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The Role of Partnership in Achieving Program Objectives: Issues and Challenges

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Africa's Health in 2010

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Partnership



Is it a global buzzword for collaboration between all kinds of organizations, or is it a core element for sustainable development?



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Partnership

- Long history in international development literature
 - 1969 Pearson Report “Partners in Development”
 - 1980 Brandt Report “North-South” stressing importance of North-South dialogue and co-operation
 - 1996 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) report on development co-operation



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What is Partnership in the Context of Health?

An organizational model that bring together groups that include governments, international agencies, civil society, private sector representatives, into a formal, collaborative relationship dedicated to the pursuit of a shared health goal.



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Characteristics of Partnership

- **Partnership** - a union of equals – (equity)
- **Partnership** - a mutually beneficial alliance between orgs; roles, responsibilities & accountabilities are clearly defined
- **Partnership** - based on trust, shared vision & commitment to common objectives
- **Risks & benefits are shared in pursuit of a shared goal**



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Why is Partnership Vital in the Development Process?

- Enhance effectiveness & efficiency of development efforts
- Access to crucial resources - expertise & relationships that would otherwise be inaccessible
- Partnerships produce new knowledge to inform development – *learning is a key benefit derived from partnership*
- Accountability leads to stronger partners – Mutual accountability



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Factors for effective partnership

- Development of trust between parties
- Cooperative interpersonal relationships
- Active communication
- Mutual influence
- Joint learning



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Types of Partnerships

- North – South
 - Donor with local NGO/CBO/FBO
 - Donor with government
 - Donor with private corporation
 - International NGO (INGO) with local NGO/CBO/FBO
 - International NGO (INGO) with government
 - INGO with INGO



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Types of Partnerships

- South – South
 - NGO/CBO/FBO with government
 - NGO/CBO/FBO with government
 - NGO/CBO/FBO with private corporation
 - Government with private corporation



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Effectiveness of Partnership

- Effectiveness can be measured through:
 - Partner satisfaction
 - The achievement of program goals & objectives



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Effectiveness – Partner Satisfaction

- Comparative analysis of 4 case studies - partnership between US PVOs & African NGOs in Kenya/Ethiopia (*Darcy Ashman, 2001*)
- Perception Gap
 - *US Partners – high degree of satisfaction*
 - *African partners – more reserved, identifying several concerns with partnership*



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Effectiveness – Partner Satisfaction

African perception

- Inequality
- Lack of mutual influence (*negotiate mutually satisfactory arrangements*)
- Length of contract short (*1-3 years*)
- Little say in what will be reported, when, & in what format
- Impact of internal policies of US partners on Africa partner organizations (*e.g. staff turnover*)



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Effectiveness – Achievement of Objectives

- Historical approach to US foreign assistance - strong partnerships are crucial to overall impact of work supported in Africa
- USAID logo in the 1960s, 1970s, and currently –

Reflects commitment to partnership



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Partnership: A Community of Learning

“As a basic principle, locally-owned country development strategies and targets should emerge from an open and collaborative dialogue by local authorities with civil society and with external partners, about their shared objectives and their respective contributions to the common enterprise”

- Development Assistance Committee. 1996. Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- GAO report of March 2001 – “USAID fights AIDS in Africa, but better data needed to measure impact”
 - Missions & regional offices use inconsistent indicators to measure program performance
 - Data collection is sporadic
 - There is no requirement for missions & regional offices to regularly report the data they collect
- Turning point in reporting requirements – now standard across USAID health programs



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- Increasing need for the establishment of systems that will allow USAID & partners to effectively manage program portfolio
- Creation of a community of learning for USAID & its partners



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- Support to develop standardized indicators in consultation with other partner organizations
- These indicators enable program managers to track similar results over time & across multiple countries
- Use of program monitoring data for jointly tracking progress towards program objectives & for decision making for program improvement



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- Program accountability & improvement depend on collection, analysis, reporting, & use of data
- Opportunities for mutual accountability develop around program implementation & the learning process resulting from joint analysis, use, & reporting of program data



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- Decisions made through consensus yield better, more relevant choices of projects, programs, or policies
- Solutions are more likely to be tailored to problem as perceived by those affected & resulting benefits more likely sustained



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Partnership & Strategic Information

- M&E Partnership Principles
 - Shared vision of all those in partnership
 - Genuine participation & collective decision making
 - Transparent, mutual feedback & communication
 - Openness to differences & conflict resolution
 - Trust, accountability, mutuality & openness



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Partnershi_ & Re_ional Pro_grams

- Partnership is a very important approach for regional programs
 - Produces strategic advantage in program implementation
- Regional partnerships allow donor funds to make greater impact in several countries, without having to invest directly in each country thru bilateral programs – **POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP RESOURCES**



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Partnership & Regional Programs

- Sub-regional health organizations make significant contributions addressing health needs in countries within the sub-regions – e.g. ECSCA, WAHO
- Regional partnership can play the following role in achieving program objectives:
 - advocacy for policy change
 - resource mobilization
 - generation & dissemination of evidence-based best practices
 - harmonization of standards & guidelines



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Partnership: Issues & Challenges

- Southern agencies argued that relationship must change from hierarchical donor-recipient or patron-client to that of partnership
- Shared power - not an end in itself - but directly linked to achieving better development outcomes mutually valued by US & African partners (To what extent is power shared?)



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Partnership : Issues & Challenges

- Leadership & absorptive capacity
- South-to-North accountability is traditionally centered around funding
- Limited funding for local organizations make relationship with organizations from the North look like dependency rather than partnership



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Partnership : Issues & Challenges

- Functional accountability – accounting for resources & immediate impacts thru narrative & regular financial reports

Versus

- Strategic accountability – Intentional, if impact & results of programs on the end user & communities it is intended to serve...



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Partnership : Issues & Challenges

- To what extent does principles of collaboration conflict with established principles of accountability :
 - Tensions between partnership & accountability
- Power Sharing
 - Where is the balance of power?
- Assessment of partnership
 - Need for mutual assessment of the partnership relationship



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Partnership : Issues & Challenges

- Communication – Space & Time
- Manpower – Human resource
- Financial constraints
- Organizational capacity
- Strategic Information - Monitoring & Evaluation



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Partnership



A core element for sustainable development



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What is Changing?

- Significant shift in the degree of influence & responsibility afforded local partners
- Recognition of resource contributions by African organizations – knowledge of the environment, relationship with communities & other stakeholders, etc
- Partnership management behavior change (*perceived as controlling & unresponsive by African partners*)
- Acting as partners rather than as contractors



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Some Questions to Ponder Over

- What is the future of partnerships in Africa?
- What impact will the current global economic crises have on partnerships?
- To what extent is there real shift towards equity in partnerships between African & US organizations?



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