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Global Landscape: A Review of International Partnership Trends

An Input for UNICEF's Strategic Framework for
Partnerships

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1. Introduction

Globalization generates unprecedented opportunities, but also leads to a rising number of global challenges, creating a need for global public policy. New forms of collaborative governance are emerging to meet this need. One particular area of expanded collaboration is the continued push for more effective, deepening and lasting public-private partnerships, for example between the United Nations (UN) and non-state actors, including civil society and business. In recent years, the UN and its agencies have continuously scaled-up their partnership engagement. While quality and quantity of alliances vary across the UN system, they are all driven by the desire to more effectively implement internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has been at the forefront of advancing the partnership agenda and relies on a broad and diverse set of partnerships to implement its mission. While many of these partnerships produce significant results, some have not yet managed to realize their full potential. In order to make the best use of its own as well as its partners’ capacities to create the best results for children, UNICEF is in the process of developing a comprehensive partnership strategy.

This paper is an input for UNICEF’s strategic framework for partnerships. It gives an overview of the current global partnership landscape by explaining the partnership phenomenon (Chapter 2), identifying recent international partnership trends (Chapter 3), illustrating common challenges and emerging international good practices (Chapter 4) and outlining some preliminary implications for UNICEF (Chapter 5).

2. Understanding the Partnership Phenomenon

Why has there been such an explosion of cross-sector interaction in the last decade? And what are the reasons for the persistent growth of partnerships in numbers and importance? An analysis of partnership types, key drivers and potential benefits as well as the rationales for engaging in partnerships provides an understanding of the partnership phenomenon.

2.1 Partnership Types

Partnerships are commonly defined as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits.”¹ They can take many forms, ranging from multi-million (or even billion) dollar global programs to low budget community-based initiatives. Due to their diversity they are difficult to categorize. They may be classified across numerous levels, for example by looking at the actors involved, their geographic dimension or their function.

Partnerships can be multi- or bilateral and actors can include, among others, multilateral organizations, governments, multinational and local businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community based organizations, universities and think tanks. The level of a partnership can range from local to global.

Partnerships can fulfil one or more of the following functions:² First, advocacy partnerships such as the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and the Stop TB initiative advance a specific cause and/or draw attention to a particular issue. Second, partnerships may have the purpose to develop norms and standards such as codes of conduct or reporting guidelines, for example the Global Reporting Initiative or the Access to Basic Services for All Initiative. A third function can be sharing and coordinating resources and expertise. These partnerships, like the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS or the “Moving the World” alliance between the World Food Programme and TNT take advantage of technological innovation and the benefits stemming from an exchange of information, experience and best practice. Finally, partnerships may have the purpose to harness markets for development. These partnerships support the development and expansion of sustainable markets at a local, regional and global level by either helping to provide access to markets or to bridge or deepen markets. Examples include the Shea Butter

¹ General Assembly Resolution A/C.2/62/L.33/Rev.1, para.2

² Cf. for this paragraph: Witte/Reinicke (2005), 8 et seqq.

Production Initiative or the Micro-Insurance Initiative among the Allianz Group, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and the United Nations Development Programme.

2.2 Key Drivers for Partnerships

Several factors explain the rise in cross-sector alliances. First, there is a growing realization that classical public sector actors cannot shoulder all of the world's pressing problems alone. Due to the complexity of global problems and scarcity of resources, they need the support of non-public actors to adequately address problems like climate change, corruption or diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Second, non-public actors, including business and civil society organizations, have increased in reach and importance in past decades. They are increasingly willing to accept their growing responsibility and are becoming ever more involved in sectors like health, environment and humanitarian aid. Business increasingly came to appreciate the benefits of partnering with the public sector, like image enhancement, new market opportunities or better links to governments. These developments have resulted in increased cross-sector interaction and led to the emergence of public-private partnerships.

The Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 already showed signs of the beginning of a new era. In Rio, governments adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action for sustainable development which states that "Governments, business and industry, including transnational corporations, should strengthen partnerships to implement the principles and criteria for sustainable development".³ With these words, Agenda 21 indicated the direction in which the discourse on the role of private actors in international politics would develop in the following years.⁴

Ten years later, the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development clearly demonstrated that the partnership movement had gained momentum. According to Jonathan Lash, president of the World Resources Institute, the Johannesburg Summit "will be remembered not for the treaties, the commitments, or the declarations it produced, but for the first stirrings of a new way of governing the global commons – the beginnings of a shift from the stiff formal waltz of traditional diplomacy to the

³ Agenda 21, Chapter 30, Point 7 (UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (vol. III), 30.7).

⁴ Martens (2007) (a), 13.

jazzier dance of improvisational solution-oriented partnerships that may include non-government organizations, willing governments and other stakeholders.”⁵

2.3 Potential Benefits

Partnerships hold important promises: They can sometimes act more flexibly than traditional players and make it possible to move beyond the (often minimal) intergovernmental consensus in an issue area. They have the potential to combine complementary resources and to mobilize additional resources, such as new funding, cutting-edge knowledge and technology to provide undersupplied global public goods or goods with strong positive externalities. Moreover, they can create policy ownership among a broad range of actors, for example for the implementation of global conventions. Partnerships also have the potential to act as catalysts for organizational reform and institutional innovation.

2.4 Rationales for Engaging in Partnerships

Private and public actors have different reasons for engaging in partnerships. Partnerships can arise where public and private interests overlap. The following table provides an overview of common rationales of the public sector, business and civil society.

Table 1: Rationales for Engaging in Partnerships.

	Public Sector	Business	Civil Society
Advocacy	Broaden support for a particular issue Gain access to private sector marketing expertise	Enhance reputation by being associated with a high profile cause Potentially promote an issue in the interest of the company	Leverage the power of other actors to promote their own focus issues
Developing Norms and Standards	Fill the regulatory gap, which emerges due to the difficulty of creating international	Avert binding regulation at national / international level Participate in shaping rules so that they do	Shape the rules according to their views Contribute to compliance

⁵ World Resources Institute (2002): WRI expresses disappointment over many WSSD outcomes. Washington, D.C. (WRI news release, 4 September 2002); cited in Martens (2007) (a), 17.

	<p>consensus on standards</p> <p>Promote voluntary compliance and encourage responsible behavior</p>	<p>not contradict business interests</p> <p>Create a level playing field by achieving voluntary compliance by competitors</p>	<p>verification</p>
<p>Sharing and Coordinating Resources and Expertise</p>	<p>Mobilize additional resources and expertise from the private sector</p> <p>Take advantage of complementary resources</p> <p>Ensure maximum development-relevance of social projects by supporting private actors in implementation</p>	<p>Enhance reputation</p> <p>Get public sector support (financial support as well as expertise) for the implementation of social projects.</p>	<p>Get access to resources</p> <p>Contribute expertise in order to ensure maximum development-relevance of projects</p>
<p>Harnessing Markets for Development</p>	<p>Achieve development through private sector advancement and by maximizing the development impact of private investments</p>	<p>Get financial, logistical and knowledge support from the public sector (e.g. start-up capital) for investment decisions and operations</p>	<p>Usually not involved</p>

3. International Partnership Trends

The public sector is expanding the partnership agenda and is moving beyond the fundraising paradigm. Non-state actors, including business, civil society organizations and philanthropic foundations, have grown in reach and importance and are increasingly influencing policy-making at national and global levels.

3.1 The Public Sector: Growing Relevance of the Partnership Agenda

3.1.1 A Rising Trend

Recent decades first witnessed a slow rise in the interest for cross-sector partnerships, followed by a rapid expansion of partnership activities in the last decade, particularly in the UN context. This boom has now given way to a slower, though more selective and complex rise in partnership activities. Although there is no global overview of the number of existing partnerships, evidence based on reports of individual agencies, the rising number of entries to the database of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) - now listing 344 partnerships compared to 319 in 2006 - and the increased number of bilateral partnership programs (from 6 to 10 of 22 DAC donors) suggests an increase in overall partnership numbers.

Some UN agencies have by now entered into several hundred partnerships with private actors. The Food and Agricultural Organization, for example, counts more than 830 collaborative arrangements and the World Health Organization has entered into approximately 90 partnerships in recent years.⁶ UNICEF lists 191 corporate partners on its website (those with contributions valued over US\$100,000 in 2007) but is engaged in a much greater number of different types of collaboration. For a survey conducted in 2008, for example, UNICEF identified 628 different companies worldwide with active collaborations, partnerships and contacts. In 2007, corporations and corporate foundations made direct financial contributions to UNICEF totalling 117 million US\$.

There is also a trend towards more global multi-stakeholder initiatives. About 400 global partnerships worldwide were identified in 2005 (about half of them concerned with environmental and health issues) compared with 50 in the 1980s.⁷ The World Bank currently engages in 125 Global Partnership Programs and 50 Regional Partnership Programs and UNICEF in over 70. In 2007, the United Nations

⁶ Rochlin/Zadek/Forstater (2008), 13

⁷ Dr. Inge Kaul, cited in: Rochlin/Zadek/Forstater (2008), 12/13

Development Programme engaged in more than 40, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in about 35 each, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in about 30 each.⁸

The rising relevance of partnerships is also reflected by important institutional changes within the UN which have taken place to facilitate the partnership movement. This includes the establishment of the UN Foundation in 1998, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships in the same year and the Global Compact in 2000. The Global Compact has now evolved into the largest corporate citizenship and sustainability initiative in the world, with over 4,700 corporate participants and stakeholders from over 130 countries.

Moreover, the large number of key international conferences and meetings which have either actively promoted partnerships or have taken place with business and civil society participation highlight the importance that the UN attaches to the advancement of the partnership agenda. These include amongst others the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Global Compact Leaders' Summit in 2004 and 2007 and the High Level Meeting in New York in September 2008, pledging private contributions of \$16 billion to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

3.1.2 A Move beyond the Fundraising Paradigm

In the past, many public players have enthusiastically pushed for partnerships with business, expecting that companies would pay the bills without being actively involved in project design and implementation. While this worked in some (primarily philanthropic) cases, large-scale business engagement cannot be reduced to providing funding alone. Partnership activities should generally strive to be aligned with core business interests and should draw on companies' core competencies in order to ensure sustainability.⁹

At this stage, the level of engagement with the private sector still varies greatly among public entities. Agencies with further reaching partnership strategies in place or currently working on them include the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the

⁸ Strengthening UNICEF engagement in Global Partnership Programmes (2007), para. 13

⁹ Witte/Reinicke (2005), 72

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Among those who have embraced the partnership agenda, fundraising still remains an important objective of working with the private sector. Yet, many UN agencies as well as other public sector actors, like bilateral donors and the World Bank family have embraced more advanced partnership strategies and have moved beyond the fundraising paradigm. They are now engaging in partnerships in order to mobilize other kinds of resources, like management and technical expertise, knowledge, in-kind contributions, networks and consumer contacts, to improve the development effects of core business operations and to foster private sector development.

3.2 Non-Public Actors: A Growing Role of Civil Society, Business and Foundations

Non-state actors, including business and civil society organizations, have grown in number and importance. Global NGOs are flourishing, having risen in number from 23,600 in 1991 to about 44,000 in 1999.¹⁰ There are well over 78,000 transnational corporations today, compared to about 37,000 in 1990, with some 780,000 foreign affiliates and millions of suppliers and distributors operating along their global value chain.¹¹

Global foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittance flows to developing economies have strongly increased over the past years, even though the global financial and economic crisis is currently causing a slowdown. In 2008, FDI flows into developing economies continued to grow, but at a much lower rate than the year before. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development expects that global FDI flows will decline in 2009.¹²

Total official development assistance, on the other hand, has dropped in the last two years. It continued to drop from an all time high of \$107.1 billion in 2005, to \$104.4 billion in 2006 and \$103.7 billion in 2007 principally as a result of a decline in debt relief grants. Adjusting for changes in prices and exchange rates, aid disbursements fell by 8.4% in 2007 compared to 2006. Excluding debt relief grants, net aid rose by 2.4%. At the 2005 UN World Summit, developed countries pledged to scale-up aid from \$80 billion in 2004 to \$130 billion in 2010 at 2004 prices. With debt relief grants unlikely to return to 2005 or 2006 levels, bilateral aid and contributions to

¹⁰ Nelson (2002), 19 (a)

¹¹ Nelson/Prescott (2005), 10; UNCTAD/PRESS/PR/Accra/2008/022 02/04/08.

¹² Cf. UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2008.

multilateral development institutions will need to increase rapidly over the next two years if developed countries are to meet their commitment for 2010.¹³

The growing role of non-state actors has conferred more opportunities, but also more responsibilities on them. Global companies face new competitive pressures and have to respond to increased demands for greater corporate responsibility and accountability.¹⁴ Civil society organizations increasingly demand to be included in the global policy-making process.

3.2.1 Civil Society Organizations: From Confrontation to Collaboration

In the last decade, the self-concept of many NGOs has changed. Once largely opposed to the system, many have become an integral part of it, wishing to contribute to finding solutions, instead of simply revealing deficiencies.¹⁵ Today, highly qualified professionals compete for positions at big, international NGOs like Greenpeace, Amnesty International or Oxfam. Their working methods increasingly resemble those of corporations.

This development has led to an increased desire of civil society organizations to partner with business and public institutions. Many are already successfully engaging in partnerships. Large international NGOs are often represented in global program partnerships and more traditional forms of cooperation in implementation remain a crucial operational pillar for many implementing agencies.

For business, NGOs are attractive partners because they are easily approachable, relatively flexible and usually less bureaucratic than many traditional donors.¹⁶ Large NGOs are sometimes equipped with bigger budgets than UN agencies and may enjoy a comparable reputation. Therefore, in some cases business may prefer to work with NGOs rather than with UN agencies.

However, the shift towards more collaboration has triggered concerns about NGOs' independence and has partly led to a radicalization of those NGOs that have decided not to be part of this development. While the majority of NGOs are not fundamentally against partnerships and more recent criticism seems to focus on process and implementation rather than on the notion of partnerships per se, there are some NGOs that deliberately opt out to continue their more critical and confrontational role. On the other hand, smaller NGOs often wish to participate, but

¹³ Cf. the UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2008, Goal 8.

¹⁴ Nelson/Prescott (2005), 10

¹⁵ Cf. Beloe/Elkington/Fry/Newell (2003)

¹⁶ Marschall (2002)

lack the resources to do so. As a consequence, the voices of smaller NGOs are often lost in the partnership hype.¹⁷

The difficulty of expanding formal participatory rights of civil society at the UN has also furthered informal cooperation in the form of partnerships.¹⁸ The “Cardoso Report” in 2004, commissioned by the Secretary General, was supposed to strengthen participation of civil society in formal political processes and contained a number of recommendations.¹⁹ However, the report was not taken up vigorously by member states and did not receive the formal support of a General Assembly resolution, although some of its ideas have clearly influenced subsequent practice.²⁰

3.2.2 Business: Trends in Corporate Social Responsibility

It is no longer sufficient for business to simply make a profit, pay taxes and obey laws. Companies, in particular those with a global reach, are increasingly pressured by consumers, investors, NGOs, governments and citizens to act responsibly, be accountable and contribute to broader societal goals.²¹ The business community, in particular global corporations, has absorbed the social demands and has adjusted its corporate behavior by adopting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. Partnerships with the UN are very popular. Today, there is hardly any multinational corporation on the Fortune 500 list that does not run a partnership project with a UN organization; companies like BP, Coca Cola, Daimler Chrysler, Microsoft, McDonald’s, Nike, Novartis, Shell and Starbucks are among the most active in that respect.²² Important corporate partners for UNICEF include IKEA, Procter & Gamble and Unilever.

CSR has doubtlessly been booming in past years, fueled by the rise of environmentalism, which constitutes one of the most dynamic areas of CSR today. Yet the question remains: Are companies getting it right?

Like most industries, the corporate responsibility business has a handful of leaders, many followers and numerous laggards.²³ The leaders have recognized the business case behind CSR. They have embraced the notion that CSR is essentially about how

¹⁷ Cf. Benner/Witte/Streck, Introduction (2003)

¹⁸ Martens (2006), 6 (b)

¹⁹ UN Doc. A/58/817 (“Cardoso Report”)

²⁰ Cf. Hill/Peter (2007) who cite as example that the GA has held four informal interactive hearings with NGOs, civil society and the private sector as part of its preparations for its subsequent “Special Sessions” on the Secretary-Generals Report “In Larger Freedom” on migration and development, on HIV/AIDS and on the Least Developed Countries over the last two years.

²¹ Nelson (2002), 3 (a)

²² Martens (2007), 20 (a)

²³ Cf. Franklin, in: “Do it right”, The Economist, January 17th, 2008

the company makes its profits, not only what it does with them afterwards.²⁴ These companies are increasingly working together in multi-stakeholder initiatives in order to agree on codes of conduct, usually within a particular industry and in consultation with governments, UN agencies and NGOs. Examples include the adoption of the Equator Principles, a benchmark for managing social and environmental issues in project financing, and the establishment of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to handle the problem of government corruption in resource-rich countries.²⁵

For the many followers in the CSR industry, the concept is essentially about public relations. Since their CSR programs are usually not aligned with their business strategy, they are sometimes not sustainable. Finally, there are the laggards: Companies, which have simply failed to pay attention to CSR, or even think they can afford to ignore it; they usually operate in industries with a low profile or in countries where scrutiny is minimal.²⁶

The current financial and economic crisis will be a big test for CSR. While it is too early to assess the overall impact, many in the field are cautiously optimistic about the future of CSR. Some go even further and believe it could be good for the CSR industry, as the benefits of responsible behavior will become apparent.²⁷ Obviously, if a company goes bankrupt it cannot continue to engage in CSR. Moreover, there will be cutbacks in companies that have only engaged superficially in CSR for PR-purposes. However, companies that have aligned their CSR initiatives with core business objectives will most probably be able to protect them even in times of crisis. If CSR is integrated into the overall business strategy, it constitutes an integral part of the business and backpedaling is very difficult.

3.2.3 Philanthropic Foundations: A New Movement

Another trend generating more partnerships, especially of a global nature, is the growing engagement of private foundations. Resources mobilized by foundations for development have risen steadily and are now estimated at approximately \$4 billion to \$5 billion annually.²⁸ The spending is highly concentrated in the hands of a few players, most notably the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, and heavily focused on health programs. In 2007, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation disbursed a total of

²⁴ Nelson (2004), 33 (b)

²⁵ Cf. Franklin, in: "A stitch in time", The Economist, January 17th, 2008

²⁶ Franklin, in: "Do it right", The Economist, January 17th, 2008

²⁷ "CSR executives put brave face on the financial crisis", Ethical Performance, November 2008

²⁸ Cf. Marten/Witte (2008)

approximately \$1.7 billion - a sum higher than that of 7 of the 22 member countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

Many foundations bring innovative and business-like approaches to the international development work. As a consequence, a number of the global partnerships programs funded by foundations - most notably those of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation - focus more strongly on results than traditional development agencies and stand out through rather well developed evaluation and impact assessment schemes.

3.3 Partnerships and Aid Effectiveness

How do partnership activities relate to efforts of the international community to harmonize and align aid delivery? Business, civil society organizations and philanthropic foundations have assumed an important place in providing development assistance. While their engagement is an indispensable asset to help traditional donors to reach internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, the growing number of players has led to a more complex and fragmented global development landscape. Their work poses new challenges to the international aid architecture.

The international community intensified its efforts to enhance aid effectiveness shortly after the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000. There was a growing realization that in order to reach the MDGs, more aid alone was not enough - it had to be better and smarter than before to be truly effective. The first High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness took place in Rome in 2003, followed by a second High Level Forum in Paris in 2005. In Paris, over one hundred donor and developing country governments and heads of multilateral and bilateral development institutions endorsed the Paris Declaration, pledging to increase efforts in harmonization, alignment and managing for results.

In 2008, the third High Level Forum was held in Accra. Its main aim was to take stock of the extent to which donors and development countries are fulfilling the commitments made in the Paris Declaration. The Accra Agenda for Action welcomes the growing diversity of providers of development assistance, including contributions from foundations and civil society organizations, but notes that the effectiveness of aid is reduced when there are too many duplicating initiatives. It calls on all partners to reduce the fragmentation of aid by improving the complementarity of donors' efforts and the division of labor among donors, leading to improved allocation of resources within sectors, within countries, and across countries. It also calls upon all global funds to support country ownership, to align

and harmonize their assistance proactively and to ensure that existing channels for aid delivery are used and strengthened before creating separate new channels that risk further fragmentation and complicate coordination at country level.

4. Challenges and Emerging International Good Practice

As mentioned above, there are compelling reasons for establishing collaborative relationships and partnerships. However, they neither provide quick-fix solutions nor are they the answer to every problem. They can be both risky and costly and are generally not easy to build and sustain. Many of them fail, or at least fail to meet the high expectations that are created when they are first established.²⁹ Even though different kinds of partnerships have different obstacles to cope with, common risks and challenges applicable to all types of collaborative relationships and partnerships can be identified. As the experience of multilateral and bilateral organizations engaged in partnering grows, international good practice to meet these challenges is beginning to emerge.

4.1 Reputational Risks

It is critical for public sector actors in general and particularly for the UN to preserve their most valuable assets: their legitimacy, credibility and moral authority. Choosing the wrong partner would not only negatively affect the partnership in question but also diminish the overall support for the partnership approach and eventually result in a lasting tarnished reputation of the organization.

Examples of partnerships criticized by civil society for social, environmental or human rights reasons are the projects between the United Nations Development Programme and Shell, as well as Coca Cola and Nestlé's involvement in the Global Compact. Partnerships with companies not accused of violating human rights or social and environmental standards can also reflect badly on the image, like the fundraising partnership between UNICEF and McDonald's in 2002.³⁰ The alliance with McDonalds, one of the biggest fast-food chains in the world, was seen to be inconsistent with UNICEF's mission to promote good and healthy nutrition to children. Consistent and transparent partner screening and selection mechanisms, executed in a cost-effective and swift manner to avoid undue bureaucratic hurdles, help mitigate these risks.

To date, there is no standardized set of criteria to screen and select potential partners within the UN system. The UN Business Guidelines, issued in 2000 and currently under revision, set out a broad range of eligibility criteria. Building on this loose framework, most agencies have formulated selection schemes tailored to their needs.

²⁹ Nelson/Prescott (2005), 12

³⁰ Cf. for this paragraph: Martens (2007), 37 (a)

An increasing number of Agencies, Funds and Programs are turning to external screening agencies to gather information about potential partners.³¹ The World Food Programme, for example, bases its research and screening process on external sources such as Hoovers (financial information) and Innovate, an investment research and advisory firm specializing in analyzing companies' performance on environmental, social and strategic governance issues.³² Several UN entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs entered into an agreement with World-Check in April 2006, a company using hundreds of thousands of public sources to track and create profiles for high-risk individuals and businesses.

While partner screening may take place on a systemic level, partner selection depends on the agency's mandate and scope of partnership activities.³³ While a one-size-fits-all approach that would be applied systematically across the UN system may not be feasible due to diverse institutional demands, a minimum set of common benchmarks and standards is necessary. During the 2008 UN Private Sector Focal Points Meeting, representatives from business, international organizations and NGOs agreed on its potential structure: They opted for a balanced approach weighing traditional negative criteria against a positive screening model, integrating the Global Compact principles as a key component and taking a company's "Communication on Progress" as a criterion in the decision-making process into account.

4.2 Clarity on Roles and Responsibilities

Partners who fail to understand the core drivers for engagement can fall victim to false expectations which can eventually lead to frustration. Some public sector officials, for example, had inflated expectations about private sector contributions. One possible explanation for this misjudgment could be a lack of understanding of the necessity for the private sector to link partnerships to a clear business case.

To understand each other, partners have to be aware of their respective complementary strengths. They have to be clear on their respective roles and responsibilities in order to be able to agree on a realistic work agenda. Moreover, they should agree on specific goals and targets as well as on specific commitments based on the targets. This serves as a motivator and guidepost and enables an

³¹ A/62/341, para. 23

³² Cf. WFP/EB.1/2008/5-B/1, para. 21

³³ Cf. the Final Meeting Report of the UN Private Sector Focal Points Meeting 2008

evaluation of progress. The stronger the incentive to stick to the commitments made with regard to legal/social ramifications, the higher the probability of compliance and success.

The Moving the World Partnership between TNT and the World Food Programme is a good practice example for the formulation of clear roles and responsibilities: In this case, the partners went through a step-by-step process, determining what each partner could do best and used this assessment to design joint work programs.³⁴

The Stop TB Partnership and the Partnership for Principle 10 (an alliance to enhance public access to information, participation and justice in national level decision-making) on the other hand, are good practice examples for the formulation of clear goals and targets. The Stop TB Partnership developed a strategic plan which set out its vision, mission and specific short- and long-term targets and laid down strategic directions and objectives as well as key approaches to be taken to pursue the objectives. The Partnership for Principle 10 developed clear guidelines to assist each partner to commit to a specific set of action items based on common agreed principles and appropriate to its own resources and abilities.³⁵

4.3 Partnership Management

For partnerships to succeed, they must be managed professionally. As projects move from planning to implementation, conflicts are likely to emerge along the way. In this respect, partners need to be equipped with effective conflict management mechanisms. While the presence of strong governance structures, clear work programs and deliverables may prevent conflicts from erupting in the first place, strong management allows for the resolution of existing conflicts in a productive manner.³⁶ An independent partnership broker may be helpful to bridge gaps and to assist partners in finding a solution.³⁷ An organizational culture that tolerates conflict constitutes a critical ingredient for successful conflict management. If failure is not an option – because it is tied to large reputation costs or the loss of jobs – then it is unlikely that conflicts are dealt with in an effective manner.

Partners also have to be able to respond to change flexibly. Predictable changes, such as departures and arrivals of key personnel have to be taken into account from the start. The discussion of “ground rules” for dealing with expected and unexpected

³⁴ Cf. Witte/Reinicke (2005), 43

³⁵ Malena, B (v) (2004)

³⁶ Witte/Reinicke (2005), 43

³⁷ Scott (2007), 11

change at an early stage helps partners to face changes confidently and confront them innovatively.³⁸

Several tool books have been developed to help partners plan and manage their collaboration, amongst them the “Partnering Toolkit”, produced by the International Business Leaders Forum and the “Partnership Assessment Tool”, developed jointly by the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Office for Partnerships, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Global Compact. The Partnership Assessment Tool helps partners assess a project’s development prospects by providing an overview of the essential elements that make effective partnering. The “Brokering Guidebook”, a sister publication of the Partnering Toolkit, highlights the assets internal or external brokers bring to partnerships as process managers, conflict mediators and behind-the-scene leaders. Another practical tool aimed at improving partnership performance is AccountAbility’s Partnership Governance and Accountability Framework.

Specific trainings have also been developed to strengthen partnership management. This includes for example the courses “Partnering Skills for Strategic Engagement” launched by the UN System Staff College and the Partnering Initiative in 2005. Moreover, the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry and the International Business Leaders Forum jointly run the Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership, a one-year postgraduate course aimed at building the skills of people who can act as intermediaries. In addition to this, the Overseas Development Institute and the International Business Leaders Forum have designed a professional Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme.

4.4 Dealing with Conflicting Organizational Cultures

Time and again, public and private partners have to grapple with strong differences in their organizational cultures and operating principles. The public sector generally works in a more bureaucratic and conventional manner than private actors. Its modus operandi is characterized by strong hierarchies, formal procedures and a hesitancy to make quick decisions and assessments without prior consultations and a careful analysis of potential ramifications.

Business is generally more willing to take risks. Decisions are made more rapidly with an expectation that they will be acted upon immediately. Rather than a focus on the right process, actions are judged by outcomes. The different styles have often led to frustration on both sides: Private partners were perceived to be single-minded,

³⁸ Scott (2007), 11

pushy and competitive, public partners as inflexible and unadventurous.³⁹ In the past, partners have all too often let the opportunity to benefit from each other's style slip away.

Hiring people with cross-sector skills is an effective way to tackle the challenge. The United Nations Development Programme's Growing Sustainable Business Initiative, for example, hires partnership brokers with business backgrounds. There is a general trend of increased cross-sector motion: Executives from the corporate world are increasingly taking up management positions in NGOs and other civil society organizations, and corporations have started to recruit staff from development banks, relief agencies and large foundations.⁴⁰

Some big partnerships also feature secondment programs. The most established one among them is the World Bank Group's Staff Exchange Programme, which was launched in 1995 to foster cultural exchanges with private partners. The Bank has collaborated with more than 200 organizations, including other international financial institutions, government agencies, universities, private sector companies, NGOs and advocacy groups.

Some agencies benefit from private sector skills by including the corporate sector in their operations: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for example, has established the "Council of Business Leaders". The Council consists of executives from five major corporations, advises the Commissioner on partnership strategies and helps to generate further private sector support. Specific training with corporate staff also facilitates cross-sector understanding. The Global Compact Omnibus Training, for example, seeks to empower senior managers to integrate the Global Compact principles into their business processes.

4.5 Impact Assessment

Systematic impact assessments of partnerships are crucial for several reasons. First of all, monitoring and evaluation structures are the key to ensuring accountability to beneficiaries, partners and donors. Second, learning from mistakes and successes and identifying potential for optimization is difficult without such assessments.⁴¹ Third, assessments facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned which is necessary for an effective scaling up and replication of successful partnerships. Moreover, systematic impact assessments could corroborate the widespread assumption that partnerships contribute positively to the development agenda by

³⁹ Cf. Scott (2007), 10

⁴⁰ Murray (2007)

⁴¹ Cf. Witte/Reinicke (2005), 44

delivering measurable proof. However, measuring effectiveness and impact is not easy since it requires the development of clear benchmarks, time-bound targets against which the partnership in question can be evaluated, evaluation tools and the allocation of adequate resources.

In most partnerships, systematic monitoring, evaluation or impact assessments are still not taking place. Although most individual projects are assessed as part of standard evaluation practices, these findings are frequently not comparative.⁴² Two exemplary surveys confirm this view: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recently examined evaluations of selected UN partnerships for sustainable development. Of the 32 partnerships that responded to a survey questionnaire, only 28 % had completed an evaluation, 38 % had planned for some form of evaluation in the future, and 19% had no plans for evaluation.⁴³ Another survey examined 70 applicants for the Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development awards and five award winners. Again, evaluation and assessment were found not to be at the top of the partnerships' list of priorities. Only 6 % reported that they were required by donors to conduct impact assessments.⁴⁴

Yet, some partnerships feature well-developed impact assessment mechanisms. The World Food Programme, for example, has a strong monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment process: It organizes its partnership activities in teams working with detailed planning matrixes from the beginning of each initiative. Teams report on a quarterly or biannual basis on their progress towards the agreed targets and objectives. Senior management reviews the reports and presents them to their steering committee for discussion. In addition to formal reporting, management remains in contact with corporate partners through frequent, informal phone conversations.⁴⁵

Moreover, the Food and Agricultural Organization has carried out a comprehensive impact assessment of its partnerships in 2005. To carry out its work, the evaluation team used a combination of material and tools, like reviews of independent evaluations, auto-evaluations, as well as surveys and structured interviews with staff and partners.⁴⁶

Most of the large global health programs also have a strong record of independent evaluations. The Roll Back Malaria initiative, the Stop TB Partnership, the Special Programmes for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, the Global Forum for

⁴² Witte/Reinicke (2005), 74

⁴³ ENV/EPOC(2006)15/FINAL, 13

⁴⁴ Steets (2006), 87

⁴⁵ Cf. A/62/341, Box 7

⁴⁶ Sauvinet-Bedouin (2005), 7 et sqq.

Health Research and the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS for example have undergone external evaluations within the past five years.⁴⁷ The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization has also conducted a number of its own evaluations, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition reports on progress every year by checking targets against success. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has assessed global health partnerships from two perspectives: In 2002 by examining the outcomes of the partnerships themselves and in 2005 by conducting an assessment of country-level perspectives.⁴⁸ The 2002 study found that many global health partnerships are producing benefits beyond what individual partners could achieve, including attracting attention and funding to diseases, spurring countries to craft smarter policies that plan for the future, encouraging countries to strengthen program monitoring and accountability and boosting wider stakeholder participation. Yet many partnerships were perceived to be underperforming. Findings of the 2005 study suggested that the gains global health partnership had made came at a cost: The introduction of vertically oriented resources into horizontally organized health systems in a resource-constrained environment had two negative consequences. First, countries struggled to absorb resources because the partnerships did not provide adequate support to implement programs. Second, countries were burdened with parallel processes, because partnerships often bypass the processes that countries already have in place. In addition, global health partnerships had not adequately communicated with countries and partners.⁴⁹

The World Bank is a recognized good practice leader with regard to impact assessments. The World Bank Development Grant Facility has developed a procedure to monitor and evaluate their global and regional programs. Every partnership funded through the Development Grant Facility must conduct independent external evaluations every three to five years, in addition to providing annual financial and progress reports. Renewed funding decisions are based on evaluation results.⁵⁰ In 2001 the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group initiated a comprehensive review of its involvement in global programs, resulting in two reports. The first report focused on the Bank's internal support and oversight processes for managing its global program portfolio, the second contained additional findings from 26 case studies. In response to the recommendations spelled out in the reports, the World Bank developed a set of guidelines for its own

⁴⁷ Lele/Gerrard (2004), xii; Uttig/Zammit (2006), 22

⁴⁸ Uttig/Zammit (2006), 23

⁴⁹ Cf. "Developing successful Global Health Alliances" (2002) and "Global Health Partnerships: Assessing Country Consequences" (2005)

⁵⁰ A/62/341, box 7

global and regional program reviews and developed a sourcebook for evaluating global and regional partnership programs.

4.6 Organizational Capacity and Mainstreaming

Managing and establishing partnerships requires a substantial investment of money, energy and time. Even though an investment in institutional structures seems to be correlated to partnership success, many organizations engaging in partnerships fail to designate dedicated staff and sufficient financial resources to partnerships. This contributes to slow set-up processes, management problems and leads to frustration among partners.

Although integrating partnership activities into the organization's main structures and core operations is vital to ensure lasting engagement of staff, partners rely all too often on only a few committed individuals who work in relative isolation within their respective organization.⁵¹ The lack of mainstreaming seems to be the consequence of a more fundamental strategic problem, namely that for some public institutions it is still unclear just how partnerships are supposed to add value to mission accomplishment.⁵²

UN Agencies, Funds and Programs increasingly acknowledge the necessity to provide adequate organizational capacity in order to deal with partnerships. The establishment of private sector focal points throughout the UN system, as well as the United Nations Development Programme's introduction of partnership brokers at country level, are steps in the right direction. Different UN Agencies, Funds and Programs are currently thinking of appointing dedicated private sector officers within their legal departments. Some agencies report that they have created or increased budget lines for partnerships or hired new, dedicated staff for their country offices.⁵³ Some have started to include partnership management in job descriptions and provide various incentives for staff to reach out to external stakeholders.⁵⁴

4.7 Local Ownership

Another challenge that partnerships have to grapple with is to create sufficient local ownership. Many partnerships are conceptualized at headquarter level which makes it difficult to get support from the ground. Without local ownership, legitimacy and

⁵¹ Scott (2007), 11

⁵² Witte/Reinicke (2005), 72

⁵³ A/62/341, para. 33

⁵⁴ Witte/Reinicke (2005), 63

sustainability of partnerships are called into question. Local ownership requires a broad inclusion of stakeholders in the design and implementation of partnerships (which can, however, also lead to a slow-down in decision-making processes, reduced flexibility and increased operating costs). Measures to increase local institutional capacity, like strengthening local leadership and local management capacity may also be necessary to ensure local ownership.

Contrary to common partnership rhetoric, various studies reveal that affected actors tend to be underrepresented in partnerships and that the geographical imbalances known from intergovernmental fora are often replicated.⁵⁵ Yet, some partnerships have managed to ensure broad participation of stakeholders. The World Commission on Dams, for instance, included all major stakeholders. Members of the Commission were selected to achieve balanced representation and the Forum comprised a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Some partnerships, like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Global Reporting Initiative and the Stop TB Partnership, have institutionalized stakeholder assemblies to review partnership governance. Some feature multi-stakeholder boards as well as additional stakeholder advisory structures to ensure that the board and other governance systems are held accountable to broader stakeholder interests. These can be, among others, technical design and oversight committees (Global Reporting Initiative), stakeholder advisory groups to voice broader concerns (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) and regional and/or topic-based committees (Stop TB Partnership).⁵⁶

Partnerships can also increase local ownership by involving local stakeholders in their work. In the United Nations Development Programme's Growing Sustainable Business Initiative, for example, full-time partnership brokers operate in several countries to identify opportunities for investment and design innovative business models at the intersection of market-based interests and development goals.⁵⁷ The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation also strongly involves local business in its work. It seeks to reduce poverty by encouraging micro, small and medium enterprises in order to enable the poor to earn a living. In cooperation with local Governments, it helps to build technical infrastructure and provides capacity-building to upgrade productive and export capacities.⁵⁸ Some other noteworthy initiatives include the UN Global Compact's country-level networks, the United Nations Development Programme's China-Africa Business Council and the

⁵⁵ Schäferhoff/Campe/Kaan (2007), 32

⁵⁶ Cf. Rochlin/Zadek/Forstater (2008), 20

⁵⁷ A/62/341, Box 5

⁵⁸ A/62/341, Box 5

collaboration between the International Business Leaders Forum and the German Agency for Technical Assistance to build partnership capacity among selected African governments.⁵⁹

4.8 Transparency

The UN Business Guidelines demand partnerships to be transparent. Transparency is a critical precondition for accountability of partnerships, since decision-makers can only be held accountable if accurate information on the governance process is available.⁶⁰ The transparent use and exchange of information protects the credibility of the partnership and enables the building of trust.⁶¹ If transparency is absent, partnerships can create the illusion of progress, giving corporations and governments positive publicity without measurable results in development.⁶² Thus, information about partners, sources, use of funding and governance structures should be available for review. However, it has to be kept in mind that a high degree of transparency is associated with considerable costs for the partnership and binds resources, which are then not available for other activities.⁶³

Examples of transparent partnerships are the Global Fund, the Global Reporting Initiative and the world Commission on Dams. The Global Fund has high transparency standards in its grant making and financial disbursements and has institutionalized instruments to disseminate most of the other relevant information, including minutes of board meetings.⁶⁴

The Global Reporting Initiative's Articles of Association commit their Board to develop "procedures that enhance and ensure the transparency of decisions and decision-making processes" and the Secretariat to "post on the Internet minutes of meetings of the Board, Stakeholder Council and Technical Advisory Council".⁶⁵ In practice, the Global Reporting Initiative makes drafts of all relevant documents available to the public in a timely manner and informs stakeholders about how their feedback is dealt with.⁶⁶

Likewise, the World Commission on Dams managed to maintain a credible process by disseminating all working papers and documents about its operations to all stakeholders and posting them on the website. The partnership made special efforts

⁵⁹ Nelson (2007) (c)

⁶⁰ Schäferhoff/Campe/Kaan (2007), 28

⁶¹ Steiner (2003), 38

⁶² Hale/Mauzerall (2004), 226, cited in Schäferhoff/Campe/Kaan (2007), 28

⁶³ Bartsch (2008), 14

⁶⁴ Lu et al. (2006), 487, cited in Schäferhoff/Campe/Kaan (2007), 29

⁶⁵ CRI 2002g: art.24.8, cited in Beisheim/Dingwerth (2008), 23

⁶⁶ Beisheim/Dingwerth (2008), 23

to overcome the digital divide by adopting a communications strategy that, in addition to the Internet, included personal contact through seminars, workshops and official consultation.⁶⁷

4.9 Need for a Systematic Approach to Partnerships

For public organizations with strongly decentralized structures as well as for the United Nations system as a whole, it has been a challenge to develop a consistent approach to partnerships while at the same time allowing flexibility for experimentation and local drive. Across the UN system, for example, Agencies, Funds and Programs have reached very different stages in cooperating with non-state actors, with some engaging strategically while others are still cautiously experimenting with individual cases.

On an operational level, various Agencies, Funds or Programs have developed their own specific guidelines for working with private actors which build on the general UN Business Guidelines created at the UN Headquarters. While different missions and tasks of different UN organizations require different guidelines, their basic compatibility with the general guidelines should be ensured.

To date, there is still a degree of confusion with regard to the consistent application of the guidelines. Unresolved legal questions contribute to time lags, among them the use of UN name and emblem, liability and indemnity issues, as well as the question whether UN bodies may accept pro bono services and gratis personnel from companies.⁶⁸ A consistent system-wide approach will not only help to overcome these legal hurdles but can also generate significant synergies, for example through a joint approach to partner screening and selection or through the exchange of emerging lessons and mutual learning.

The striving for a common approach to partnerships is reflected by several operations. First, the UN is currently in the process of revising the 2000 UN Business Guidelines to better reflect the shared experiences of the organization, help increase the scale, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of engagement with business and overcome the above-mentioned legal hurdles. All UN organizations have been encouraged to contribute to this process.

Moreover, the UN is scaling up knowledge exchange and learning across the UN system. The UN-Business Focal Point Newsletter is a key communication tool for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Various peer-to-peer UN Private Sector

⁶⁷ Wigell (2008), 15,16

⁶⁸ A/62/341, para. 52

Focal Points meetings have taken place since the late 1990s. The UN-Business web portal (currently in development), the partnership fairs and the partnership database hosted by the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Global Compact Office's database of corporate responsibility and partnership practices, as well as the partnering skills courses all enhance system-wide learning. Furthermore, there is ever-growing research on partnerships, amongst others, numerous publications by the Global Compact and the United Nations Development Programme.

4.10 Integration and Alignment

This last challenge applies to global partnerships only. Many of these partnerships are struggling to come to grips with the general tension between their mostly supply-driven and vertical approach and the Paris Declaration's and Accra Agenda for Action's call for harmonization of donor procedures and the alignment with country programs. The growing number of global partnerships has all too often led to poorly coordinated solutions and duplication among aid initiatives. The assessment of global health partnerships, for example, counts 47 initiatives in the area of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis alone, of which 24 are concerned with fighting HIV/AIDS - effectively coordinating all these initiatives is hardly feasible anymore.⁶⁹

The sheer number of initiatives could overstrain the scarce capacity of developing countries since they often call for the establishment of new structures instead of building on existing country systems⁷⁰. Often, programs are not aligned to partner countries' broader development agendas, including poverty reduction strategies, budget frameworks and assistance strategies. Thus, while individual initiatives may operate successfully in their own system, the challenge to take wider implications into account has not been sufficiently tackled so far.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has developed good practice guidance for integration and effectiveness of global programs at the country level.⁷¹ It calls on partners to think twice whether the establishment of a new global program is really necessary and suggests a step-by-step approach based on the following questions: Is there a compelling need for a new collective global or regional action? If so, does that global action require earmarked global financing for country programs? If so, can the financing be channeled through an existing

⁶⁹ Cf. Martens, 41 (2007) (a)

⁷⁰ Schäferhoff/Campe/Kaan (2007), 22

⁷¹ OECD, COM/DCD/DEV(2006)9, 2006

institution, or is a new global program needed? If so, is there a clear rationale for the scale of financing proposed?

Two good practice examples are the Education for All Fast Track Initiative and the Global Environment Facility. The Fast Track Initiative rates well in terms of alignment and harmonization due to the strong link of funding to broadly endorsed education sector strategies.⁷² The Global Environment Facility is also reasonably well aligned, featuring good coordination with national stakeholders.

5. Implications for UNICEF

Partnerships are here to stay. They have become an integral part of the UN system, the business community and civil society. There is no sign in sight that the rising partnership trend will reverse any time soon. The ever expanding partnership agenda affords many thrilling opportunities for public and private actors to further their goals, ultimately in the interest of humanity, but also creates new challenges which can only be tackled in a joint effort of all actors involved.

Up to now, UNICEF is a strong leader in the field of partnerships. In order to keep its leading role and to achieve the best results for children, UNICEF needs to embrace a strategic approach towards partnerships. Its partnership strategy needs to be coherent, yet flexible enough to allow for necessary experimentation. With regard to the choice of partners, the planning, managing and implementation of partnerships, as well as impact assessment, mainstreaming and alignment, the strategy should be based on emerging international good practice. A strengthened strategic approach will enable UNICEF to optimize the impact of its programs and create the best results for children.

⁷² OECD, COM/DCD/DEV(2006)7, 2006

Appendix I: Acronyms

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Appendix IV: About GPPi

The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) is an independent think tank based in Berlin and Geneva. Our mission is to develop innovative strategies for effective and accountable governance and to achieve lasting impact at the interface of the public sector, business and civil society through research, consulting and debate.

Our Approach

- We are an independent and non-profit institute. We receive project funding from foundations as well as our project partners and clients from the public and private sectors. We re-invest profits from consulting activities into our research work.
- We build bridges between research and practice. Our international team combines research and public policy expertise with management consulting skills. We foster the exchange of knowledge and experience between researchers and practitioners.
- We promote policy entrepreneurship. Our work strengthens strategic communities around pressing policy challenges by bringing together the public sector, civil society and business.

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