clear about what they bring to the table. Those partners in more powerful positions should be vigilant about their own behaviours and ensure they are not exercising the power differential to the detriment of others or the partnership, and take steps to build the confidence and engagement of all partners (see box on equality vs equity).

Sources of power

SOURCES	EXAMPLES
Critical resources	• Money • Access to / credibility with a stakeholder group • Technical knowledge / skills • Data / information • Legal instruments • Political influence
Structural / positional power	• Formal / legal authority • Reputation / brand / size • Social status and legitimacy • Network centrality / control (e.g. being the fiduciary agent for a partnership or controlling communications)
Cultural / human influence	• Cultural norms / societal imbalances (e.g. around gender) • Discursive power / ability to communicate / persuade
Ability to walk away	• The partner has alternative approaches it could take - the partnership is not critical to its mission or survival



Equality vs equity

In partnership, we may see huge disparities between organisations - a massive multi-national company or an international donor working with a local civil society organisation, for example. And we see partnerships in which a few partners might play a major role and other partners having only a peripheral role.

Because of such disparities, we avoid the use of the term 'equal' when describing partners. Instead we use the concept of equity: all partners have equity in a partnership because they bring some vital (usually non-financial) resource to it, and should be respected for what they bring.

Pragmatically, all partners cannot have equal decision-making over every issue. However, of course partners must be part of making any decision that would affect how they apply their resources. And where partners have particular expertise or important insights (e.g. a civil society organisation that intimately knows a community), their opinion should be paramount in that decision-making.

In order to ensure all partners can play a full, equitable role, some less empowered partners may need support which could be **financial** (to cover the time they need to fully engage); **practical** (e.g. arranging travel for a rural community group to attend meetings in the capital city; translation at meetings); **coaching** (helping to build confidence around communicating with quite different groups; and **effective facilitation** in partnership meetings that allows all voices to be heard, and ensures that it is clear what value each partner brings to the table.

Signs of a healthy power dynamic in a partnership

- Full and open discussion of topics, however challenging, especially around budgeting
- People with the most relevant skills and experience on a particular discussion lead the way, rather than people who represent the biggest organisations
- There is collective push-back if donors make unrealistic demands on a partnership
- Power imbalances are discussed openly before they become a problem

Signs of a problematic power dynamic in a partnership

- Unease / a sense that one partner is dominating discussions and decision-making
- Sense that one's own / other partner's interests are not being seen as important
- Sense that some topics are 'off-limits' for discussion, for reasons that are not obvious

"Where people feel responsible for something they have little real control over, it can feel deeply unsettling and become a source of stress. This often results in attempts at direct and controlling behaviour. Typically this is manifest in non-attendance at meetings, attempting to control the agenda and not sharing resources."
John Atkinson

2.3 Mutual benefit

If all partners are expected to contribute to the partnership, they should also be entitled to benefit from the partnership. A healthy partnership will work towards achieving specific benefits for each partner, potentially over and above the common benefits to all partners. Only in this way will the partnership ensure the continuing commitment of partners and therefore be sustainable.

Key to this recognition is understanding what kind of benefit(s) each partner is receiving. In general, the more transparent each partner can be, the better.

While many not-for-profit organisations or public institutions may have concerns about engaging in partnership where a company might gain financially from their involvement, harnessing commercial interest can be transformative to a partnership. For example, in the context of health, whether it's a company wanting to engage to invest in wellness at work (thereby reducing the cost of absenteeism and increasing profits), or creating a profitable business model from a new product or service that supports healthy living (such as innovative insurance products), there should be a return on investment.

The return in investment can be both a driver and an enabler of scale, and it has great potential to achieve widespread impact. As long as the health outcomes are linked with the commercial benefits, there is potential for mutual benefit. However, the balance of benefits can be disrupted when commercial gains are disproportionate to, and take precedence over, social or environmental gains.

Ensuring mutual benefit can also be a challenge between partners where there is significant power imbalance, particularly where one partner has access to vital resources (funding, information or relationships). In all cases, mutual benefit can best be guaranteed when all partners are very clear with one another about the resources they are bringing to a partnership, and the benefit that they are deriving: recognising that these elements can change over time.

The benefits gained from a partnership must be seen to be fair. If a partner always appears to be taking and never giving, the imbalance will cause other partners to lose interest and potentially walk away.

2.4 Accountability and commitment

Partnerships work well when they enshrine the concepts of both **mutual** accountability – partners are accountable to each other for the delivery of their commitments – and **collective** accountability – all partners are collectively committed and accountable for the delivery of the partnership as a whole.

Mutual accountability

In a partnership, partners should hold one another to account. There should be a sense of shared risk and shared reward. This can be one of the most significant, and potentially most often overlooked, elements of partnership accountability. If a partner agrees to deliver something and fails to do so, there should be consequences. But the range of 'consequences' are different from a transactional contract, where there may be withholding of payment for non-delivery of work. A more subtle approach is required to address non-delivery of work in a partnership, where reasons may include lack of capacity, lack of understanding, internal politics or changes of personnel, or differing expectations. Put positively: a strong, trust-based partnership relationship, and the importance of the partnership to all, helps to ensure that partners follow through on action they have agreed to.

Collective accountability

Whether or not there is a formal accountability requirement (e.g. towards a donor providing funding to the partnership), all partners should feel a collective responsibility for the partnership as a whole to deliver. This means going beyond being satisfied with simply delivering on their own commitments, and to look out to support other partners wherever one of them might be struggling to deliver, or to collectively increase resources where things may not be going exactly to plan (very common for partnerships operating in complex environments).

A charter for good partnering behaviour

In order to support the relationship and encourage good partnering behaviour, partnerships may benefit from creating a 'partnership charter', setting out the principles, values and expected behaviours to which the partners commit. The charter may be included as a section in the partnership agreement, or be a separate document. It can also be used a statement of intent at the beginning of a partnering process.

The process of co-creation of the charter will help to build partners' understanding of good partnering, gain buy-in towards the approach, and help to build the relationship among the partners. It also provides a reference document to hold partners to account.

A charter might include, for example:

Principles

- Partners commit to working towards the interests of the partnership as a whole, alongside achieving their own individual objectives, and to understanding and helping other partners to achieve theirs;
- Partners commit to the principles of, and will take action to ensure, equity, co-creation and respect for all partners and the resources of all kinds they bring to the table;
- Partners commit to being open and transparent in all their partnership dealing.
- Partners commit to being accountable to each other for the delivery of their commitments, and together co-accountable externally for the delivery of the partnership;
- Partners commit to 'sharing the glory' and ensuring all partners are fairly recognised in external communications.

Review and learning

- Partners commit to regularly review how effectively the partnership is operating, including the quality of relationship between the partners, and be willing to make necessary adjustments;
- Partners commit to a spirit of learning together and capturing their experiences.

Dealing with difficulties

- Partners agree to be open about challenges they may be facing when delivering their commitments, and be willing to help other partners who might be struggling with theirs;
- Partners commit to encourage an atmosphere supporting all partners to bring up challenges, and be willing to have the 'difficult conversations' that may be necessary to help ensure the partnership remains on track;
- Partners commit to work through challenges collectively, and be willing to 'put themselves into the shoes of their partners' to try to understand issues from their perspectives.

3 Structure and set-up

THE BOTTOM LINE:
The partnership's structure should be fit for purpose.

Every partnership has its own unique structure: the governance, management, operational and reporting arrangements that are required to make and act on decisions, implement effectively and check that the partnership is staying on track and creating value.

An effective partnership has the following structures in place:

3.1 Legal / fiduciary arrangement
3.2 Governance, management and operational structures
3.3 Partnership documentation
3.4 Theory of Change and measures of success
3.5 Funding and resourcing

The structure should be dictated by, and evolve in response to, the purpose of the partnership, not the other way around. If the partnership is a relatively simple collaboration, the governance and management structures can be relatively light-touch. If the partnership is dealing with complex legal or financial territory (for example, if there is significant donor funding requiring clear reporting structures), there may be a need for more significant arrangements.

Often there is a temptation in partnerships to over-invest early on in heavy governance arrangements, at the expense of getting to action.

We recommend putting in explicitly temporary, light touch structures to begin with and then evolve them based on experience.

Multi-stakeholder [partnership] boards often require costly trade-offs between inclusiveness and effectiveness. The literature of development is replete with illustrations of failure as a direct consequence of inadequate inclusion. But… efforts to achieve inclusiveness have most often resulted in very large, unwieldy boards or, initially in some cases, in multiple boards. The size, combined with the large number and extent of different interests, has often impacted negatively on effectiveness. **Keith Bezanson and Paul Isenman**

3.1 Legal / fiduciary arrangement

Legal / fiduciary structures will be dependent on the level of complexity. Most simple partnerships may be run without creating any new legal entity, often using one of the partners as the legal and fiduciary agent if required. More complex initiatives, or where a partner has certain rules which don't allow it to operate sufficiently flexibly, may require either the setting up of a new legal entity, or the engagement of a third party - a '**backbone organisation**' - that can host the partnership.

In practice, most partnerships will start more informally, only taking on the hassle and cost of creating a dedicated legal resource as it becomes unavoidable.

3.2 Governance, management and operational structures

Governance and stewardship

Partnership governance arrangements are put in place to i) ensure compliance and accountability of the partnership and ii) deliver the highest quality of decision-making sometimes in situations of complexity and competing interests.

MSPs for the SDGs are almost always voluntary arrangements which require a different approach to a compliance-based company board. One practical distinction is to consider the notion of 'stewardship', implying a sense of care-taking for the whole partnership and partners, rather than 'governance', which implies a sense of judgement, oversight and compliance (see next page).

Larger or more complex partnerships will often have different levels of governance. These might include, for example:

- **Board:** The ultimate authority made up of the heads of the main partners meeting annually;
- **Management Board:** 'Working level' partner representatives meeting regularly (for a larger partnership, this might be a sub-group of 'core' partners);
- **Advisory Board:** Group of experts or relevant stakeholders that can contribute towards decision-making by the official Boards.

Partnership governance design principles

- **Governance structures should be as simple as possible while ensuring necessary accountabilities**
- **Decision-making should be devolved to the lowest appropriate authority / level**
- **For decisions on specific issues, those with strongest knowledge should be given appropriate weight**
- **Governance structures should reinforce the key partnering principle of equity / balance of power**

Signs of a less effective, compliance-based 'governance' structure	Signs of a more effective, support-based 'stewardship' structure
Framing and language is used that some 'other' is to blame when things go wrong.	Challenges are raised on the basis that there is mutual accountability for finding solutions.
Divergent views persist about the fundamental purpose of the partnership.	The central purpose of the partnership is clear to all.
Public commitments are made which are not implemented.	There is evidence for delivery of public commitments; where commitments are not met, plausible explanations follow.
Partners feel unable to express themselves openly. There are feelings of mistrust or lack of transparency.	Strong, trust-based relationships are in evidence. When challenges arise, the benefit of the doubt is given.
Most discussions across the partnership are internally-focussed, to do with matters of process.	Most discussions across the partnership balance an internal and external focus, and are driven by a shared sense of purpose.
Challenges are presented in a way that is hard on the people, but soft on the problem.	Challenges are presented in a way that is hard on the problem, but soft on the people.

Management and operational structures

Day to day management of a partnership emerges from its degree of complexity and the particular partners involved.

A relatively simple partnership can be managed without creating significant additional structures, but with strong communication and coordination among the partners.

In some cases, an individual partner might provide the overall management and coordination. This may cause certain challenges - for example a power imbalance where that partner has fiduciary responsibility and is the one passing funding on to other partners. It is important that the management reporting is to the partnership as whole, not just within the host partner.

For more complex partnerships it may be necessary to create new management or operational structures, potentially with the support of a backbone organisation to provide the day-to-day management and operations.

The same principles apply here as with governance: the new structures should be demand-led, they should be as simple as possible, and they should be embedded to the fullest extent in existing structures.

Many partnerships create temporary structures or task teams to focus on a specific element of the partnership, and once the task has been achieved, the team dissolves, but the relationship between individuals has been strengthened. This demand-led, time-bound, relationship-driven approach to management and operational structures can help reduce the risk that partnerships become institutions in their own right, and to ensure an ongoing focus on the value or impact being created through the partnership.

3.3 Partnership documentation

In all but the simplest, most casual partnerships, documentation including a partnering agreement is essential. Documented agreements ensure that partners have the same understanding of the partnership they have been negotiating and provides clear guidance for the future; having senior level signatories ensures a certain level of commitment to the partnerships; and the process of developing an agreement forces partners to consider all the important issues before partnering.

We recommend splitting documentation into at least three types:

1) An overarching (usually non-legally binding) **partnership agreement,** signed by all partners, setting out the basis for the partnership, including an expression of the vision and aspirations, how the partnership will create added-value, what each partner brings to the table and hopes to get out of it, the high-level roles and responsibilities of the partners, how it plans to operate and an agreement over the principles and values of the partnership (see **Tool 2: Partnering agreement template,** page 81). The partnering agreement may also include a 'charter' setting out the commitments and expectations for partner behaviour (see page 52). The table overleaf shows the distinctions between a conventional legal contract and a partnering agreement.

2) Any (legally-binding) **contractual agreements**, for example setting out the terms where funding is exchanged between partners; a service-level agreement where one partner is providing secretariat support to the partnership; other legal requirements partners may require e.g. over intellectual property etc.

3) A living **work plan** with activities, timelines, clear, measurable outputs / outcomes and performance indicators.

4) A record of the **history of the partnership.**

As a partnership develops, we recommend ongoing review of the documentation to keep it relevant and ensure it provides the necessary guidance to all the partners.

Contractual agreement	Partnering agreement
Purchaser dictates the terms based on the procurement rules of the purchaser	Organisations jointly develop the terms, needing to fulfil both organisations' rules
Lays out exactly what the supplier will do for what payment	Lays out desired partnership aims, what each partner can bring to the table
Embeds the supplier being accountable to the purchaser	Embeds mutual accountability
Cements the power relationship	Seeks to build equity and transparency between the organisations
Cannot explicitly deal with non-tangibles (e.g. social capital)	Allows each organisation to bring non-purchasable, non-tangibles to the table
Legally binding and main control is legal censure	Non-legally binding elements; main driver / control is joint desire to achieve objectives

3.4 Theory of Change / measures of success

Just as any large development programme benefits from a Theory of Change, so an effective partnership should set out the logic behind how its set of activities (or 'transformation pathways' in the case of transformational partnerships) will create impact, and how it will measure progress towards that impact.

A Theory of Change is not something that is developed as a one-off, but should be a living document under continual review. It should be iterated based on gaining deeper understanding of the problems and interests at play, experimenting with different approaches and responding to unexpected opportunities as they arise. Characteristics of this more evolutionary and flexible approach are:

- Activities, outputs and outcomes emerge over time;
- Resources required from the partners need to be adjusted regularly;
- Significant adjustments in direction are expected over the course of implementation, based on ongoing analysis and new learning;
- The Theory of Change of the partnership is reviewed and adjusted regularly, including the pathways and underlying assumptions.

3.5 Funding and resourcing

Partnerships for the SDGs will need a range of resources to be able to implement and deliver impact. Except in the explicit case of fundraising partnerships, partnerships should not be seen as a way for an individual organisation to bring in income.

The starting point should be the **specific need or opportunity**. As shown in the **stakeholder resource map** on page 33, different stakeholders potentially bring a huge range of resources around that issue. In some cases, partnerships might require no external funding - partners agree to commit and align their resources, programmes and activities.

In most cases, funding will be required both for external (to the partnership) implementation costs, as well as funding to partners to allow them to bring their resources to the table (e.g. NGOs and other civil society organisations will usually need funding to cover their staff time and organisational costs to contribute to a partnership). Partnerships that have created a sufficiently compelling vision for the additional value they will create rarely report difficulties in securing funding their work - from donors, foundations, companies, governments etc.

Many partnerships get started without external or additional funding, using the resources they can commit. Partnerships can be built slowly over time, and external funding may come only later in the process to help build scale, once the partnership is demonstrating results.

As a general rule, if external funding is needed, it is better to have multiple donors rather than a single large donor. The presence of a single large donor may create a problematic power dynamic, made worse if – for procurement reasons - a single partner receives the money, because other organisations are more like sub-contractors than full partners.

Signs of a well-funded and effectively resourced partnership

- Multiple resources drawn on, mostly from within partner organisations;
- Diverse external funding streams.

Signs of an unsustainably funded partnership

- Over-reliance on a single large donor (especially if it is a private or unaccountable donor);
- Funding received by an individual partner represents too high a proportion of their income;
- Partnering activity ends when external funding ends;
- Organisations are in a consortium as a requirement of receiving donor funding, rather than because they are the 'right' partners who together can create value to meet a defined need.

4 Management and leadership

THE BOTTOM LINE:
The partnership should be well managed, and requires the application of leadership at multiple levels.

Managing partnerships goes well beyond typical project management, requiring the ability to manage the contributions of multiple organisations, without line management control, as well as managing the relationship between partners. It also requires different forms of leadership to ensure partnerships are successful.

Partnership management and leadership includes the following elements:

4.1 Leadership
4.2 Results-oriented project management
4.3 Risk reduction and troubleshooting
4.4 Monitoring, review and iteration
4.5 Communication
4.6 Learning and knowledge sharing
4.7 Managing organisational cultural friction

The challenge of dedicated secretariats

Many partnerships get to a scale or complexity where they bring in an external secretariat or backbone organisation to manage the partnership. While this has the advantage of providing a dedicated resource, it risks partners passing on more and more responsibility to the secretariat and themselves taking a step back. This in turn can lead to what is in effect a new (and usually badly funded!) institution rather than a partnership.

While this may be a reasonable approach to embed the long term work of the partnership, it should be done deliberately and by choice of the partners, rather than accidentally.

4.1 Leadership

Partnership requires considerable leadership capacities at multiple levels:

- For **individuals** involved in the day-to-day business of implementing a partnership, leadership skills are required to make the necessary decisions (often based on incomplete information), operate in a complex and rapidly changing environment, and act as a champion for the vision of the partnership. For larger partnerships, there is likely to be a small group of these individuals who drive progress.

- There is also a dimension of **collective leadership**, which refers to the ability of all of those engaged in the partnership to take responsibility for the collaborative effort; not relying on a single individual; and not simply looking at protecting their own, or their organisation's interests, but being aware of the partnership as a whole and being willing to step in as and when necessary (while relying on others to do the same).

- A third strand relates to **organisational leadership**, where partner organisations involved in a partnership put their institutional weight behind what the partnership is trying to achieve. This includes making available the necessary resources so that the partnership can function effectively; and using external communications and other platforms to advance the goals of the partnership. Another important dimension here is for senior leaders within an organisation to create the space or provide the institutional mandate to partnership managers to take the necessary risks and find the ways of working necessary to make the partnership a success.

The more important a partnership is to an organisation, and the more value of all types that it is creating for that organisation and collectively, the more leadership an organisation is likely to demonstrate, and the more resources they will make available to the partnership. The degree of leadership shown by – for example – a CEO of a large technology company is directly related to how closely the partnership aligns with the company's strategic interests. With strong strategic alignment, significant resources can flow including the full suite of their own personal networks, the company's data scientists, finance specialists, supply chain clout, programming capacity, equipment and so on.

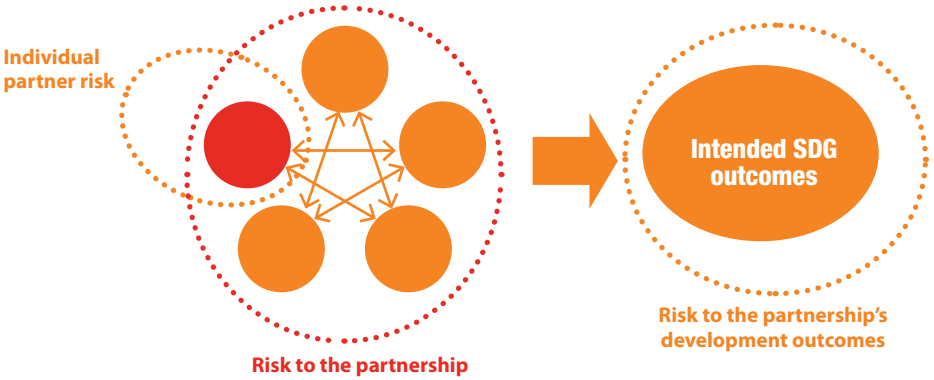
4.2 Results-oriented project management

Project management of partnerships in comparison with in-house projects, is significantly complicated by the fact that the delivery team sits across different organisations, with different priorities and different reporting lines / managerial structures.

In more complex partnerships, a designated secretariat (either within a partner, or an external 'backbone organisation' may take on the role. In simpler partnerships, one partner might be responsible (usually the one that is also the fiduciary agent if that is required), or it may be shared among a couple of partners. Where partners play the role of project manager for a partnership, we typically see a matrix reporting in which the project manager reports both within their organisation's line management and to the partnership board.

We often see that those individuals representing their organisation and responsible for delivery are not always

Types of partnership risk



For guidance on dealing with conflict of interests in partnership, go to page 21.

given the time allocation, support or training by their organisations in order to carry out their responsibilities. We encourage partner organisations to strengthen their own institutional capacity to partner, in order to ensure that individual managers can fully engage in partnership working with external organisations.

Organisations can support individuals in the following ways:

- Embed roles and responsibilities into workplan and performance plans;
- Establish systems for contract management or oversight, appropriate for the particular partnership;
- Establish a process and culture to enable accountability, transparency and flag issues before they become problems.

4.3 Risk reduction and troubleshooting challenges

Risk reduction

Partnering for the SDGs can produce extraordinary outcomes, but the benefits can come with significant risk The success of a partnership depends on all partners sharing an understanding of the risks, and working collectively to reduce them.

Risks can generally be categorized as the following interconnected types:

- Individual partner risks
- Risks to the partnership itself
- Risks to the outcomes of the partnership

Risk assessment and management should be considered a shared obligation among all of the partners.

Including an explicit risk assessment and management process in the partnering approach can create opportunities throughout the partnering cycle for frank discussions about potential risks, their impact and their probability, and options for mitigation.

Troubleshooting

While ensuring the solidity of the Building Blocks should see off most difficulties, unforeseen challenges arise in the life of every partnership. This is entirely to be expected when diverse stakeholders with different interests and different organisational and financial pressures come together to jointly create value in a novel way.

When dealing with these challenges, the higher the degree of trust and the strength of the relationship, the more commitment there will be to finding solutions and moving forwards constructively. The way that partners deal with challenges has the potential to build the relationship, and to result in changes that make the partnership healthier in the long run. Poor response to challenges can damage the collaboration. Some of the key principles of solving partnering challenges are as follows:

- Avoid a blame culture;
- Create a common understanding of the issues involved;
- Make it a joint problem and find a solution together;
- Learn from the experience.

Some common partnering challenges and how to deal with them can be found in the **Tool 5: Troubleshooting**, page 86.

4.4 Monitoring, review and iteration

The primary purpose of monitoring and review is to provide useful information to the partners and stakeholders to inform decision-making and guide how the partnership may need to adapt and change.

Each individual partner should be monitoring its own involvement in the partnership. Is it continuing, or promises, to deliver net value? Are we properly delivering on our commitments?
Do we continue to have senior level support? Is the partnership sufficiently institutionalised into our organisation?

Collectively as a whole, we recommend three elements to monitoring and review, all of which should be used to intelligently iterate the partnership:

- **Efficiency** looks at the partnership itself, how well it is set up and running, and the health of the relationship among the partners.
- **Effectiveness** looks at the work the partnership is delivering, and progress towards its planned goals and milestones, in terms of outputs, outcomes and impacts. It also means reviewing the Theory of Change of the partnership to ensure it is still valid or if it needs adaptation.
- **Added-value** looks at the degree to which the partnering process is adding value by achieving outcomes which could not be achieved independently.

Efficiency

An efficient partnership is one in which communication is strong, the relationship between the partners is healthy, management is effective etc. In other words, it is one in which the Building Blocks are strongly in place. The **Partnership Health Check** (**see Tool 7**, page 91) can be used both formally and informally on a regular basis to test the Building Blocks and find any weaknesses against which remedial action can be taken.

Effectiveness

As discussed in the Building Block on Structure and Set-up, at the outset, every partnership should define measures of success and have a clear Theory of Change laying out its activities, outputs, outcomes and expected impact.

In some cases different partners could have different measures of success within a single partnership. A company, may want to monitor sales figures for a new bio-fortified flour product; an NGO may want to monitor farmer livelihoods; the government, improved nutrition. The partners will need to agree monitoring that fulfils all needs.

For 'better traditional development' partnerships, most organisations will already have monitoring and evaluation systems in place to track progress and results along theories of change. If existing systems of one of the partners can be adapted for use by the partnership - great. If not, the partnership will need to create its own framework and approach. However, partners will often still need the results to feed into their standard M&E systems and this should be considered when designing the framework.

For transformational development partnerships, monitoring progress is less business-as-usual. As set out in Annex 3, the approach we recommend is envisioning the desired future sustainable state, and building a set of transformation pathways that, taken together, should (at best initial informed guess) deliver the necessary system change. Each transformation pathway should have its own set of indicators.

Transformational development partnerships will need to measure:

1) Progress along those transformation pathways in terms of: a) milestone indicators - e.g. "15 NGOs join advocacy campaign" may be a milestone towards "government changes its policy to purchase only bio-fortified food for schools"; plus b) any progress indicators (e.g. government signals it is considering changing policy); as well as indicators of ultimate success of each transformation pathway ("government changes policy");

2) Based on experience to date, the degree of confidence that the original transformation pathways remain valid and sufficient to achieve the transformation to the envisioned future state (e.g. what underlying assumptions have turned out not to be correct or that we've missed? What additional transformation pathways do we need?); and any recommended changes;

3) Based on experience to date, the degree of confidence that the envisioned future sustainable state is the optimum future state to aim for (and any recommended changes).

An essential part of measuring all three is bringing together all the stakeholders involved in the project and crowdsourcing their insights on progress beyond traditional indicator measurement that may miss more subtle indications of progress, of blockages and of missed or belied assumptions.

For all types of partnership, the results should be used to continuously adapt the Theory of Change and iterate the partnership in order that it remains optimized to deliver its objectives (or even to adjust its objectives).

Added value

Partnerships take considerable time and effort and we need to be able to provide evidence that they deliver more than the sum of their parts.

In some ways, transformational development partnerships are easy to justify as there are rarely alternative approaches to achieving the same goals - there is no counter factual against which to compare. As discussed in Annex 3, all that needs to be demonstrated is that the effort involved in system transformation is worth it in terms of the expected ongoing benefits that are derived.

A well set up monitoring and review framework should be able to be used for the purpose of formal evaluation of a partnership.

For 'better development' partnerships, the key is to have, from the beginning, complete clarity over the different Collaborative Advantages and therefore the ΔP (the expected increased in impact due to taking a collaborative approach - see section on value creation) that you are aiming for. While of course this should adapt over time (partnerships should always be looking for new opportunities to create additional value), it provides a clear framework through which you can define and then demonstrate success for your partnership.

Considerations for monitoring and review

In general, across all three areas, key factors to consider include:

- Ensure that the process informs the future, rather than judging the past;
- Clarify what data is actually required, and by whom. Try to work with a limited number of indicators essential to track progress and inform key decision making;
- Take a participatory approach to the design and implementation – involving partners and stakeholders to ensure maximum buy-in to the process and ownership of the results;
- Be realistic about the resources available for monitoring and review;
- Avoid investing too much upfront in identifying indicators and setting up data collections protocols, that could prevent exploring and seizing opportunities;
- Be creative in using already existing information and data and also consider so-called qualitative information as evidence (minutes of meetings, communications materials, brokering journals, contribution stories, etc.);
- Use the Theory of Change not only for partnership design, but also as a management tool with the aim to support critical thinking about the intended change processes and to explore the ongoing role the MSP plays in bringing about this change;
- Tie into existing frameworks wherever possible (in particular reporting of progress in Voluntary National Reviews);
- Be transparent – share the findings and results with all relevant stakeholders, as often as possible;
- Simplify – keep the process as quick and simple as possible.

4.5 Communication

Communication plays a central role in almost every aspect of effective partnership, whatever the type or scale of the partnership. Partnerships bring together individuals and organisations from different backgrounds, sectors, and organisational cultures, and they are required to form a shared understanding of the issue at hand, and to think creatively and ambitiously about possible solutions that will generate most impact and most value for all. This all requires effective communication. And when we use the term 'communication', we often mean 'listening': being in receptive mode rather than broadcast mode.

Different communication levels in partnerships

There are three key levels in effective partnership communications:

1. Communication across the partnership. This underpins both effective project management and a strong working relationship among partners. We recommend a portfolio approach to communication: a) formal communication (reports, project meetings etc.); b) informal communication (just pick up the phone!; check in with your partners, see how things are going, if there are any concerns cropping up, and new insights; and c) social communication - get to know people on a human level; go and grab coffee or a drink - it will help to build up a trusting relationship;
2. Internal communication within individual partner organisations. This ensures organisational buy-in to the partnership, sustainability/long term involvement and organisational learning;
3. Communication outside the partnership. This is to stakeholders and the general public in order to mainstream work of the partnership, raise awareness and create legitimacy. It is important to consider there is a wide range of potential stakeholders who will directly need to be communicated with and who indirectly will hear about the partnership.

It is crucial to the success of a partnership to ensure strong communication both within the partnership – contributing to the project and the relationship management – and externally to celebrate success and continue to build buy-in with other stakeholders and external funders.

The key to communication in partnership is about keeping it simple and doing it often. This means using the

"[This partnership] will never develop a true culture of learning until it becomes more self-critical" **interviewee comment from a partnership evaluation**

right type of communication at the right times, regularly sharing information with them (through meetings) and ensuring that the main channels of communication remain active and flow in both directions.

Communication styles and challenges

Just as with any diverse professional group, sensitive and effective communication requires an appreciation of the range of communication styles used by different cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Communication becomes more complex within a partnership context because there is an additional complicating factor relating to the terminology and jargon used by different stakeholder groups. These differences can be more extreme than those relating to different native tongues because the same word might mean completely different things depending on who is hearing the word.

For example, the words 'benefit', 'value' and 'interest' all mean different things if you are an investor, or you are in a profit-making business, compared to those in a not-for-profit organisation or a public sector body. Partnerships also develop their own language, definitions and shorthand, giving certain defined meanings to otherwise generic common words. At least one global partnership, for example, has its own definition of the word 'country'!

Signs of good communication

- Constantly checking your and others' assumptions about key terms
- Not taking for granted that others share your organisation's jargon
- Feeling sufficiently comfortable to ask for clarification of apparently simple terms
- Taking time to translate key materials into multiple languages, and where appropriate to use interpreters

Signs that there may be communications challenges

- Frequent use of acronyms and programmatic labels as shorthand
- The view that 'communications' is a thing that a particular person has to worry about, rather than a responsibility of all of those involved in a partnership
- The sense that those new to a partnership would require a glossary in order to understand central concepts

4.6 Learning and knowledge sharing

Effective partnerships should embody a spirit of inquiry. They are characterised by regular adaptation, review and iteration, responding to changes within the partnership and in the broader context. The more complex the partnership, the stronger the commitment to ongoing learning and course correction. Over the past few decades, a vast amount of partnering experience has been created and this guidebook attempts to distil as much of it as possible. However, much of the most detailed and useful partnership experience remains in the heads of key individuals, particularly in relation to the challenges that are faced and how they are resolved. This section offers a simple three-level framework for learning and knowledge sharing in partnerships which, if widely followed, could help to reverse this trend.

Individual reflective practice

Learning starts with ourselves as individuals. Leading partnering practitioners keep journals through which they document interesting, surprising or unexpected ideas or actions emerging through partnering. These journals can be private, and the discipline of keeping a journal requires us to articulate thoughts which otherwise remain half-formed or are lost. They can also provide useful records of insights for the individual to draw on in the future, as well as providing the raw material for knowledge exchange with others.

Organisational learning

Sometimes, organisations are set up so that learning becomes institutionalised, but this is quite rare. We can see this because, usually, institutional memory gets lost when someone moves on. When a key individual with a lot of partnering experience leaves an organisation, a significant asset is lost. Somehow, partnering knowledge must be captured in the organisation, for example through adjustments to policies, systems and practices. Building organisational capacity to partner involves creating a culture of learning and experience exchange (see **Annex 1: Institutional capacity to partner**, page 69).

Partnerships as vehicles for learning

If a partnership is trying to do something innovative or creating value that can't be created any other way, then it should become a vehicle for learning. If institutional memory is often lacking in organisations, the notion of 'partnership memory' is even more rare. This is a problem because people forget why certain decisions were made, leading to duplication of effort or even a weakening of the partnering relationship; also, it is hard for those who are new to a partnership to make sense of it. For example, if a new organisational representative joins the partnership and questions why one partner appears to be receiving undue benefit, this can cause tension and resentment if the reasons cannot be provided.

"What goes on below the surface affects the surface" **Andy Goldsworthy**

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"
Peter Drucker

Partnership representatives and managers can learn a huge amount from each other. While there are growing opportunities for peer learning and knowledge exchange through public webinars, there is nothing that can replace the quality and speed of knowledge exchange that can happen via trust-based relationships between small groups of individuals. And the quality of this knowledge exchange becomes higher depending on the diversity of the partnerships in question.

The most effective partnerships create a powerful shared narrative, which serves as a kind of living memory. The story should be fair, and it should be compelling. It should cover:

- Where things began: the origin story ;
- The individual heroes that made it all happen;
- Achievements and milestones that keep partners involved ;
- Where things went wrong ;
- The work that still needs to be done ;
- What success looks like.

This story isn't necessarily something that can be fully captured in a public document. As trust grows between individuals, this story is what gets shared, challenged and added to. Having the discipline to maintain this sense of a shared narrative is useful for multiple reasons, not least because it facilitates external evaluation (because there is consensus about what is working well and what needs improvement), which in turn enables efficient course correction.

Some signs that a partnership prioritises learning

- Individuals demonstrate ;reflective practice, including senior organisational leaders;
- Organisations take steps to institutionalise and incentivise learning in their policies and practices;
- The partnership itself has a recognisable narrative about its origins, purpose and key achievements, which is agreed by all existing partners and easily understood by outsiders;
- It is possible to make course corrections including adjustments to the structures and a change in personnel, because the core purpose of the partnership is widely understood .

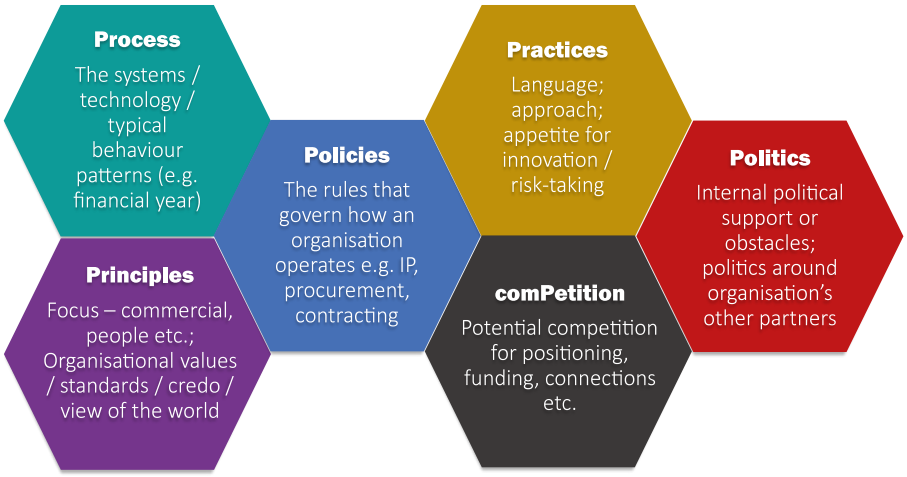
Some signs that a partnership has not yet prioritised learning

- The withdrawal of key individuals would represent an existential threat to the partnership;
- There is suspicion of ideas from beyond the 'usual suspects';
- From the outside, it is difficult to make sense of what the partnership actually does;
- It is incredibly difficult to make course corrections because there is no consensus about what is important and what is not important.

4.7 Relationship management

As important as project management, is relationship management: ensuring that the partners are working effectively together, that all partners are benefiting from the arrangement, that there is strong communication, trust and transparency. The partnership healthcheck process is an excellent way to help manage that process.

One key further element of managing relationships between partners is an understanding of the organisational cultural friction.



The '6 Ps' of organisational culture

Adapted from partnership as conversation: why partnerships are condemned to talk and what they need to talk about James Cornford, Rob Wilson, Susan Baines, 2013

Every organisation has its own set of values, procedures, language and jargon, world views, insights, technologies and behaviours. Together these make up its *organisational culture*.

Except perhaps when we change organisations, we rarely notice the culture we are in. We get used to our way of working, our behaviours and thinking, our own IT systems, our particular lens we take on the world and assume everyone things and acts the same way.

Organisational cultural clashes are inevitable whenever diverse organisations work together. For-profit companies working with the UN system often complain about how slow decision-making and processes are. International NGOs working with national NGOs find they have incompatible financial and reporting systems. Social enterprises with an appetite for innovation and risk-taking can become disillusioned and frustrated when it comes to working with governments where there is no 'permission to fail'. In some countries, the culture is highly hierarchical with all decisions having to be made at the top, whereas in others, individuals are far more empowered.

The diagram sets out the '5 Ps' of organisational culture: process, principles, policies, politics and practice, along with a sixth: comPetition. It is the differences - often hidden - in organisational cultures that may end up causing clashes and friction.

Often we end up blaming individuals when problems arise, rather than appreciating the inevitability of such clashes which are really not an individual's fault.

We do not have to have the same organisational culture to work successfully together - indeed, it is the diversity of organisations that can create significant added value in partnership. But such differences must be talked about and managed to avoid causing too much friction. For example the principles and values (which may not be clear until the partners start to work together) can be a major influence on organisational choices, priorities and approaches. It is possible for partners to operate with different values if these differences are transparent and not in opposition.

In order to effectively manage cultural friction, it is important to:

1. Understand and be open about the culture of your own organisation - how decisions are made, what might make it a difficult organisation to work with etc.; **What would you tell a friend about your own organisation, its ways of working, and what it would be like as a partner?**
2. Make an effort to understand your partners' cultures;
3. Have ongoing conversations understanding how your organisational cultures might impact your work (everything from the different value lenses you might use to something as simple as different financial year ends) to determine where there are likely to be points of friction in advance of problems actually arising;
4. Together with all the partners find solutions to work around the inevitable clashes that will occur, including through being as flexible as possible on all sides.

Are your Building Blocks solid? Partnership health check

Monitoring the "health" of how the partnership is functioning, as distinct from its outputs and deliverables, is essential, and usually overlooked. Taking the time to monitor partnership health will help to ensure its 'Collaborative Advantage' is still being applied; that there is still a quantifiable difference being made by the existence of the partnership; that value is being created by and for partners; that it is working efficiently and effectively; and that the relationship between partners is good.

Partnership health checks can be conducted throughout the life of the partnership. A shared commitment to undertake regular health checks can be captured in the partnering agreement; this pre-emptive approach is much better than waiting for things to go wrong or for the relationship to deteriorate before introducing a health check.

The health check tool **(see Tool 7**, page 91**)** covers all of the Building Blocks. While the tool can best be undertaken as a partnership, it can be applied initially by each partner organisation, to enable free and open exploration of any potentially difficult topics, with the results ideally provided to a trusted and independent facilitator. The facilitator can then provide the results back to the partnership, for example at a one-day workshop, in a relatively objective way and offer practical suggestions and insights. Applying the tool in this way helps to highlight areas where partners' perceptions differ and that need to be addressed.

Exploring issues such as trust and power helps to make partners more aware of these as potential issues as they work together. The outcomes can be used within the partnership to identify areas of course correction, strengthening, and new opportunities. They can also be used within each partner to demonstrate the organisational benefits of engagement.

This is an opportunity to gauge and compare each partner's perception of the way that the partnership is working, and the relationships within it, and to identify problems or areas where partners' perceptions are substantially different.

4 Annexes and Tools

ANNEX 1 Institutional capacity to partner 65

ANNEX 2 Some implications of country context on partnering 68

ANNEX 3 Partnerships and system transformation 70

TOOL 1 Stakeholder mapping 80

TOOL 2 Partnering agreement template 81

TOOL 3 Internal prospective partnership assessment 82

TOOL 4 Value assessment framework 84

TOOL 5 Troubleshooting 86

TOOL 6 Managing power imbalances 88

TOOL 6 Partnering healthcheck 91

ANNEX 1

Institutional capacity to partner

What does it mean to be 'fit for partnering'?

As the first sections of this guidebook sets out, solving the complex sustainable development challenges addressed by the SDGs requires multi-sector collaboration and an all-of-society approach. However, although many organisations from all sectors are recognising and engaging in this process, all too often the lack of internal institutional alignment leads to frustrated partners and missed opportunities.

One of the most common hidden barriers to effective partnering, is lack of internal institutional capacity. While the business case for partnering may be clear, the business case for investment in internal institutional capacity to partner is often less clear, or even seen as risky or irrelevant, and thus contested by parts of an organisation.

Partnerships to address the SDGs are complicated. They span multiple organisational levels, units and regions. Often, they require as much internal partnering (management of power dynamics, mutual benefit and communication) as external.

The kinds of barriers that frequently arise include:

- Internal rules and sign off procedures making partnering horrifically slow
- Partnerships are not holistic and/or inclusive. Often one part of an organisation does not know what another part is doing, and important internal stakeholders are not brought in early enough.
- Partnerships happen sporadically, lacking a consistent champion to manage the transition and continuously improve over time
- Organisations lack shared systems for organisation-wide learning and key partnering processes and systems
- Institutional alignment is often missing (practitioners leading the charge without a unifying vision and strategy – OR – senior leadership pushing a strategy without capacity for implementation)

As a result, organisations may fail to build systematically on their experiences and so waste valuable resources because they consistently recreate the wheel. They wind up bogged down in partnership process or caught up in politics, instead of capturing a greater value from their partnerships and replicating and scaling their approach.

In contrast, a strategic investment in building institutional partnering capacity can enable organisations to mainstream a partnership approach and operate more efficiently. The "Fit for Partnering" process is a pathway which helps organisations to identify how aligned their internal set-up and processes are towards effective partnering, and to prioritise interventions which will build on their strengths, address challenges, and maximise their ability to engage effectively with partnerships and to gain genuine value from doing so.

For organisations to maximise the benefits of collaboration, they need to ensure they understand how and why partnerships can deliver value for their organisation and have a clear strategy to inform and prioritise engagement, along with the right leadership commitment to implement it. They must have sound systems and procedures to be able to take partnerships through their lifecycle from initial identification through prospective value assessment, due diligence and sign-off, implementation, monitoring, reviewing and learning, along with supportive instruments - both legal and HR. Organisations must have skilled staff with the right mindset, relationship and trust-building skills and technical partnering knowledge. And finally, they must be underpinned by a pro-partnering culture that is outward-looking and by nature seeks to collaborate wherever value can be created.

With all these elements in place, an organisation can become institutionally "Fit for Partnering".

So what does a "Fit for Partnering" organisation look like? All organisations will be at a different point on the pathway – it is a journey, not a point of arrival. But there are common elements of good practice which any organisation can measure themselves against and work towards, and these can be grouped into the four categories described below.

ANNEX 1

"It's only going to happen if the senior leaders own it and model it. They need to accept there will be messiness, adaptation, flexibility, but if they do this the organisation will follow."
World Vision

"What's needed most is time and intention. No matter what you do it takes time, and leaders need to acknowledge and enable their staff to do all the partnering stuff as part of their work, so it can be part of your job. The bottom line is not just number of people served or dollars into the organisations, it's about the relationships you are forging."
World Food Programme

Leadership and Strategy

Clear buy-in and a mandate for partnership coming from the leadership team are essential to a successful partnering approach. Without this, staff will feel that messages are mixed, and the incentive to prioritise partnering will be lost. An organisation which aspires to partner effectively needs to work towards:

- A clearly defined vision and rationale for partnering
- A unique value proposition for the organisation to be perceived by others as a "partner of choice"
- A full partnering strategy, which is aligned with and supports the organisational strategy
- Commitment from the Board and Executive Leadership team
- Sufficient committed budget
- The partnership strategy and commitment fully communicated across, and accepted by, the organisation

Systems and Processes

Internal systems and processes, such as HR, finance and legal systems, can either support or hinder partnership working. For most organisations, these systems will not have originally been set up with partnership working in mind, and, depending on their flexibility, it can be challenging to adapt to partnership-friendly processes. To operate as effectively as possible, and avoid frustrations and inefficiencies, organisations need to develop the following:

- Partnering policies and principles
- Clearly defined internal rules and procedures across the full lifecycle of partnerships
- A systematic approach to mapping and identifying potential partnerships
- Tracking, monitoring, relationship and knowledge-management systems
- Pro-partnering legal agreements
- Partnership-supportive HR policies and KPIs.

The "MUST-Have" partnering competencies

M Mindset	U Understanding of other sectors	S Human Relationship Skills	T Technical Partnering Knowledge
• Humility to realise that others may have more appropriate knowledge/ resources • Inclination to reach out to work with others • Willingness to give up autonomy of decision-making • (Measured) risk taking • Propensity for innovation • Ability to work for the benefit of the partnership as a whole	• Language • Values and culture • Interests • Motivations and drivers • Resources and capabilities • Systems and process • Capacity limitations • Legal limitations • AND understanding of your own!	• Ability to look from others' perspectives • Networking and connecting • Approaching and engaging potential partners/selling ideas • Relationship/trust building • Interest-based negotiation • Facilitation • Communication • Coaching and mentoring • Meditation/conflict resolution/troubleshooting	• Understanding the partnering lifecycle • Key principles and Building Blocks • Best practice approaches to setup and governance • Ability to assess critically when and when not to partner • The relationship black box of trust, equity and power • Partnership agreements • Reviewing partnerships • Developing exit strategies

We need to be able to take risks, in going out and interact with these other organisations and institutions and without that nothing is going to happen. Courage to take risk internally: people around us in the team that go out and create those relationships, they are crucial. Then there is the courage found from external partners, those we want to partner with – those who embrace the commitment of partnerships. This makes a difference.
Elijona

"We are rehauling our career framework and overhauling what it takes to get the job done now. Including interviews with staff in the field. Then workshops with leadership. Will get an idea of what's needed and get a sense of what the gaps are so we can better articulate to our staff what we want, provide the training they need and attract people to this field."
World Food Programme

You need to indoctrinate early: we look for partnering in our recruitment, we emphasise it in induction, provide refresher training, use feedback tools to check back on how we're doing. But yes, that culture of listening, being respectful, looking together at the kinds of value that can be achieved by different kinds of organisations working together. This is really important.
CARE International

Skills and Support

To partner effectively, staff need an appropriate level of partnership knowledge and skills. What level this needs to be, will depend upon the extent of their involvement in partnerships.

- For all staff, a basic awareness of what partnership means and why it is important in the organisation, will be helpful.
- For staff whose work impinges on partnerships, but who are not directly involved (such as finance and legal staff), a higher level of understanding of partnerships is essential.
- For those in the organisation who are directly managing or involved in partnerships, there are a set of "MUST-have" competencies, which are not only essential to partnership working, but will also be more widely applicable to working with others. Some of these can only be learned through training, but many can be gained through mentoring, modelling, working alongside others etc. The figure on the left sets out these partnering competencies.
- Finally, there may be a group of staff who will be acting as partnership brokers or trainers, who will need training in specialist skills, in order to help and support their colleagues. Alongside this, support and guidance will be needed by staff working in partnerships. This will include:
  - Partnering tools and guidelines
  - Direct support available where needed from experienced partnership brokers
  - Mechanisms to capture and share experiences of partnering (e.g. through a community of practitioners

Partnering Culture

Finally, an organisational culture which supports partnering is essential to under-pin the other elements. This is likely to include:

- A humility over what can be achieved alone, and a willingness to reach out to work with others to achieve goals
- Encouragement to risk trying out new approaches to achieve the mission with an acceptance that with risk can come failure
- Tenacity, drive and courage
- A commitment to enter into partnerships on the basis of equity, transparency and mutual benefit
- An ability to share decision-making and work for the benefit of the partnership as a whole
- An innovative and creative approach to finding new solutions.

ANNEX 2

Some implications of country context on partnering

When it comes to partnering, context is everything. The potential for different types of partnerships will be influenced by the context within a country. While each country is unique, the following considerations will often be relevant:

Political stability

Development partnerships involving the public sector benefit from stable, consistent government. A major risk to partnerships generally is the loss of key champions, supporters and implementers. When governments change, priorities may change, ministers may change and, in countries where the top levels of the civil service are politically appointed, the civil servants may change.

While having ministerial or even presidential championing of a partnership can be a hugely important success factor in getting a partnership going, the flip side is that if it is too closely associated with specific individuals, changing priorities or even the fact that someone else founded the initiative, may prevent future support when individuals are replaced. This can be hugely disruptive to partnerships and can even potentially kill them off.

Further, when it comes to significant or longer-term investments in a partnership by the private sector – for example in the development of infrastructure or investment in new factories – political, civil or environmental instability will be considered to be a major risk factor. In this case, partnerships with donors to de-risk investments might be appropriate. For major long-term programmes, engaging parliamentarians (or councillors at city level) across the political spectrum, to build wider buy-in, can help to ensure some level of continuity even after political shifts.

Stage of development of a country

Large development institutions often classify countries according to their stage of development, with fundamentally different approaches applied according to whether a country is facing a humanitarian crisis requiring emergency responses, or whether it is in a stable, 'developing' situation where it is possible to make longer-term interventions. The implications for partnering in each context are very different. Not all organisations divide the world up in this way, but it is a highly relevant classification for some types of institutions – particularly those within the United Nations System.

Another element is whether there is a significant presence of donors or development banks – which are beginning to withdraw in certain countries, particularly in the context of an overall decline in global aid budgets. In certain middle-income countries, for example, there may in the past have been a significant development presence from certain donors or development banks, and there may be an expectation that the private sector will somehow fill the gap left by large development institutions. It is true that increasing levels of commercial activity and foreign or domestic direct investment bring tremendous social development opportunities, but these opportunities do not happen automatically. Unlike development institutions, the private sector does not have as its central mandate the protection of the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

Large foreign companies can bring a lot of negotiating power when they make investment decisions, particularly in developing countries. In order to attract these investments, governments often provide tax breaks, which can undermine the system that should be supporting and financing government expenditure. This is why we highlight business acting responsibly, inclusively and sustainably – and paying its fair share of taxes - as its first contribution to development.

Level of trust between government and business

The relationship between government and business can strongly affect the ease with which partnerships can be developed. Where levels of trust are traditionally low, significant efforts including, for example, roundtable brainstorming events, may be required to develop mutual understanding and build up the relationship and mutual understanding to the point of agreeing to co-develop partnerships. This is also where the process of partnering is so important since, when done well, it supports the gradual build-up of the quality of trust and relationship while developing, and then implementing, the partnership.

Size, formality and organisation of business

In general, the more developed an economy, the greater percentage of companies that are formal (i.e. legally registered), the greater the proportion of medium and large companies, and the more organised business tends to be. As discussed above, it may be easier to partner with larger companies – particularly on social and environmental issues – as they tend to have greater resources available, and may be able to engage on larger, and potentially more impactful, programmes. However, when it comes to inclusive business – the development of new pro-poor products and services such as micro-solar solutions – partnerships with smaller, more nimble, innovative and entrepreneurial companies might be appropriate. It can be ideal if a spin-off of a large multinational company can engage in a multi-stakeholder partner. This brings the agility of a small organisation whilst having access to key competencies and resources of the large company.

Industry representative organisations, chambers of commerce etc. can be extremely useful, both as a route via which to engage individual companies, and as partners in themselves – for example in improving standards in supply chains across a whole industry. Business organisations will also often already have strong connections with government, for example through public-private dialogue forums, and these intermediary organisations can be seen as trusted interlocutors – though in some cases there may be concerns about real or imagined lobbying activities or hidden agendas.

Strength of Civil Society

In countries where civil society is weak, it can be challenging to find civil society organisations that are sufficiently formalised to engage strongly in partnerships – either as co-implementers or as legitimate representatives of communities. Financial resources may be required to support CSOs to play a full role in the development of partnerships and so ensure inclusion and sufficient engagement with communities. In cases where there is little or no organised civil society, it may be necessary to support the creation of new organisations, or even work with individuals.

In certain contexts, civil society might be very divided – even when they work on the same issues – not least because of competition to gain resources from donors. There is a need for more collective action from civil society to ensure adequate representation, but there are not many incentives for this to happen.

Also, civil society may be quite critical of the government, or business, or the UN system, so they do not want to partner. Political challenges and divides can also undermine partnerships, as can legal issues such as LGBTI, women's sexual and reproductive health rights, age of consent for children to get access to health services and so on: these contextual factors also need to be understood and taken on board when developing partnerships so that each partner's position and constraints are also acknowledged.

Religious factors also come into play – for instance the role of women in certain faith based communities, when engaging with and responding to the needs of communities, the bigger partners (who might be international) may not understand all the ground work that needs to be done to engage and actually get the partnership started – so this is fundamental to help with managing expectations all round.

ANNEX 3

Partnerships for transformational development

As the old saying goes, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach that man to fish and he eats for a lifetime."[11] Of course, the aphorism is too simplistic to reflect the complexity of the real world. It could only work if the man happens to: live by a thriving lake with a fishstock so sustainable it's able to support the needs of all the people who have been taught to fish; be able to afford to purchase and upkeep the necessary equipment to be able to fish; have the time to be able to spend fishing while also holding down a job that brings sufficient income for his family; have a security net of family or community-based support which would feed him when he is sick or old and cannot fish; and have refrigeration or other means of preservation for the weeks when the lake is too stormy to fish. And he must really, **really** like eating fish.

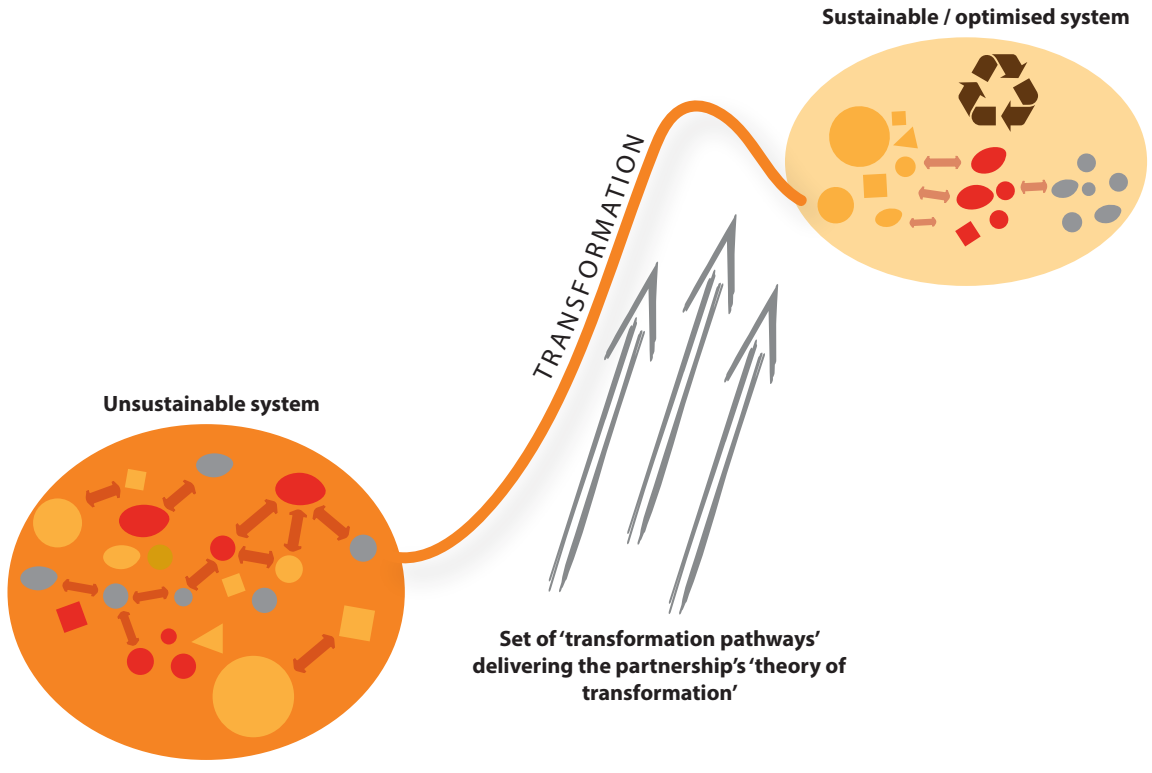
International development is littered with examples where simplistic solutions to complex problems fail to deliver lasting change: schools being built to improve education only to find there aren't sufficient teachers to teach in them; training up teachers in rural areas only to find they migrate to the city where opportunities are brighter.

Systems approaches appreciate that we live in a complex, interconnected world (a 'system'). They attempt to model one defined part of the overall system, understand the variety of complex, interconnected entities and factors within it, and use a range of levers to adjust different aspects of the system simultaneously and adaptively.

System transformation aims to use these levers to shift a system from an **unsustainable** (in economic, social or natural resource usage terms) situation to a **sustainable** (or at least more sustainable), ongoing situation. In other words, it attempts to tackle the underlying causes and leave behind a self-sustaining, resilient legacy where little or no further action or ongoing external inputs are necessary.

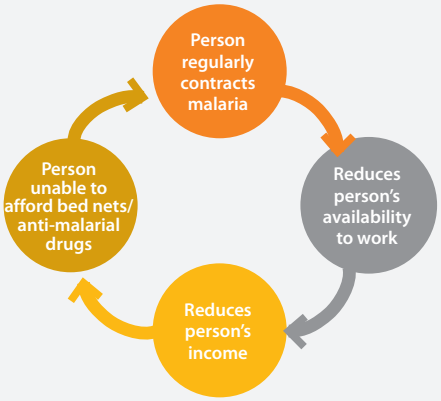
By their nature, multi-stakeholder partnerships are able to bring together a formidable set of essential levers - from policy and regulation to behavioural influence, from scalable commercial approaches to capacity developmen - which can deliver a set of 'transformation pathways' able to shift the system.

Visual representation of a system transformation



11. A similar analogy, in animated form, has been made by Duncan Green: http://how-change-happens.com/resource/systems-thinking/

Simple system transformation example



Unsustainable situation: A person regularly contracts malaria because they cannot afford bed nets/anti-malarial drugs. This reduces their availability to work, and therefore their income, which means they cannot afford the bed nets/anti-malarial drugs.

Sustainable situation: A person is sufficiently healthy to work full-time, and so has sufficient income to afford bed nets/anti-malarial drugs to keep them healthy.

Approaches to transformation

1. **Non-scalable, non-transformational, 'beneficiary' approach:** NGO purchases and distributes bed nets, and makes anti-malaria drugs available for free to anyone who gets sick;

2. **Medium term transformation:** Create a micro-loan system for anti-malaria medicine, so that anyone who gets ill has immediate access to medicine to avoid missing work, meaning they can afford to pay off the micro-loans over time. It could be delivered through a partnership with major employers, the latter pump-priming the system in their workplaces, motivated by the incentive of reducing absenteeism;

3. **Long term transformation:** Workers pay a percentage of their salary into a well-functioning social security system which provides universal health coverage.

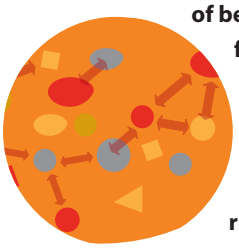
Transforming a system requires significant energy and resources, usually over a considerable period of time. It also usually requires collective action among a wide group of partners who are willing to co-develop and commit to a collective vision. In some cases, transformation attempts can fail entirely, particularly where there is strong inertia or opposition to change.

However, **once transformation has taken place, the benefits (the difference between the system operating sustainably and unsustainably) will continue to accrue indefinitely.** For example, Europe's switch from using incandescent (filament) lights to LED lights took a huge investment, including the political investment (regulations to outlaw incandescent lights), research investment to develop new technologies, business investment to develop new factories, adjustment of whole supply chains, new marketing materials and consumer acceptance. However, the benefits (notably massive reduction in electricity usage for lights) accrue every year, with no significant further investment required. Hence, the initial investment required becomes smaller and smaller in comparison with the benefits gained.

What is a system?

A system can be modelled as a set of entities (or nodes) that are interconnected in various different ways.

In social systems, these entities might be individuals, organisations, communities (each with their own set of behaviours, capacities, financial capabilities, power/influence, and knowledge/ data, level of inertia, appetite for risk-taking etc.). They are interconnected in any number of ways: through trading (exchanging money for goods or services) or employment, through community and social interaction, through influence, through knowledge exchange, through physical infrastructure, through the payment of taxes in return for public services such as education and health etc.



A supply chain, for example, can be thought of as a system connecting companies selling 'inputs' – such as seed and fertilizer – to farmers, to consolidators, to manufacturers, to supermarkets, to purchasers.

Of course, no system sits in isolation, but is contained within – and is impacted by – its environment: the physical infrastructure in which it sits (including transport, water, energy); further afield, the institutions, laws, regulations and societal / cultural norms in which the whole operates; and then finally inside the natural environment (oceans, air, water etc.). The edge of the system is sometimes referred to as the 'system boundary', and the 'boundary conditions' are those aspects of the overall environment that impact the system.

Every system is interconnected with countless other systems (a household could be considered as a system, interconnected physically with the rest of the street, which is connected to a whole town) and it is somewhat arbitrary where one draws the system boundaries. The wider one draws the boundaries (i.e. zooming out to have more of a bird's eye view) the greater the complexity and challenge of action. But if the system boundaries are drawn too tightly, they may not include essential external elements that impact the smaller system so greatly that it prevents it from transforming sustainably. The example above, of training up teachers in rural areas only to have them move to the city for higher wages, illustrates the risks of focusing on a system that is too small.

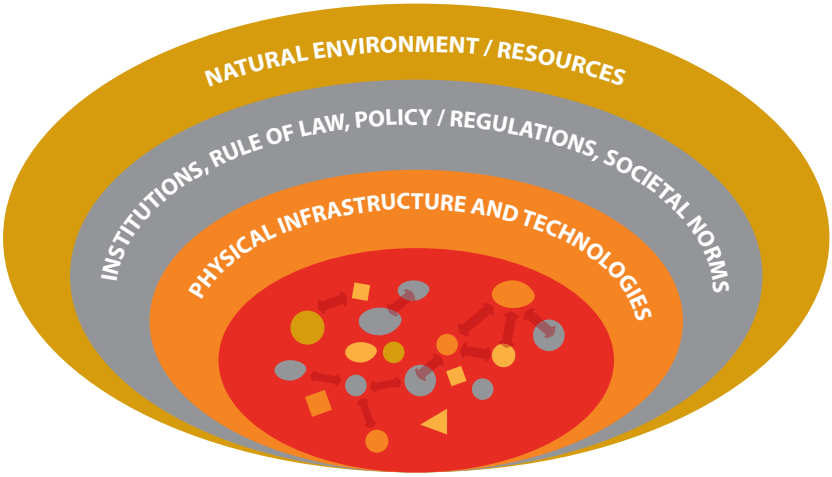
When planning system change it is important to choose the smallest system you believe can be sustainably transformed and then, as you implement action, to be highly aware of issues outside of the system that are affecting it, and be able to expand the system to incorporate those elements as required.

Most societal systems are complex, developing organically over time, based on and responding to changes within the boundary conditions around them.

For example, early settlements would always be built near a source of water, often rivers, which could also provide transport links. As infrastructure and transport technologies developed, settlements could be built further away from direct water sources. As another example, cities were originally quite limited in the density of population due to outbreaks of disease. The building of sewerage system infrastructure changed the boundary conditions, allowing far higher density of population of people to reside, and accelerating urbanization.

Adjusting boundary conditions is an important lever for system transformation.

A system, made up of interconnected 'nodes' (people, organisations, communities) sitting within three levels of the environment in which it has developed and runs. The 'boundary conditions' are all those influences from the environment which affect the system.



ANNEX 3



Magritte's La Clairvoyance – system transformation requires the ability to envision what a future sustainable end state could look like.

For more on the monitoring, review and iteration required for transformational development, go to Building Block 4.4, page 58.

Future vision approach to system transformation

1 Planning

a. Understand the base issue and map the key stakeholders;

b. Bring stakeholders together to understand as fully as possible how the system is working currently including interconnections, incentives and power dynamics;

c. Undertake a visioning exercise: based on the information collectively available, what does an optimal scenario for a feasible, sustainable future state look like? What is the ongoing value that would be created in comparison to the current situation?

d. What are the blockages to transformation? Who loses out, and how much power do they have to prevent it? Which vulnerable stakeholders need to be supported?

e. Using the powerful levers MSPs can bring (see below), what are the different **transformation pathways** that together can deliver the transformation? What is the theory of change / 'theory of transformation'?

f. What are the likely costs of that transformation in comparison with the ongoing value created? How can it be funded?

2 Implementing

a. Engage and build up the set of key partners with the necessary resources and instruments; begin to implement the set of transformation pathways;

b. Constantly monitor progress along the transformation pathways towards delivering the desired effects;

c. Regularly bring together all the stakeholders to check that the desired sustainable end state remains the optimal approach, or adapt as appropriate;

d. Adapt and iterate the transformation pathways and/or add new pathways as required to take account of unforeseen aspects (including situations involving vulnerable stakeholders losing out, or when it becomes clear that a wider system will need to be considered) ;

3 Measuring

a. Measuring the changes on the system and the ongoing impact the final system transformation is currently, or projected to be, delivering.

Levels of complexity

Transforming or rewiring systems involves using a range of levers to adjust the different elements of a system through a set of 'transformation pathways' so that the final configuration and dynamics is stable and operates in a more sustainable and beneficial configuration. The approach taken – and in particular the level of granularity of design and action – will be dependent on the level of complexity of the system to be transformed.

Systems can range on a spectrum from simple, through complicated, complex, and up to chaotic[11] – depending on the level of confidence in terms of modelling the system, and how it might adapt to any course of action.

Simple	Complicated	Complex	Chaotic
A simple system has few, and uncoupled, variables to consider in modelling, and we can easily make confident predictions about how to improve the system. For example, a train track with a single train that goes back and forth between two stations is a simple system. We know if we purchase a more powerful train, people and goods will get between stations in less time.	A complicated system might be the train itself. It has thousands of moving parts that have carefully been designed by engineers to work together. While there are obviously 100s of variables, we can model them and diagnose and fix problems, or design a way to increase the train's performance, for example through a more powerful engine, strengthening the engine housing, improving the brakes etc.	A complex system is one that has so many variables and moving parts, and/or so many different interactions, that we can no longer fully model individual elements, and cannot predict with confidence precisely what will happen when any specific intervention is made. The train driver's body is an example of a complex system.	A chaotic system is one which is so complex, with so many moving parts, multiple different (coupled/ non-linear) interconnections, and often with an unstable environment (e.g. in fragile situations), it becomes impossible to predict what any course of action will result in. Undertaking the same action at different times might result in different effects, and it is more or less impossible to apply good practice from one system to another. A country's entire mobility system might be an example of a chaotic system.
High confidence in ability to map the existing system, design a future sustainable state, and the pathways to get there. Granular level action (e.g. building the capacity of individuals) can deliver a degree of system transformation. High confidence that the designed transformation pathways will deliver the desire results.	**Designed transformation pathways will need to be constantly monitored and adapted based on the reality of the impact they are having, and whether additional transformation pathways are required**		**No confidence** in ability to properly map the existing system, design a future sustainable state, or pathways to get there. Granular level action not appropriate. Instead, need to work on the **boundary conditions** – create incentives so strong and irresistible that the system organically transforms itself in alignment with the incentives. The way the system adapts to the change in boundary conditions needs to be monitored to ensure it is delivering the desired results, with changes made as necessary.

11. Dave Snowden's 'Cynefin' model. Cynefin is Welsh word meaning 'habitat'. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynefin_framework

The approach given above involves a step-by-step process of understanding the current system, visioning what the future, more sustainable system looks like, and designing the interventions/ transformation pathways (i.e. the sets of activities) that deliver a shift in different aspects of the system to move from the current to the future system.

Moving along the spectrum from simple to highly complex/chaotic, we see that as complexity increases, so does the need to deliver more, and more, complex transformation pathways in order to account for the different aspects of the system that need to be addressed. The greater complexity, the less confidence we can have that the future state we have envisioned is the optimum feasible state, or that the transformation pathways are the right ones or are sufficient.

Trying to transform more complex systems feels like a game of 'whack-a-mole' – as you deliver a set of interventions to deliver on the specific challenges you've modelled, so new issues arise requiring a further set of interventions. This is why highly iterative approaches are essential, adjusting depending on what is learned. With the systems approach, part of the process involves learning where the boundaries are and being able to test different actions, and iterating towards a solution.

At some point along the spectrum, it all becomes too complex, too chaotic, for there to be any confidence that any set of actions on the individual parts of the system will together deliver the desired transformation. Under these circumstances, a different approach is required: to adjust the boundary conditions of the system – the three layers around the system – in a way that creates so strong an incentive that the system itself (and all players within it) have no choice but to adjust and adapt to the new boundary conditions.

Such boundary conditions change could potentially be: taxation/ regulation (e.g. the phasing out of ozone layer-damaging CFCs through an international ban, or the creation of a national minimum wage); a cultural/attitudinal shift (e.g. drink-driving becomes a social taboo in many countries where previously it may have been acceptable); a natural phenomenon (e.g. COVID-19 requiring a complete shift in how society operates, or the running-out of water around Cape Town leading to fundamental shifts towards the massive reduction in the amount of water used); or in some cases, a new technology can be so effective that it can utterly disrupt a system (e.g. invention and availability of cheap solar power, or the internet). The incentive must be so great that all the things that might have prevented the system from transforming to date (e.g. the cost of transformation, lack of essential technologies, politics, popular indifference, or deliberate blocking attempts by the powerful) become minor hurdles to be overcome, rather than impenetrable barriers.

In some cases, multi-stakeholder partnerships might need to use a range of approaches, including both those that affect the boundary conditions (in order to build the foundations and motivation for transformation) and those that capacitate, connect and reorient the different entities within the system. For example, the Scale Up Nutrition partnership focuses both on advocacy – ensuring that nutrition becomes a political priority at the highest level in each country where it works – as well as supporting system transformation for better nutrition, for example through micronutrient fortification of food.[17]

How system transformation can be resourced

The resources (financial and otherwise) to transform a system may come from one or more sources:

1. The resources are contributed by the partners involved as they see the significant benefits that the transformed system will bring them; [Note: may require loan financing of some kind];
2. Investment made by government/ grant funding by donors/loans by development banks as the transformed system will provide ongoing benefit to the public good;
3. The transformed system includes a direct revenue stream that can be used to cover the cost of transformation (e.g. building of infrastructure such as new toll roads or energy distribution);
4. The savings from the transformed system (e.g. reduced cost of water to residents, or reduced health costs due to a healthier population) can somehow be monetized (e.g. through innovation bonds) to pay for the transformation.

17. Scaling Up Nutrition is both a system transformation partnership and a 'better traditional development' partnership, with its work to coordinate the actions of ministries, civil society, the UN system, donors and business.

Chaotic system transformation example

The decarbonization of society, essential to reduce the degree of climate breakdown the world is increasingly suffering, is an example of a shift in a system that is far too complex to tackle by working with individual entities. While tragedies such as the 2020 fires in Australia contribute to a cultural/public attitudinal shift, carbon is so built into the fabric of people's lives that the personal choices they are able to make (e.g. around flying or eating meat) can only reduce their carbon footprints by a small fraction.

The only way to transform to a zero or negative carbon system is to create an incentive so huge that the system and all the entities contained within it – business, individuals, governments etc.– adapt organically over time, through a myriad of pathways that could not necessarily be predicted or designed. And it has to be done at just the right pace: push too hard and too fast against a system, and it doesn't have time to adapt and will instead collapse or push back; push too slowly, and it will take too long for the world to decarbonize, leading to untold suffering from climate breakdown.

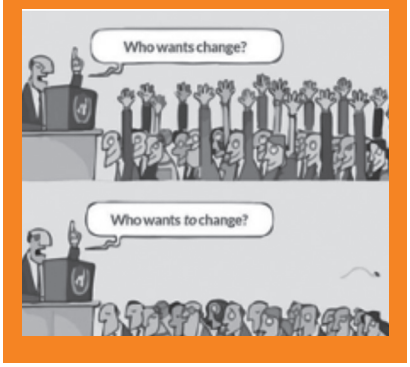
An incentive that may be sufficient to shift the system is a global taxation on carbon emissions, a tax that increases over time to a point where the tax from carbon emission is sufficient to cover the cost of its capture. If implemented well, the process would give certainty to business over the future cost of carbon and allow them time to invest in decarbonizing their operations and products, including through the development of new technologies. The tax revenue would be used to ensure social equity during the transition, helping the system shift as quickly as possible, accelerating the existing drive towards renewable energy, and building the new infrastructure required to live low-carbon lives.

A clear example of where a sufficiently strong incentive forced all parts of a society to organically adapt and change around a common cause was the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Whether the threat of climate chaos will be enough to do the same will likely come down to strength of leadership.

Blockages to system transformation

Inertia

One challenge to system transformation is inertia. Any transformation will require significant investment by multiple organisations to do things differently. Most entities are generally quite risk averse and considerable efforts might be needed both to increase the incentive to change, and to help make change the easy option, and as risk-free as possible. Persuading smallholder farmers, for example, to start purchasing unfamiliar higher-yield biofortified seeds instead of their regular seeds may require significant initial subsidy, or a promise to purchase the crop at a set price, irrespective of how well the seeds grow. After all, what might seem like an obvious move from the outside, may feel like a risk too far for those living life precariously.



Further, systems tend to push back against interventions and even if apparently 'transformed', they require significant time to 'bed in', allowing the wider system to adapt to the new reality. Without that embedding, they will often fall back to the original.

'Winners' and 'losers'

In many cases, system transformation, while aiming to maximise sustainable development and benefits to all, will result in some actors – the beneficiaries of the old unsustainable system – losing out in some way.

In cases where the poor or vulnerable might be negatively affected, it is important that transformation programmes ensure that such people are empowered as a result of the process, for example through the provision of alternative livelihoods.

In cases where those actors are benefiting at the expense of society or the environment, a system transformation that reduces that benefit might be considered an acceptable outcome. For example, if the system transformation aims to reduce the amount of unhealthy fast food eaten, fast food companies will be required to adapt their business model, potentially losing out on sales.

Poor enforcement

Where rule of law or enforcement is weak, regulatory / taxation leavers may be ineffectual in practice and so alternative levers may be required.

The powerful levers MSPs can bring to bear

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are a powerful mechanism to achieve transformation, as they can collectively bring to bear a whole range of different levers either supplied by organisations from different sectors, or created through partnership (see the section above on value creation). The levers below range from those that can change the boundary conditions (with the system within it adjusting appropriately) to those that aim to re-engineer the system:

1. **Policy / regulation / taxation:** *Governments* using these levers can force/influence how markets and businesses operate, and the choices people make. E.g. banning single-use plastic, or taxing environmentally unfriendly production can shift the balance of costs to a point where environmentally sustainable products are the most economically viable; further, regulatory shift can enable transformations such as energy transition and open up innovative investment.

2. **Infrastructure development:** Developing the energy, water and transport infrastructure *(government and companies)* directly creates new opportunities (e.g. transport and water infrastructure supports new agriculture, transport links opens up investment in previously isolated towns)

3. **Advocacy and balancing power:** *Civil society* of all kinds, and even *business,* can i) engage and empower people to push for change from government or from companies and/or ii) to help rebalance power away from those that become too powerful, or that use their power only in their own interests;

4. **Good governance and institution-building:** Often supported by *bilateral donors* or *the multilateral system,* capacity development of public institutions to more effectively (and democratically) deliver their mandate;

5. **Influence / behaviour change:** Shifting behaviours through the power of marketing (*business*), the range of media (mainly *media companies*) and through advocacy / education (*consumer groups, faith groups, schools, NGOs* etc.) can have a major impact on everything from consumer purchase choice (e.g. pro-environmental products) to healthier lifestyles;

6. **Cultural norms:** Often driven by *civil society movements,* changes to social and cultural norms and attitudes can shift societies e.g. on the acceptance of gender-based violence; or corruption;

7. **Innovative technologies and digitalization:** New technologies, developed or implemented at scale most often by *companies* – from the internet to solar powered desalination – can open up huge potential for transformation; digitalization can create a step-change in accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness;

8. **Commercially viable / inclusive business / market-based approaches:** Overwhelmingly provided by the *private sector*, whether traditional companies or social enterprises, such approaches have the potential to scale since they are economically sustainable by their very nature and can attract investment; engaging small businesses in supply chains is a potent approach to bring people out of poverty;

9. **Standards:** The creation of recognized standards (e.g. around sustainability) (*all sectors*), can be a driver for change in institutional practice and behaviours; it can support continuous improvement and influence purchasing decisions through differentiated branding (e.g. Fairtrade);

10. **Access to evidence, information and data:** Data from both usual (*government* and *academia*) and unusual sources (e.g. market data produced by *businesses*, population movement tracking from mobile phone *companies*), along with (often *academic)* evidence supports development of new approaches and more effective targetted action;

11. **Investment / access to affordable finance:** Investment (from *public, private,* or blended**)** can be critical for product or market development, infrastructure development or major change; innovative finance (from *foundations, NGOs* or *private)* can enable a transformation in public sector practice and results; Affordable finance (from the *private sector* (banks), *NGOs, donors*), allows people nd companies to invest in growth and opportunities;

12. **Education and capacity development:** Improving education *(public sector)*, skills and capabilities (*public, private, NGO*) can create a potent new workforce, or enable people to take advantage of new opportunities;

13. **Organisation:** Bringing people or organisations into larger groups (usually supported by *NGOs*) can result in multiple synergies including economies of scale and increased power (e.g. smallholder farmers coming together as a cooperative with more purchasing / borrowing / selling power);

14. **Human and community capital and ingenuity:** *Communities* can bring the powerful resource of their own time and energy, e.g. in construction to build water infrastructure in their village, or create enterprises (e.g. community-run childcare facilities, solar energy rental, primary healthcare entrepreneurs) that deliver essential services in different ways.

System transformation in practice: Agua para todos*

Original unsustainable situation:
In many of the suburban areas of Cochabamba, Bolivia, residents did not have household pipeline access to water. Water supply was exceedingly expensive, with households individually buying water from commercial water trucks. In addition, the water was stored in family-owned barrels – yet these were frequently rusty, therefore diminishing water quality and posing a health risk. While it was feasible for the public water company, SEMAPA, to bring the primary distribution – the main pipeline – to the suburban area, there was no point without the secondary water distribution system into people's homes. The sheer cost of building the secondary water distribution system in any conventional way ruled that out as a possibility.

Partnership
The partnership brought together SEMAPA; a water pipe manufacturing company, Plastiforte; the residents, organised into 'Water Committees' of 200 households; and a micro-credit and capacity-building organisation, Pro-Habitat.

Planned solution
Working with Plastiforte and Pro-Habitat, the Water Committees were trained to build and manage new secondary water distribution systems, through small enterprises. Plastiforte developed new technologies to simplify and reduce the cost of the infrastructure. The cost of constructing the secondary distribution system is paid by the users themselves, with micro-credit loans from Pro-Habitat, paid back over time with the savings they make on the cost of potable water. While in the initial phase, the water is still bought commercially from a private supplier, the positioning of the secondary water distribution has been agreed with SEMAPA, and the building of a main pipeline connected to it is included in SEMAPA's development plans.

Final state sustainable solution
Residents have access to water at considerably lower cost than previously, as they can buy the water in bulk from the commercial companies (reducing its end cost by half). The secondary water distribution system is managed by commercially-viable community-based SMEs, keeping maintenance costs low, providing livelihoods and ensuring long term sustainability.

At some point the distribution systems should be connected to the main pipe distribution, significantly lowering costs in the future.

Levers applied

- **Organisation; human capital:** The local people organised together as Water Committees and became partners in the solution – using their own human resources to deliver much of the work and reduce otherwise impossibly high construction costs;
- **Capacity development:** Developing the Water Committees' capacity to build, manage and maintain the distribution system;
- **Regulation:** The government needed to change the regulations to allow the Water Committees to own and manage the water distribution system;
- **Infrastructure development:** By SEMAPA extending its main pipeline to these areas, the cost savings on water become even more significant, making it more and more viable for other communities to invest in the creation of their own community distribution systems;
- **Technological innovation:** The plastic pipe manufacturing company, Plastiforte, created new, affordable technologies for the secondary water distribution system;
- **Access to affordable finance:** The micro-financing from Pro-Habitat was essential to allow the residents to purchase the equipment and build the community distribution systems;
- **Commercially viable approach:** The management of the distribution system is undertaken by commercially-viable local enterprises to ensure sustainability.

* Please note, this is a simplified version for illustrative purposes

Tools

TOOL 1	Stakeholder mapping	80
TOOL 2	Partnering agreement template	81
TOOL 3	Internal prospective partnership assessment	82
TOOL 4	Value assessment framework	84
TOOL 5	Troubleshooting	86
TOOL 6	Managing power imbalances	88
TOOL 7	Partnering healthcheck	91

Tool 1: Stakeholder mapping

USE
To identify the organisations and individuals to be engaged in / taken account of by a potential partnership project

PARTNERING PHASE
Early in the scoping phase

Stakeholders can be defined as:

- Those whose interests are affected by the issue or those whose activities strongly affect the issue;
- Those who possess resources of all kinds (financial, influence, expertise) needed for strategy formulation and implementation;
- Those who control relevant implementation "instruments" (usually the public sector).

The stakeholder mapping exercise provides a systematic approach to identifying all interested / interesting parties and begins to help to distinguish the roles each of these might take in relation to a new partnership project.

Initially, the information available will be limited and the mappings will need to be adjusted as more intelligence comes in.

1 MAPPING 1: Initial sweep

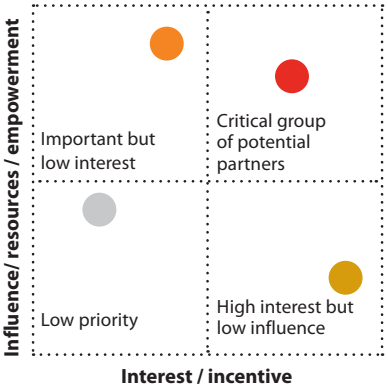
In the first stage, organisations and individuals from across the sectors are identified and mapped in a grid similar to that below, with their specific interest detailed in the relevant box:

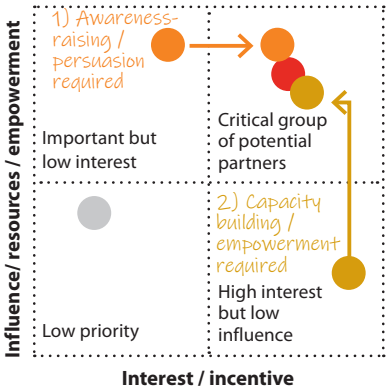
Stakeholder	Affecting	Affected	Resources	Instrument
Name 1				
Name 2				

2 MAPPING 2: Influence against interest

Stakeholders are mapped within a 'Boston Square' to capture the degree to which each stakeholder has resources and influence over the relevant issues against their level of interest / incentives to engage.

Ideal partners will be in the top right quadrant with both the resources/influence and a high interest in the objectives of the partnership. However, it is rarely so clear cut. There may be cases where: 1) significant awareness-raising is required to turn a highly-influential but low-interest stakeholder into an interested potential partner or 2) significant capacity development to turn a stakeholder with high interest but low influence into a stronger partner.





3 MAPPING 3: Roles and degree of engagement

Multiple different organisations and individuals might play roles in a partnership project, but not necessarily as partners. This mapping of stakeholders, begins to outline the potential roles by classifying each stakeholder.

Role	Description
Partner	A formal part of the partnership, bringing their resources to the table (although they could be funded to do so), and part of the co-design and co-decision-making of the partnership. None of the other categories are formally partners.
Contractor	An individual or organisation contracted to provide services.
Influencer / champion	Someone influential who is willing to use their social or political capital to advance the partnership, e.g. through engaging or influencing key stakeholders / partners, making connections to funders, speaking at major events etc.
Amplifier	An organisation with an interest and channels for dissemination of generated learning or knowledge.
Funder	A financial supporter of the partnership
Knowledge / data provider	An organisation that can provide key knowledge, information, insights or data to a partnership.
Regulator	Usually governmental, the regulator sets the rules in which a partnership may operate, and may need to adjust those rules for the partnership to thrive
Beneficiary	Those who benefit from the partnership but not considered as partners. Wherever possible, and almost certainly in system transformation partnerships, 'beneficiaries' should be considered as partners and be extensively consulted.
Potential inhibitor	Those who have the power potentially to inhibit a partnership from being effective. This may, for example, be those that risk losing out from the results of transformational development.

Tool 2: Partnering agreement template

USE
A template including the essential defining elements of the partnership to be agreed by partners

PARTNERING PHASE
End of scoping and building phase

There will be different forms of agreement related to a partnership:

- **Partnering agreement** – non-legally binding, agreement of intent to capture the value, vision and spirit of a collaboration and enshrine the principles of partnership
- **Contracts** – legally-binding agreements, sometimes bi-lateral and usually including financial flows and accountabilities required by funding rules (may be similar to service contracts)
- **Workplan** - constantly iterating project plan with activities, timelines, clear, measurable outputs / outcomes and performance indicators

Partnering agreements will likely be iterative documents, adding and adapting as more information is known and understanding is built up.

Who?

- Short description of partners (including legal status, overall mission), identification of representatives of each partner organisation

Why?

- Vision statement
- Overarching drivers / reasons for involvement of each of the partners
- Objectives of the partnership
- Demonstrable VALUE created through partnering
- How each partner hopes to gain from the partnership

What?

- Mission statement
- Context and target of the partnership activities
- Initial high-level theory of change and expected activities
- What each partner brings to the table / resource commitments
- Roles and responsibilities of each of the partners
- External resources
- Overall measures of success

How?

- Governance / accountability structure including decision-making principles
- Operational structure (coordination / management arrangements / secretariat) and internal communications
- Financial arrangements [details may be in a separate contract]
- Measures to strengthen partner capacity to implement commitments where necessary
- Timeframe and procedure for ongoing partnership review and revision
- Metrics for tracking and measuring partnership performance against partnership and each individual partners' objectives
- Sustainability strategy for sustaining partnership 'outcomes'

What if?

- Risks / threats and mitigation
- Grievance mechanism to resolve differences
- Rules for individual partners to leave or join
- Exit ('moving on') strategy for partnership as a whole

External communications and IP

- Rules for branding (using own, each other's) and other rules for the public profile of the partnership;
- Intellectual property and confidentiality rules
- Protocols for communicating externally

Charter

- Agreed underlying principles / values of the partnership and partners
- Code of conduct / expected behaviours in the partnership

See page 53 for an example of what might be included in the Charter

Tool 3: Internal prospective partnership assessment

USE
To assess the value, risks and implications of a partnership opportunity and inform a go/no-go decision

PARTNERING PHASE
Scoping and building, prior to developing a partnership agreement

While partnerships have the potential to create significant value for an organisation, they are an important commitment that should not be entered into lightly. This tool is used to help organisations assess the value, risks and implications of a partnership in order that they can confidently go ahead, or understand what further information / negotiation / internal alignment is required.

All but the simplest partnering is iterative in approach, with more and more relevant information becoming available as the partnership takes shape. Hence this tool is a living document, updating and adjusting as the details become better known.

The tool is in two parts: an information sheet to capture the current knowledge, and an at-a-glance checklist to see where the partnership is in terms of the criteria the partnership prospect must pass before going ahead.

Checklist

Not acceptable | **May become acceptable with adjustments** | **Acceptable** | **Insufficient information**

Area	Assessment	Outstanding issues / further information required
1 Acceptable partner (including due diligence)		
2 Partnership fits with organisational mandate and is strategic		
3 Partnership provides significant value / impact		
4 Costs acceptable in relation to value gained		
5 Implications are acceptable		
6 Risks are sufficiently low or well mitigated		
7a Sufficient financial resources to implement		
7b Sufficient internal resources / capacities available		
7c Sufficient buy-in from relevant staff / divisions / country offices		
8 Clear measure of success for the organisation		
Decision status as of date:		**Decline** | **Continue to pursue** | **Go ahead**

Prospective partnership information

Overview

- Context and drivers
- Vision, mission, objectives and activities
- Value-add of partnering
- Non-partnership alternative approach (if applicable)
- Expected role of organisation

Outstanding issues and next steps

- What decisions / negotiation / information is required?
- What specific further actions are recommended, by when and by whom?

1. Prospective partner(s)

- Partners' interests / priorities are sufficiently aligned with ours
- Partners pass due diligence assessment
- Partners' values / ethos are sufficiently compatible and brand association (e.g. logos appearing together) is acceptable
- Previous experience of partner to date have been positive

2. Fit

- With organisational mandate
- With organisational strategy
- With current programmes / obligations / other partnerships

3. Benefits / value

Mission value:

- Contribution towards mission / impact for ultimate beneficiaries

Organisational value:

- Increased capacity to deliver
- Increased technical expertise / knowledge
- Additional resources / funds
- Creativity / innovation / sustainability
- Positioning / visibility / positive branding / reputational
- Increased social and political capital
- Influence
- Access to new networks / constituencies
- Making the organisation increasingly a 'partner of choice'

Value is balanced:

- Benefit gained by all partners is well balanced.

4. Costs

- Analysis of transaction, implementation and possible over-run cost

5. Implications

- What precedent (if any) does it set?
- Obligations / commitments being made – is there an 'exit strategy'?
- Effect on other relationships / reputation
- Accountability issues

6. Risks

Note that the risks below are risks relating to engaging with partnership itself. There will also be risks related to project delivery.

- Loss of programmatic focus
- Duplication of efforts
- Overlong time investment
- Financial implications
- Lack of sufficient capacity to deliver
- Empowering others without legitimacy or interference with natural systems / distorting the market
- Compromise neutrality or independence / reputational issues
- Loss of autonomy on key issues
- Risk to existing relationships
- Implied endorsement

7. Organisational capacity / buy-in

- Funding sources for implementation
- Internal buy-in from internal senior champion plus relevant staff / offices
- Sufficient resource that can be committed
- Sufficient internal skills and competencies to deliver

8. Measures of success

- Clear measures of success from the organisation's perspective

Ideally, all partners would follow a similar approach, using this tool to guide them through their own internal partnership journey, and providing at-a-glance clarity over what extra information or negotiation is required.

Once all the checkboxes are green, the partner should be ready to sign! If any are red, the partnership should not go ahead - or at least not without very careful consideration of the risks and senior-level sign-off.

Tool 4: Value assessment framework

USE	PARTNERING PHASE
To systematically assess what value is / might be created through a partnership approach, at what cost	All phases

PARTNERSHIP AS A WHOLE

Potential sources of partnership value creation: Collaborative Advantage

1 **Complementarity: Bringing together essential complementary resources**
Impact delivered by a complete, workable solution impossible without the full set of key resources

2 **Systemic transformation: Harmonization / coordination of key system actors' resources / instruments**
Transformation of a system leads to a steady- state, solution delivering ongoing value and benefits.

3 **Standards: Creating collective legitimacy and knowledge**
Developing and disseminating norms, standards and policies to raise standards / create a level playing field across a whole sector, enabling ongoing impact.

4. **Innovation: Combining diverse resources, thinking, approaches**
Creating new, more effective approaches, technologies, services and/or products with the greater impact they will deliver.

5. **Holism: Convening holistic range of actors across traditional silos**
More workable, context-appropriate, cross- cutting and implementable approaches increasing the quality and breadth of impact.

6. **Shared learning: Creating a mechanism for collective learning and capability- building**
Raising the level of knowledge, expertise and capacity widely, leading to more effective practice and greater impact.

7. **Shared risk: Collectively sharing risk of major investments / implementation**
Companies, banks, donors are willing and able to make large investments or loans jointly, or NGOs willing to co-deliver major scale programmes, otherwise too risky.

8. **Synergy: Aligning programmes / resources and cooperating to exploit synergies**
Increasing the degree of impact from the input resources available (or achieving the desired outputs with lower input).

9. **Scale: Combining delivery capacity across geographies**
Taking successful programmes, products and approaches to scale to multiply the impact.

10. **Critical mass: Collectively providing sufficient weight of action or boldness / imperative to act**
Combining / aligning / coordinating resources to create the critical mass needed to deliver otherwise impossible outcomes / impact.

PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE AND PARTNERSHIP DIFFERENCE

Which collaborative advantage mechanisms and what additional impact (partnership difference ΔP) do we expect	How will / do we know these forms of value are being created?

Notes:

EACH INDIVIDUAL PARTNER

Potential sources of partner benefit

1. ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC MISSION		2. ORGANISATIONAL GAINS	
Direct achievement of strategic objectives For an NGO this could include delivery of specific programmatic or advocacy objectives, with direct or indirect impact on intended beneficiaries. For a company it might be gaining commercial value through new business opportunities, or to ensure the sustainability of a supply chain.	**Contribution along theory of change towards ultimate objectives** A partnership may contribute only indirectly towards an organisation's mission. For example, the partnership might support the adoption of standards or behaviours that indirectly facilitate or contribute to the achievement of a particular objective. Or it might support an enabling environment or systemic shifts that allow a problem to be tackled more effectively in the future.	**Leveraging resources** Resource gains can include financial gains in the form of funding or cost savings that can be made (for example through sharing services). Organisations might also receive non-financial material gains such as in-kind contributions of goods, services or volunteers.	**Intangible/indirect gains that improve capability for future delivery** Social or political capital; Networking and connections; Increased legitimacy; Reputational benefits; Market advantage; Influence and positioning; Knowledge and capacity building; Innovation in thinking; and Employee morale and retention

Potential sources of partner cost

TRANSACTION COSTS	IMPLEMENTATION COSTS		
Partnerships can take a significant amount of time both to develop and to manage, requiring staff time, social and political capital and some 'hard costs'	**Staff time** All staff time plus overheads / full cost recovery	**'Hard' costs** Money and other resources with a financial value (e.g. travel, office space, equipment etc.)	**Non-tangible** Social and political capital used in implementation

ORGANISATIONAL COST / BENEFIT (PER PARTNER)

Partner benefits	Partner costs

Cost / benefit analysis:

Tool 5: Troubleshooting

USE
To support partners to deal with internal partnering challenges

PARTNERING PHASE
All phases

Challenges and problems are a healthy part of any partnering journey. When dealing with such issues, the higher the degree of trust and the strength of the relationship, the more commitment there will be to finding solutions and moving forwards.

At the same time, the way that partners deal with challenges has the potential to build the relationship (and potentially results in changes that make the partnership healthier in the long run), or it may end up damaging or even destroying the collaboration.

1

Avoid a blame culture

If you believe you are partly or fully responsible for problem (e.g. you've failed to deliver on a commitment or made a mistake) accept responsibility and be transparent about it. If a problem has arisen in your partner's domain, in recognition of your respect for them, do not simply jump to blaming the partner, but keep an open mind.

2

Create common understanding of the issues involved

When something goes wrong, partners may have quite different understandings of the causes of the problem. The figure below demonstrates how it can happen. Firstly, partners may not have access to the same information, the 'common data', and so will be working from different information. Secondly, in interpreting the information, each partner will have its own 'lenses': 1) they make assumptions, thereby adding extra data (yellow) which may or may not be valid; 2) they will then have their own cultural or experiential interpretation of the (different) information, leading to different understanding.

To build common understanding involves working with your partner to together try to merge each partner 'track' of observation, interpretation and understanding as much as possible:

i. Build as much common agreement on the observable data (merging the lefthand circles);
ii. Challenge all assumptions – both theirs and yours to avoid adding in incorrect information;
iii. Understand both your and their context/experiential lenses to understand how the lenses might cause divergence of understanding;
iv. Come to a joint understanding as far as you can on the **root causes** of the problem and where you disagree, have clarity on exactly what you are disagreeing on and why (at what point your understanding diverges in the parallel tracks).

3

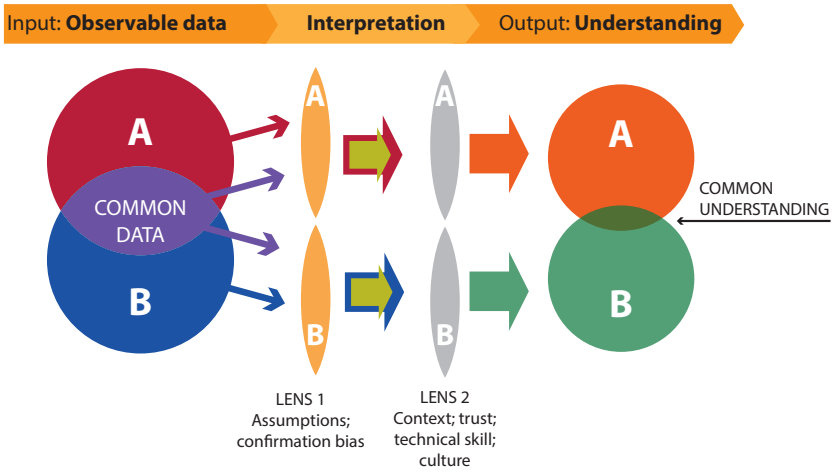
Make it a joint problem and find a solution together

A problem for one partner is a problem for the whole partnership. Even if it seems to fall squarely into the domain of one partner, there may be structural, capacity or other issues that prevent the partner from solving the problem on their own. By working on the problem together, being open, positive and forward-looking, the partners may come up with more innovative solutions, bring in additional resources or even fully redesign elements of the partnership itself in order to tackle the underlying issues.

4

Learn from the experience

Put in place measures (e.g. stronger early warning systems, communication) to avoid similar problems happening in the future.



Common partnering challenges

Challenge	Mitigation	If the problem does happen…
Ever-changing personnel: The role of individuals in representing partner organisations is critical. When individuals move away, it can mean having to rebuild the relationship from scratch, even having to again make the case for why the partnership is important to the organisation.	Spread relationships across multiple individuals, e.g. have two partner reps for each organisation, and engage a wider network of champions beyond the representative. Agree protocol to ensure proper handover as soon as change of personnel is known.	If you are the new representative: don't judge too quickly; be respectful of the history, make a purposeful effort to build up the relationship, and ask a lot of questions. If dealing with a new counterpart: you may need to bring them along the whole journey from why the partnership was set up in the first place, through how it has morphed and the value it is creating for the counterpart's organisation.
One partner not delivering: If organisations are working together for the first time, much is taken on trust. If one organisation does not deliver it compromises the investments of others.	Put in place good project management with light touch monitoring so that any issues are known early.	Understand what has led to a partner not delivering: Lack of commitment? Lack of resources? Lack of competency? External challenges? Political issues? As a partnership, together find ways to solve the issue, for example through capacity building, another partner supporting the role etc.
Global partnerships failing to deliver in-country: International partnerships negotiated at global level struggle to be implemented at country level where the level of commitment, interest and resources of the local organisations are not sufficiently in place.	Build an open and transparent culture in which partners feel able to be report if they are having challenges implementing.	If global partnerships are not delivering in a particular location, it may be necessary to consider the local partnership as an independent entity, and take the local partner actors through a full process to rebuild the partnership around their interests, capabilities, resources and desired outcomes.
Too many partners: While having more partners may eventually bring greater scale and impact, it also increases risks from complexity, cultural differences, competing timescales and demands on resources and governance challenges.	Partnerships must be based on the local context and interests.	Undertake a light touch review of the collaboration to understand where value is being created, and if it could be delivered more efficiently. Consider different governance arrangements with a smaller 'core group' of organisations taking decisions, and with the wider group playing advisory and implementing roles.

Tool 6: Managing power imbalances

USE
This tool will help partners acknowledge, identify and explore sources of power and design appropriate mechanisms to address, and actions to mitigate, problematic power imbalances within the partnership.

PARTNERING PHASE
All phases

The importance of power

As we've seen in the second Building Block, the relationship and therefore effectiveness of a partnership may be significantly impacted by power dynamics.

Imbalances of power are common, especially where partnerships involve a combination of partners of quite different size and scope, for instance, international development partners working with communities.

Further, partnerships do not exist in a vacuum but within a context (geographic, political, historical, organisational etc.) in which the power dynamics may be invisible to those unfamiliar with the context.

A power imbalance is being expressed when one partner (or a group of partners) is able to dominate decision-making or otherwise asserts power in ways that disadvantages other partners or are not in the best interest towards achieving the partnership objectives.

One of the core principles of partnering is equity: the idea that all partners are committing resources and bring something essential to a partnership, and that 'buys them a seat at the table'. And that seat brings with it a right to be part of co-creation and decision-making.

Effective partnerships centre the lived experience of those closest to the problem being addressed. This means ensuring that the relevant organisations or communities are able to fully inform the partnership's design, implementation and evaluation.

Power imbalance, when it is manifested, destroys equity and will likely cause poor partnering because:

- **It can result in poorer decision-making.** Partnership decisions should be made based on the best information and experience available. Power imbalances may result in the advice of a 'weak' partner with the best knowledge (e.g. an NGO having very close ties to a community or a particular technical specialism) not being sufficiently taken into account.
- **It reduces commitment.** If a partner feels disempowered, their level of commitment to, and willingness to invest in, the partnership will be reduced;
- **It risks unsustainable partnerships.** Partnerships are about creating value for all the partners. If power imbalances during negotiation results in a partner not gaining sufficient net value, that partner will eventually withdraw. Or if the negotiation results in one partner unfairly and disproportionately benefitting, it risks ongoing bad feeling within a partnership;
- **It may reinforce historical inequities**. Where partnerships proceed without understanding of the power dynamics underlying the status quo, the partnership impact might unreasonably perpetuate the disadvantage of marginalised groups.

Perception vs. reality

Power comes from many different sources (see the power assessment on next page): from the holding of essential resources, including funding, to formal authority.

In many cases, the **perception** of power can be enough to cause power imbalance even if in reality power is much more balanced.

For example, a government agency may be perceived externally to hold all the cards, while their staff are only too aware of their practical limitations. Similarly, community groups may be perceived as (or feel themselves to be) powerless and yet they may carry enormous moral authority and the social capital essential for a programme to be successful.

Perceived or real power imbalances may be relatively unimportant in situations where the aims of all the partners are very closely aligned but very significant where partners' aims diverge. It is also worth noting that just because an inherent power imbalance exist, it does not have to cause problems as long as it is well handled by the more powerful partners.

In most cases, having an awareness of power, and actively managing power dynamics, is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of a partnership.



This tool is structured in three steps. First it helps you to assess whether there is a problematic power dynamic within a partnership. Second, it helps to identify where the problem lies by assessing sources of power across partners. Finally, it offers mitigating actions.

1. Are we suffering from a problem power imbalance?

The assessment below seeks to check if there is an actual or perceived power imbalance being manifested and causing problems.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	Yes/No	NOTES
Do you feel the partnership unfairly skewed to deliver benefits in favour of one of the partners?		
Do you feel one partner is dominating decision-making of the partnership?		
Do you feel any partner's points of view (particularly the voices of those closest to the problem) are not being properly heard / considered?		
Do any partners show signs of being disempowered? E.g. not attending, or keeping quiet at, meetings		
Are any of the partners 'doing their own thing', rather than as part of the partnership?		

2. Balance of power assessment

There are multiple sources of power, most are less obvious than money. The table below identifies common sources and invites reflection on each one. Scores are obviously based on judgement and perception, although become increasingly valid with the diversity of perspectives contributing to the scores. Different types of power are not directly comparable. The aim of the exercise is to encourage open discussion about power, as well as to help demonstrate what each partner brings to the table.

	Partner 1 [0-5]	Partner 2 [0-5]
KEY RESOURCES		
Providing a disproportionate amount of funding towards the partnership		
Social capital; access to relationships / networks / decision-makers		
Access to technical resources including key skills, data, legal instruments		
Understanding of the relevant context, culture, history		
POSITIONAL		
Partner is in a position to be able to walk away (the partnership is not that important to them) or to easily find an alternative partner		
Formal authority, informal / moral authority, political capital		
Holding roles with control (e.g. being the fiduciary agent / grant lead; main liasion with a donor; running external communications; agenda setter for meetings)		
HUMAN INFLUENCE / ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE		
Confidence / discursive power / ability to communicate and persuade		
Seniority / numbers of representatives at meetings		
Comfort / fluency with the language(s) used (including organisational jargon)		
Cultural perception of status (e.g. gender)		
Agility / flexibility to take decisions and move quickly		

3. How can we manage/mitigate imbalances?		
Phases	**Assessment questions**	**Steps to take to manage/mitigate imbalances**
SET UP		
Acknowledge the **boundary choices** that you make	• Who (and who isn't) being represented in the partnership? • Who (and who isn't) being represented in the different committees and meetings? • How are decisions being made? • How is information being shared?	• Take responsibility for your choices: be aware of and make explicit the boundary choices that you make and the resulting implications that entail on who is being included/excluded and whose voice is being heard • Create a governance structure that ensures appropriate representation and shares power - Create decision making structures and mechanisms that acknowledge and share power - Define the roles and responsibilities of each partner (as clearly as feasible at each stage) - Ensure participants with a similar level of seniority, who are able to make decisions on behalf of their organisations, are at the table
Explore and demonstrate the **unique and valuable resources** of all partners	• What does each partner bring to the table?	• Define and make explicit the unique resources that each partner brings to the table • Acknowledge where partners bring a specific technical or social knowledge that should be paramount in decision-making
MANAGING AND MAINTAINING		
Acknowledge the **sources of power** and **power dynamics** in the partnership	• What sources of power does each partner hold? • What are the explicit and more subtle power dynamics between the partners? • How are these expressed? Through individuals? Through interactions?	• Acknowledge and explore the different sources of power/ power dynamics in the partnership • Cultivate a partnering mindset among all the members, underpinned by: - humility to realize others may have more appropriate knowledge / resources - an ability to balance and sometimes suppress individual ambitions in favour of those of the partnership - willingness to give up control and autonomy of decision-making
Actively manage power imbalances	• Can I support the different partners to reduce power imbalances? • How can I adapt the governance structure/ mechanisms that reduce power imbalances?	• Build the confidence of partners with less real/perceived power by supporting them in identifying, owning and exercising their source of power if/when appropriate • Ensure meetings are held in languages that all can understand; ensure that funding is available to all to be able to travel to meetings; choose neutral places for meetings • Support the more powerful partners to adopt behaviours which empower others • In meetings: - Ensure information is distributed in advance to cater to participants who may need to consult internally or to reflect in order to react and contribute actively - Ensure everybody's voice is being heard and encourage the quieter ones or those with less real/perceived power to express themselves
Review and address problematic power imbalances	• Are specific power dynamics problematic? • Are their specific interventions that can help mitigate the imbalance?	• Ensure that a discussion of power is included in regular partnership 'healthcheck' reviews • Identify when specific power dynamics become problematic • Design appropriate interventions to address them either internally or bring in a neutral professional partnership facilitator to support the partnership
MOVING ON		
Understand when / when not to continue partnering and maintain your ability to walk away	• When should you/should you not continue with a partnership? • Are you prepared and in a position to leave the partnership if it does not fulfil your organisation's and the collective's needs?	• Work collectively to understand the value of the partnership from all perspectives to determine whether to continue, re-design, scale or close • If you decide to close or redesign a partnership, understand the impact on less powerful / vulnerable partners and take steps to mitigate negative impact

TOOL 7

Tool 7: Partnership healthcheck

USE
To review the 'health' of the partnership, determining areas for discussion and improvement

PARTNERING PHASE
Implementation

Monitoring the health and efficiency of the partnership's setup, operation and processes, ensuring the building blocks of partnerships are in place, is essential to optimise partnership impact.

Parts of the framework can be used informally and regularly – for example every few months – as a prompt for discussion in partner meetings to help keep the partnership on track.

Below is the description for a more formal review workshop that could be held every six months or annually. Where there are many partners, or where there are significant issues raised, an external facilitator should be used.

1

Review workshop: preparation

Ask all partners to complete the checklist below, giving a score on where they feel the partnership sits relative to each aspect of good practice in partnering:

0: Completely disagree
1: Strongly disagree
2: Somewhat disagree
3: Somewhat agree
4: Strongly agree
5: Fully agree

DK: Don't know
NR: Not relevant

Analyse the results to prioritise the areas for discussion at the workshop.

2

At the review workshop

Agree 'ground rules' to encourage openness and participation, making it clear that the review is not about judgment or blame, but a positive opportunity to bring up issues, learn together and improve the partnership;

Present the checklist analysis, jointly talk through each partnering aspect and the positive experiences or the challenges partners may have around it;

Aim to fully understand and appreciate your cross-organisational perspectives or other sources of diversity;

Talk through how each aspect of partnering could be either further enhanced or meaningfully improved to the satisfaction of all partners, and prioritize;

Determine what actions should be undertaken, by whom (wherever possible by more than one partner) and by when.

3

Post review workshop

Undertake the agreed actions, conferring with partners, keeping all informed on progress;

Confirm with partners that the aspects have improved.

TOOL 7

Partnership health indicators

1. FUNDAMENTALS	
There is significant alignment of interest among partners, and a compelling shared vision, mission and objectives fully bought into by all	
The partnership has clearly identified collaborative advantages to create significant added value, deliver more than the sum of its parts towards its objectives	
The partnership is designed to deliver net value to all partners	
* Partners (particularly smaller or local partners) are sufficiently empowered and enabled to be able to contribute fully (including appropriate simplified funding / accountability requirements where required)	
The partnership is able to engage all key stakeholders with essential resources (including local knowledge, social capital)	
There is sufficient compatibility of values across partners to be able to work effectively together	
2. PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP	
All partners demonstrate clear, ongoing commitment to the partnership	
All partners are transparent about their incentives, assumptions, goals, needs, drivers and constraints	
There is a very high level of trust among all the partners	
* There is clear equity and balance among the partners in decision-making	
* Partners embrace, honour and value diverse cultures, languages and ways of knowing and being	
All partners feel accountable to each other for delivering on their commitments, and collectively accountable to stakeholders (including funders)	
The benefits accruing to the partners feel fair and in balance	
* Power imbalances are acknowledged and action taken to reduce imbalances and any negative effects of imbalances	
Challenges, problems and tensions are openly brought up and dealt with respectfully and collectively	
3. STRUCTURING AND SET-UP	
There is a partnering agreement in place, clearly setting out a vision, mission, objectives, partner obligations and benefits etc.	
There is a clear theory of change (or theory of transformation), along with a measurement framework to be able to demonstrate progress and success	
(For larger / more complex partnerships) there is a manual or 'playbook' setting out the governance, management, financial and operational structures; processes and principles / expected behaviours; rules (e.g. around external communication)	
The fiduciary / legal structure is fully fit for purpose	
* The governance structure is fully fit for purpose, including ensuring equity among partners and the integration of the voices of those closest to the ground / greatest understanding of context (local partners, stakeholders, 'beneficiaries' etc.)	
The management and operational structures for the partnership are fully fit for purpose	

3. STRUCTURING AND SET-UP (CONT.)	
RESOURCES	
The partnership is well positioned and has strong political and social capital with key influencers and networks	
The partnership has the right staff, with the right skills and sufficient bandwidth to deliver	
The partnership is financially fully resourced	
Required knowledge and data is fully available	
All other necessary resources are available	
4. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	
The secretariat is fully effective in delivering its role	
Internal communication and information sharing is sufficiently frequent and effective	
Workplan, roles and responsibilities of partners are always clear	
Deliverables and timeframes are always clear	
Financial management is timely and fully effective	
External communication and engagement is fully effective	
The partnership monitors its progress against implementation, output and impact goals, and along its theory of change	
The partnership iterates and adjusts its approach (including workplan, theory of change, etc.) based on experiences to date	
The partnership undertakes regular health checks and takes action to ensure it remains fully optimized	
* Organisational cultural differences between partners are acknowledged and well managed to avoid clashes	
There is strong collective leadership among all the partners	
The partnership ensures full engagement with, and accountability to, its stakeholders	
MEETINGS AND WORK PROCESSES	
Meetings happen with appropriate frequency	
* Setting of agendas and arrangement of meeting logistics (including any necessary representation / translation) ensure inclusivity and full engagement of all partners	
Meetings are well prepared with good documentation, and minutes are taken and circulated in a timely fashion	
Any conflicts of interest are always effectively managed	
Partners are consistently present at meetings and represented by appropriately senior level	
Decisions are made inclusively, with the right information, in a timely and efficient way	
5. DELIVERY AND IMPACT	
All partners are fully and effectively delivering their commitments and obligations	
The partnership is fully on track to implement its work plan according to schedule	
The partnership is fully on track to deliver its impact objectives	
The partnership is currently delivering / is on track to deliver significant net value to MY organisation	

SCORING

0: Completely disagree
1: Strongly disagree
2: Somewhat disagree
3: Somewhat agree
4: Strongly agree
5: Fully agree

DK: Don't know
NR: Not relevant

* Equity indicators. See: https://www.iied.org/principle-practice-what-southern-leadership-reveals-about-equitable-partnerships

PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATOR 2030 AGENDA
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PartnershipAccelerator.org

