

Sustainable Development Partnerships

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Private sector firms, nongovernmental organizations, rich and poor governments, and international organizations have always joined forces in various combinations to target specific global public policy goals. Although such collaboration is not new (witness the Green Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s), sustainable development partnerships are more organized and ambitious than ever before and are now a prominent part of the sustainable development policy landscape. However, systematic information about partnerships remains somewhat scattered, hard to find, and sometimes inaccessible; thus, it is useful to summarize a few of the most helpful Web resources on this key topic.

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) maintains the most comprehensive inventory of partnerships at <http://www.un.org.ezp2.harvard.edu/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm>. This inventory began at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>) and continues as the primary device to register partnerships that choose to relate their activities with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (http://www.un.org.ezp2.harvard.edu/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English_AVSSD_PlanInipl.pdf). The inventory contains information on more than 300 partnerships and can be queried by keywords, geographic scope, and lead partner. For each partnership, the database provides basic information including a Web site, partnership goals, organizational structure, and (where available) financial information.

There are very few business-led partnerships registered under CSD. Many such partnerships are affiliated with the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (<http://www.wbcasd.org/>), which provides basic descriptive information on partnership activities. However, the information at this Web site is not organized analogously to the CSD online database, and there is no way to generate structured lists of partnerships by topic or geography. The World Economic Forum, most well-known for its high-profile annual meetings in Davos, Switzerland, also promotes business engagement in sustainable development partnerships. Information about its many initiatives can be found at <http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/Initiatives+subhome>.

Another source of information about businesses pledging to support global policy goals is the Global Compact (<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>). Participation in the Global Compact is organized around 10 core principles rather than specific initiatives, so the information on its Web site is somewhat general: Participants can be queried

by name, type, region, country, and the date of joining the compact. In addition, details about more than 40 regional and local networks are available.

Many donor governments maintain Web sites about the partnerships in which they participate. For example, U.S. partnerships are documented at <http://www.sdp.gov/>; British efforts are detailed at <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/international/partnerships/index.htm>; and Canadian initiatives are described at http://www.canada2002earthsummit.gc.ca/sd_action/partnerships_showcased_e.cfm. For the most part, these donor government sites are skimpy on details, providing primarily snapshot summaries and links to external Web sites.

Multilateral donors are also very active in the partnership movement. The United Nations Development Programme maintains a useful service, the Global Learning Network, to spread best practices and lessons learned among partners ([http://pppue.undp.org/index.cfni?niodule=ActiveWeb &page=WebPage&s=Global](http://pppue.undp.org/index.cfni?niodule=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=Global)). The World Bank has extensive partnership initiatives involving business and nongovernmental organizations, and its research results, project examples, and other tools are available at (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20094287~menuPK:220444~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,OO.html>).

Think tanks and academic institutes have also emerged around the subject of partnerships. The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) works on sustainable development governance issues and is one of the most active think tanks working on these questions. It maintains a rich collection of information resources at <http://www.gppi.net>, including newsletters, research reports, and conference information. The Civil Society Partnerships Programme is another very active think tank with a number of valuable online resources (<http://www.odi.org.uk/cspp/Index.html>). It maintains one of the few annotated bibliographies on this topic (<http://www.odi.org.uk/cspp/Publications/Index.html#bibs>). Cambridge University has launched a post-graduate educational program on partnerships; information on the program as well as papers and partnership tools are available at <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/>.

The partnership movement has sparked a number of award programs, the best of which integrate the prize process with research and capacity building. The Equator Initiative is one such effort, seeking to foster more effective partnerships linking poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation (<http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/>). The cornerstone of the effort is a biennial Equator Prize, and a great deal of useful information on nominees and winners can be found on this Web site. Especially noteworthy is a searchable online database that has information about all 378 prize nominees (<http://www.equatorinitiative.net/advsearch.lasso>). The information is loosely structured and not complete for all nominees, but it is a valiant effort to encourage broader use of best practices on very challenging issues.

A similar combination of activities is carried out by the seeD Initiative (Supporting Entrepreneurs in Environment and Development, <http://seedinit.org/>). Like the Equator Initiative, seeD is organized around an award that recognizes successful

partnerships, research on what makes partnerships effective, and mechanisms to document and disseminate best practices. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund has similar goals but puts greater emphasis on financing partnerships. Its Web site, <http://www.cepf.net>, contains information on partnership programs that have been funded and offers details on how to apply for grants.

A number of Web sites have emerged that try to harness the power exemplified by eBay on behalf of sustainable development partnerships. The Clinton Global Initiative (<http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/>), for example, serves as a clearinghouse within which organizations can record specific commitments to achieving sustainable development goals, identify suitable partners, and track progress. The Web site contains a searchable database of partnership opportunities and other resources. GlobalGiving (<http://www.globalgiving.com>) adopts a more retail approach, permitting individuals and organizations to identify suitable projects and make financial contributions online. Would-be donors can browse project descriptions organized by region and subject, or they can use a "Donation Wizard," which suggests projects likely to be of interest following a short set of questions. Finally, Millennium Promise (<http://www.millenniumpromise.org>) provides online tools to simplify individual support for specific projects advancing the Millennium Development Goals in Africa.

A number of organizations focus primarily on constructive criticism, seeking to prod the partnership process as a whole onto a more effective footing. Many of the Web sites associated with these efforts contain useful information. The Global Action Network (<http://www.gan-net.net>) has a number of thoughtfully critical working papers, status reports, and case studies. The Access Initiative (<http://www.accessinitiative.org>) has seized on the critical issues of transparency and accountability, which are too frequently overlooked in partnership implementation. The Web site contains a trove of useful guidelines, case studies, and practical tools.

Finally, the big "poster children" of the partnership movement have extensive Web sites with valuable information. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) has extensive, detailed information at <http://www.gavialliance.org>, including specific accounting of where funds are being spent and how GAVI is governed (a practice many partnerships fail to follow). The Roll Back Malaria Partnership provides similar information at <http://www.rbm.who.int/>. And one of the most longstanding and successful models, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, has a wealth of useful information at its site, <http://www.cgiar.org/>.

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