Fostering Intersectoral Partnering:
A Guide to Promoting Cooperation Among
Government, Business, and Civil Society Actors

By Steve Waddell and L. David Brown

Fostering Intersectoral Partnering:
A Guide to Promoting Cooperation Among Government, Business, and Civil Society Actors

By Steve Waddell and L. David Brown

ABSTRACT

Addressing issues such as health care, low-income housing, and economic development often involves building intersectoral partnerships (ISPs) -- relationships between organizations based in the state, market and civil society sectors. But because of the substantial differences between these sectors, building these relationships is a difficult and lengthy process with many unusual problems. Reviewing international experiences brings to light some valuable lessons about building successful ISPs. This paper looks at inter-organizational partnerships in general, and then ISPs in particular through five stages of ISP development: (1) identifying preconditions for ISPs, (2) convening actors and defining problems, (3) setting shared directions, (4) implementing joint action strategies, and (5) expanding and institutionalizing success. It concludes with nine lessons to guide ISP formation.

DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

Intersectoral Partnerships, or ISPs, is a term that refers to activity that involves collaboration between organizations based in three sectors: the state (government), the market (business), and civil society (NGOs, non-profits, etc.). Many large and complex issues, such as housing for the urban poor, grassroots economic development, and health care, require such a range of resources and abilities that ISPs are an important approach to effectively address them. ISPs can help reduce duplication of effort and activity that works at cross-purposes; they can also stimulate innovation and unusually creative solutions if the diverse goals of participants can be addressed. In effect, ISPs can produce activities in which "the whole is more than the sum of the parts".

However, building ISPs often takes more time and effort than other forms of partnership. To better understand the process of building ISPs, it is useful to first understand inter-organizational collaborating in general. Then ISPs, which are a subset of this broader field, can be described more specifically. This includes a description of more specific actions that will support the development of ISPs through five stages of development.

Inter-Organizational Partnerships

"Partnership" is a term that can be applied to a wide variety of inter-organizational forums where information and resources are shared and exchanged to produce outcomes that one partner working alone could not achieve.[1] In their broadest sense they include everything from informal forums, such

as lunches or informal contacts, to formal systems, such as a formal consultation processes or new legal entities. Rather than think of partnerships as an outcome, it is useful to think of them as a process: as an action called *partnering*. This conveys the key active aspect of partnerships: they are not static, but are always changing as goals, abilities and relationships change.

Partnering happens for several reasons. One reason is that the parties simply want to increase the scale of their activity. Another is that they want to take advantage of the strengths of a partner. A third reason is that they want to exchange technologies or information -- to learn from one another. And a fourth reason is that they want to develop undefined opportunities, based in the understanding that dynamic interaction creates new ideas and solutions to problems.

Building partnerships emphasizes very different skills than from those required in the more familiar hierarchical organizations -- skills like listening intensely, questioning perceptively, building trust, integrating multiple perspectives, negotiating power and resource differences, identifying common ground, and creating shared visions.

Interorganizational cooperation can take many forms and involve few or many partners. Figure 1 portrays two common patterns of cooperation between two partners, though similar organizational arrangements can involve many more than two. Some partnerships involve the exchange of information and resources to strengthen the partners individual activities through a third organization. This is graphically represented as Structure A. An example might be participation in an information exchange, such as a joint committee, that enables both parties to learn information of value to their respective activities. For the business this committee might be seen as one for new product development, whereas for an NGO it would be seen as a forum to press for the company to meet community needs. In this type of partnership structure, exchanges are usually in terms of skills, knowledge, financial capital and general information, and the exchange itself is the reason for joining together. The forum is very often informal, although as partnering progresses the forum can take on more formal characteristics.

Figure 1: Basic Partnership Structures

Partner Structure A:
Exchange Focus

Partner Structure B:
New Venture Focus
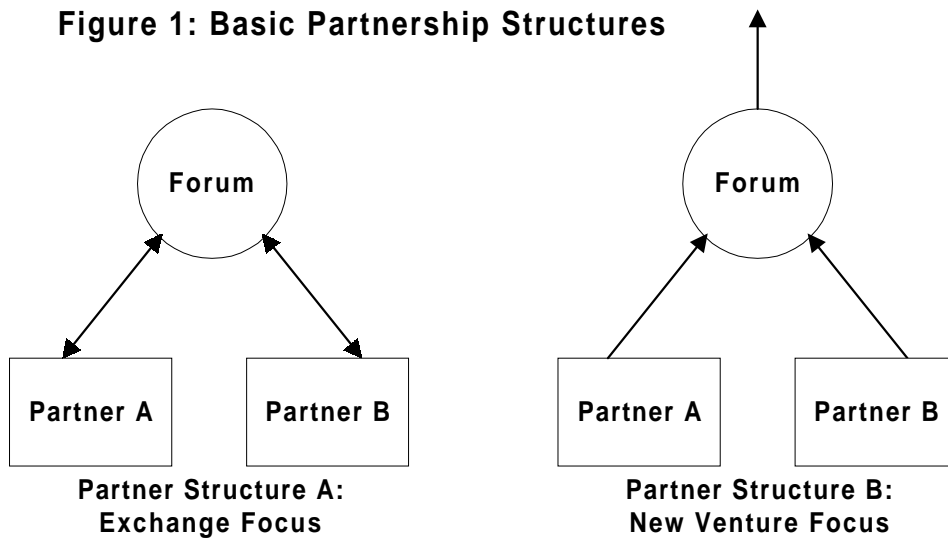
A second type of partnering involves the creation of a new organization to undertake a specific activity -- a new venture that may require activities quite different from the core activities of either partner. In this case the new forum itself may produce new services, products or infrastructure. These types of partnering tend to take a more formal structure with a separate legal entity. They are often preceded by extensive contacts among the partners in less formal relationships. Of course there are many variations and combinations of these forms.

The vision and organizational form of an alliance are often shaped by two key factors summarized in Table 1.[2] The *degree of difference* among partners will affect the amount of effort that will be required to build and maintain a relationship. ISPs require substantial effort because partners are quite different in terms of culture, goals, power, and history. The second factor, the *nature of the task* to be jointly undertaken, influences the kind of organization required by the partnership. When tasks are very general and require only information sharing about respective parties' activity, for example, the partnership can be loosely organized. When the tasks are specific, complex, and require substantial resource exchange and commitment, then more tightly-organized partnerships are required.

Traditional business partnerships generally have low diversity and high task specificity -- the qualities most facilitative of partnership formation. In such cases, formal third party organizations which produce their own product or service -- the type of forum that demands the greatest amount of trust -- are relatively common. In contrast, forming partnerships where there is great diversity among partners and is more difficult. This describes the situations facing partnerships between non-government organizations and businesses, for example. These organizations have very different purposes, members, resources and values. Most often the issues that lead NGOs and businesses to make contact are large-scale problems with contentious views about goals, strategies and responsibilities -- problems such as education, housing, health care, and the environment.

Table 1. Dimensions of Partnering

	Low Partner Diversity	High Partner Diversity
Low Task Specificity	**Vision:** Agreement on general problems relevant to similar constituents. **Organization:** Associations or ideological networks that allow loose coordination among similar organizations	**Vision:** Agreement on general problems relevant to diverse constituents. **Organization:** Broad social movements and geographically-based networks that allow loose coordination among diverse organizations.
High Task Specificity	**Vision:** Agreement on specific problems and actions needed by similar constituents. **Organization:** Issue-based networks, alliances or joint ventures that coordinate task and resource allocation among similar organizations.	**Vision:** Agreement on specific problems and actions needed by diverse constituents. **Organization:** Coalitions and partnerships that coordinate task and resource allocation among diverse organizations.

Figure 2: The Sectors

Government Business
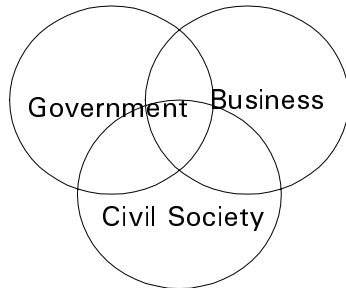
Civil Society

**Intersectoral Partnerships
Combine
Two or More Sectors**

Intersectoral Partnerships

The sectors of the state, market, and civil society are organized around quite different interests and concerns. The institutions of the state are concerned with the creation and maintenance of public order and the distribution of public goods. State organizations include the various levels of government: bureaucracies organized often as departments or ministries; state-appointed bodies such as the judiciary, regulatory boards and councils; agencies that provide public services, such as housing and economic development; and government-controlled enterprises such as utilities, education systems and health care institutions. The institutions of the market are concerned with the efficient production of goods and services. Common market organizational forms are public corporations, private companies, private partnerships, proprietorships, and franchises. The institutions of civil society are concerned with the expression and preservation of core community values and beliefs. Civil society includes non-governmental organizations, people's movements, citizens' groups, consumer associations, religious institutions, women's organizations, and indigenous people's associations. Civil society organizations may be grassroots organizations directly serving individuals of their community, or networks of grassroots organizations like federations.

Of course, there are many hybrid forms. Some notable ones are producer cooperatives and credit unions, business federations, semi-public agencies, political parties, and private universities. In these types of organizations a mixture of the values, missions, and culture of two or more of the sectors are active.

Intersectoral partnerships are a special type of partnering that span two or more institutional sectors, and so operate across the intersecting circles in Figure 2. The type of connection can vary substantially in response to different issues and local resources. Linkages vary in duration and in scale of activity as well as form of organization. Joint focus groups, for example, are a relatively weak form of linkage where a third party may take the initiative to call parties from different sectors together for a one-shot dialogue on some issue. A somewhat stronger form could engage the parties in a series of conferences. These events might be first steps in building a longer-term collaboration that makes larger demands on the parties and is capable of producing more substantial joint action, such as intersectoral committees that assess and act on social and economic development issues. When discussions produce new organizations such as an intermediary or joint partnership, they may press for substantial partner commitments over a long period of time.

The benefits of ISPs can be activity that reduces duplication and working at cross-purposes. By bringing together parties who are stakeholders in an issue, ISPs can provide better coordination by more explicitly considering each other's values, goals, and activities. However, ISPs work best when they can help each sector achieve its own goals. They imply a willingness of one sector to allow the other sectors to influence decisions that shape resource allocations, project goals, plans, activities, and outcomes. For civil society, this means ISPs must be responsive to the values and concerns of communities they represent; ISPs give civil society organizations an opportunity to obtain greater community benefit from business investment, for example. ISPs must also be responsive to businesses' profit objectives; for example, ISPs give businesses an opportunity to broaden their

markets. And for governments, ISPs must provide ways to increase public well-being; ISPs present opportunities to involve others in providing public goods at lower cost and to a wider range of citizens.

Intersectoral partnering can address "messes" or large scale issues that no one sector has the resources and ability to manage, though each has a stake in issue resolution. Three common foci of such partnership activity in recent years have been (1) finance industry and economic development, (2) environmental concerns, and (3) "public" issues like health and education. In each of these areas, problems impact all sectors. For example, economic development is such a focal area of government concern that regulation and even government initiatives are key industry issues. Yet, successful economic development often depends upon private capital for asset mobilization and on local communities for effective investment and use of the assets.

By joining together the sectors, a new range of outcomes arise that are impossible for the sectors working independently. When they work well, the different interests of the sectors give rise to a creative tension that leads to innovation in terms of product development and delivery, governance and expression of local values. With micro-enterprise lending, for example, banks and other lending agencies develop new lending products and delivery vehicles beyond traditional branch systems. And for NGOs in economic development, access to capital is increased for locally produced goods and services.

ISP Example 1. Micro-Enterprise Lending

> The key sectoral elements of micro-enterprise lending are: (I) a civil society peer group of micro-entrepreneurs, and (ii) a financier, either for-profit or non-profit, working within a (iii) government-organized monetary and supportive policy system. To facilitate the relationships, (iv) an intermediary (like ACCION International) is often created to ensure the goals of the parties are met. Working together, they loan money to micro-entrepreneurs who traditionally are outside of the financial system. Loans are made to micro-entrepreneurs via the peer groups, and the groups provide a system to support repayment of loans and development of the micro-entrepreneur.

ISPs can transform the capacities of their participants. This is demonstrated by the Orangi Pilot Project, an NGO that created civil society-government intersectoral partnership to construct thousands of local latrines and sewage systems at very low cost in urban slums in Pakistan. The partnership involved neighborhood organizations of local residents who did most of the construction labor, an NGO which provided appropriate technology and helped organize the neighborhood organizations, government agencies which built major drains and treatment plants to handle the sewage, and international donor agencies who provided financial resources to expand the initial successful pilot program. The resulting partnership produced improvements in the local sanitation system that could not have been produced by any of them working alone. It also led to new activities by the successful resident organizations on a variety of fronts.

ISP Example 2. The Orangi Pilot Project

> The Orangi Pilot Project was started in 1980 by the NGO of that name to improve conditions in a large slum (about 1,000,000 people) in Karachi. When residents indicated that sanitation was a primary concern, OPP organized them to use a newly devised technology to build thousands of inexpensive latrines and local drains. It also worked with government agencies and international donors to develop major drains and treatment plants. By 1994, more than 97% of the area was served by the new sewage system and more than 90% of the families had their own latrines. All but 6% of the costs were covered by the residents of Orangi (Khan, 1995).

Intersectoral partnerships are not restricted to developing countries. In the U.S. such partnerships involving all three sectors are increasingly common for economic development purposes. Local civil society organizations represent their communities' values and can help translate them into products and services that are produced and delivered with the expertise of the market sector and the structural support of the public sector. Governments provide tax and legislative support for housing programs, local banks provide investment capital and expertise, and civil society organizations provide delivery vehicles and help create new products responsive to the values of local communities. For example, Pittsburgh community development programs draw on the resources of all three sectors to deal with poverty problems in the inner city.

ISP Example 3. Pittsburgh Community Development Programs

> In Pittsburgh, activist community-based organizations (CBOs) and banks meet regularly to identify and develop new market opportunities, with the CBOs actually involved in delivering and creating new financial service products, such as a lending product designed specifically for low-income African-American women. The CBOs provide new delivery vehicles, like community meetings, to enable access to a market that does not use traditional bank branch-based delivery mechanisms. The banks provide the capital, but the government also subsidizes housing development through programs like those with tax credits and public infrastructure renewal (Waddell, 1996).

In this case the government has found a way to achieve public housing goals more effectively and more efficiently. The bottom line is improved quality of life for poor populations, a larger market that is growing richer, and a government with enhanced legitimacy through a citizenship with a higher level of welfare.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR FOSTERING ISPs

Building ISPs is not an easy or short-term process, and there are hazards involved in trying and failing. However, the outcomes can be impressive for all partners. Builders of ISPs are leaders in building sustainable development. They are pioneers in developing a new organizing and development "technology;" they are also pioneers in developing greater harmony by integrating economic and social development strategies.

Throughout the process of developing an ISP, rule number one is to help build and maintain the vision of what could be, and the reasons for undertaking the initiative. This means not just keeping people sensitive to the problem, but also keeping people focused upon the unique "win-win" situations that ISPs can produce. As with any technology during its early developmental stages, building ISPs demands experimentation and sharing of information about how common issues can be addressed. Intersectoral partnering is often characterized by relatively high levels of conflict as the representatives of the different sectors learn about each other and struggle to define goals that are complementary rather than conflicting. This struggle is particularly complicated when individuals and organizations are intolerant of the values and goals of others, or more concerned with their position or control than in solving problems or creating new opportunities.

Although ISPs continually produce important "process" outcomes like interpersonal relationships and action plans, often they do not produce more concrete outcomes, like new housing or an impact upon

environmental problems, until five years or more after initial contacts are made. The sectoral representatives must get to know each other, and learn each other's ways of thinking, and build trust with small initiatives before major projects can be undertaken. Mature ISPs typically go through five development stages with particular tasks and challenges: (1) identifying preconditions for ISPs, (2) convening actors and defining problems, (3) setting shared directions, (4) implementing joint action strategies, and (5) expanding and institutionalizing successes.

Stage 1: Identifying Preconditions for Cooperation

If an issue is large-scale and involves stakeholders from the different sectors, then an ISP will likely be needed to address it effectively. However, the idea of an ISP often is quite novel. Many times an organization may be satisfied with its own level of achievement, and an outsider is needed to "reframe" the situation to inspire them to have a much bigger influence upon an issue.

Very often the idea of intersectoral collaboration emerges from frustration and lack of success with other approaches by a sector or organization acting independently. Therefore, it is not uncommon that an ISP begins in a "crisis" a combative atmosphere where the sectoral representatives are meeting as a "last resort", or where one blames the problem upon the other. In this type of atmosphere, the parties hesitate to talk, perceive one another as adversaries, and distrust each other's intentions.

Any successful cooperation must be driven by real problems and needs that touch all potential partners -- although sometimes the partners' role in the problem is not initially evident and they may perceive another party as "responsible." People interested in building ISPs may want initially to ask:

1.1   What is the nature of problem that an ISP might solve, and why is it necessary to bring together actors from different sectors to solve it?
- How are key actors (stakeholders) affected by the problem?
- To what extent are resources from different stakeholders required?

As a first step, actually describing in writing the different sectors' stake in an issue is useful. Why should they be interested or concerned about the outcomes? What's "in it for them" to get involved? What skills, human resources or material resources does a sector have that are necessary to address the problem? One of the surprises with intersectoral partnerships is that new resources are often discovered and traditional resources are made more useful.

You may want to do some "brainstorming" with other colleagues with an interest in, and knowledge about, the issue. This is a time for "blue-skying" and identifying ideal scenarios without getting bogged down in the problems of resources, personalities and histories. Use "what if..." to build alternative ideal scenarios, such as "what if we had a well-organized small business sector...." The task is not to resolve the issues; rather it is to identify possibilities.

Once you have a blue-sky scenario, the next step revolves around identifying the realities. This means doing some research and answering questions like these:

1.2   What is the organizational capacity of the sector to get involved in a partnership?
- Do the key stakeholders have effective organizations?
- What are the key organizations and players in the sectors?

This is "list-making" step. Some of the information you will already know; however, often issues will require some research and footwork, including conversations with people active in the sector.

The success of intersectoral partnerships is related to the relative development of the various sectors themselves. If actors in one sector are clearly less organized or less able to mobilize resources, then those in other sectors may be tempted to resort to simple power plays. This, of course, undermines the trust that is an essential partnership ingredient. However, substantial imbalance in the comparative development of the sectors can also produce frustration that results not from misunderstanding, but from the inability of some representatives to bring anything meaningful to the relationship.

Sometimes the first task of one sector is to actively support the development of another. In the Orangi Pilot Project, the first step in building new sewage systems was to help neighborhoods organize themselves into street organizations. Without such organization, it may have been difficult for the sector to speak with a coherent voice and so, impossible for it to participate effectively in a partnership. In the West African Enterprise Network, for example, it was important to organize small businesses into associations that could give voice to their concerns as a precondition for efforts to encourage governments to adopt policies more supportive of their sector.

ISP Example 4. The West African Enterprise Network

> Through the Implementing Policy Change Project, the USAID Africa Bureau supported the development of the West African Enterprise Network, a regional association of over 200 entrepreneurs who have joined together to improve the enabling environment for private sector development. The network constitutes a strong regional association that promotes reforms conducive to private sector development and engage in dialogue with national and regional leaders (NPI Small Business Task Force 1996).

Even sectors that appear moribund usually can be found to have some representatives and activity. In economies where private sector activity is forbidden -- as has been common in banking, for example -- some private sector activity of informal lending can always be found. In societies that seem bereft of civil society organizations, extended families and religious affiliations may be the basis for association development. And in societies that appear chaotic and without any government, local "strongmen" or "wise elders" are usually present. The challenge is to be informed and realistic about the potential for the type of ISP exchange possible. But also keep in mind that one goal of an ISP can be to actually build capacity of weak sectors for more substantial exchange.

Within the sectors there are almost always some alliances. With government, coalitions are a common working form and collective initiatives based upon resources, interests or power often are numerous. In business, joint ventures, chambers of commerce and federations are common. And in civil society, coalitions around common issues or relationships -- to more effectively use the often meager resources of the sector -- can often be found. The number and quality of these alliances is an indicator of the potential for intersectoral development, since an organization which has successfully worked in an intra-sectoral collective initiative has already gained skills and experience to work with other organizations.

When identifying potential partners, keep in mind that within sectors there are often several levels of organization. Local, direct delivery and grassroots organizations, may organize themselves into larger federations, alliances or collectives. NGOs often join regional groupings of other NGOs with a similar focus; businesses participate in geographic-based bodies like chambers of commerce or industry-based trade associations. And even for governments which are highly centralized, action may depend upon many organizations at the local level.

After the major players have been identified, the next step is to research some of their background to better understand their actual potential for working together and anticipate problems that may arise. This involves asking questions like:

1.2   What is the history of the issue and relations among stakeholders?
- How much tension must be overcome to enable cooperation?
- What present or potential coalitions exist among key actors?
- To what extent is the issue widely perceived as a "crisis," so otherwise reluctant parties might be willing to try something new?
- Which stakeholders are "ready" for collaboration? Which are not?
- What are the impediments to partnering?

Often members of ISPs have not interacted historically, or have histories of conflict that lead them to view one another with animosity. It is not unusual for key players to focus upon their differences, and have trouble imagining how they can work together creatively and productively. Part of the magic of ISPs when they work is that a whole new range of possibilities opens up. When people actually begin to talk with each other, stereotypes are eroded, views are better understood and imagination begins to open up.

Answering this second set of questions is best accomplished with some field research. Actually interview people in the organizations you have identified, and ask them about their histories, attitudes, and personal networks. Also, test out some blue-sky options, such as "Could you imagine working with xx to solve that problem or take advantage of this opportunity?" These tests help gauge the amount of difficulty you might encounter when actually convening players, and help you identify strategies for handling them. One of your goals is to identify some person or organization who is respected by all sectors and key organizations to subsequently help in convening the initial partnership meeting.

When you are testing out the intersectoral options, investigate particular sources of potential problems. One big reason for intersectoral conflict or avoidance is that the cultures of the sectors are different. Usually intersectoral interaction has been restricted to simply an exchange of views -- often with substantial hostility -- rather than developing an ongoing working relationship to achieve a jointly-defined goal. When closer cooperation has occurred, fears about cooptation sometimes undermine the legitimacy of the representatives with their respective sectors. To achieve successful partnerships, sectoral representatives must be able to address the focal issue of the partnership from the viewpoint of their constituents, even while their organizations may have substantial disagreements over some other issue. This demands a detailed understanding of issues and the sector concerns and that can only emerge from in-depth exchanges over a period of time. Knowledge of constituents' concerns is vital to preserving the legitimacy of representatives; they will lose their credibility with constituents if they move too far from constituent priorities.

Some specific problems common to different sectors deserve assessment. Within the government sector, major hindrances to creative interaction include simple inertia, exhaustion from an on-going tension between the demands versus the resources, and a culture of blaming others for problems. Within business, problems include inability to build beyond the personal concerns of a charismatic founder, evaluation of issues in terms of efficiency and profitability with inadequate regard to effectiveness, and simple distrust about collective actions. In the civil society there is commonly a cycle of under funding, concern with process rather than product, a parochialism about working with "outsiders," and often difficulty in creating and maintaining cohesive organizations. All of the sectors face problems of personal aggrandizement goals overcoming commitments to the common vision.

Effective organizations learn how to deal with these issues, but they never really "get over" them -- the issues are always part of their daily life. This is obvious in a more public way with second-tier organizations like federations and alliances, where such issues are more liable to become open discussion since people are meeting as "peers" rather than within an organizational hierarchy. However, effective organizations manage to assert the collective interest and provide a base for action with other sectors.

Stage 2: Convening Partners

From your research on the problem and its stakeholders, you can identify a strategy for bringing the sectoral representatives together. Key questions include:

2.1   How should the sectoral representatives be brought together?
- Who should call the meeting?
- Where should the meeting be held?
- What rules should govern the meeting?
- What is the purpose of the meeting?

The first step in this stage is a social analysis of the situation. You may want to develop a draft map of interpersonal relationships, overlaps of interests and interorganizational ties. In the best of circumstances, partnerships develop out of other relationships and build on a history of interaction and interpersonal ties. In these cases, problems about stereotypes and intentions are less significant and the questions of "who," "where," and "what" can be guided by historic experience.

In cases where there is no historic interaction, it is important to find someone or some organization that is well-regarded by all parties to call the meeting. Hopefully your earlier research has identified a good option. Preferably this is a local person or group, but sometimes an outsider, even someone from another community or an academic might initiate the meeting. Or, sometimes you may identify a group of individuals or organizations from each sector to co-sponsor the meeting.

The convening individual or group needs to have credibility with all the major stakeholders for several reasons. First, stakeholders who do not see the convener as credible are very likely to boycott the meeting. Second, the tendency of parties with histories of conflict to replicate their history is difficult to manage if the moderator does not have credibility with the combatants. In the Bangladesh immunization campaign, for example, the initial meetings between NGO leaders and Government officials were convened by international donor agencies who were recognized by all the parties as committed to improving services to children. Later negotiations among specific NGOs and government agencies were supported by the leadership and staffs of major NGOs, who had credibility with both government agencies and grassroots organizations.

ISP Example 5. Expanded Immunization Program in Bangladesh

In 1985 President Ershad committed Bangladesh to vaccinating 85% of its children by 1990, but the task turned out to be beyond the capacity of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. At the urging of WHO and UNICEF, the Ministry approached several large NGOs to help carry out the program. After initial experiments with vaccination campaigns, they recognized that a key issue was getting children to the vaccination teams -- a task that could be best accomplished by NGOs and the local organizations they had been building for years. In a few years the "Vaccinate your Child!" campaign used the resources of 1200 NGOs, largely coordinated by ADAB, the national NGO association, as well as Ministry staff and a wide range of other supporters, to vaccinate more than 80% of the nation's children. The child mortality rate declined by 20% the next year (Hussain, 1991).

Sometimes conveners can be found in organizations which by their very nature embrace people from various sectors, such as religious organizations. Typically such organizations have roots in the elite of society, and yet have a mission that makes them open to the poor and less powerful. Individuals within religious organizations often provide an important initial bridge between these two disparate economic groups, which also tend to be active in different sectors -- the more affluent tending to have more power in the market sector and the poorer tending to be more active in civil society.

Of course in many circumstances governments themselves will convene parties concerned with an issue, since they are responsible for, and can be held accountable to, all inhabitants in their region for some kinds of problem-solving. For this reason, and because of their greater resources base and greater power, they often initiate the creation of an ISP. One additional benefit is that government staff more often includes people with a significant skill level and broader network of contacts than the other sectors usually have. In the Urban Heights situation, for example, the mayor was able to convene and later chair the meetings that brought together adversaries to discuss the future of housing policy in the community. When government agencies are seen as part of the problem, however, they may be regarded with suspicion and distrust by potential partners. In such circumstances other actors may be more credible conveners.

ISP Example 6: Cooperation on Housing Policy in Urban Height

When citizen activists challenged city realtors and bankers with systematic discrimination against potential minority homeowners in Urban Heights, the initial reaction of the business community was to totally deny the charge, in spite of the data amassed by a citizen task force. When approached by citizen activists, the mayor convened a "Committee on Residential Lending" to explore how the different parties might work together to solve the problems. Although the initial meetings of the Committee involved much disagreement and conflict among the parties, ultimately they agreed that they shared an interest in preserving and improving the housing stock of the city, and they developed and helped to implement a series of new programs and policies to support housing renewal that none of them could have carried out alone (Gricar and Brown, 1983).

Partnerships by their very nature are meetings of peers. Although the parties are obviously different and bring different resources, within the activities of the partnership they must be accepted as equals. To reflect this, particular attention must be given to where the location of meetings and how formal authority, such as chairing meetings, is assigned. When choosing a moderator for the initial meeting it is important to find someone who will be perceived as capable of enabling wide participation and a fair hearing for different views, and who will be able to manage the discussion to avoid replicating past unproductive discussion. At previous partnership meetings a variety of options have been used

to choose Chairs: sometimes widely-respected and relatively neutral individuals are chosen, and in others, mechanisms like rotating chair roles have been adopted.

For the location of an initial meeting it is best to identify some "neutral" ground, so the meeting will not be perceived as under one organization's control. As in the role of Chair, for future meetings a system of alternating meeting location or finding a neutral mutually-agreed upon location is often used. One benefit of meeting in the parties' own offices is increasing the amount of information parties share about each others' situations and concerns.

Your research needs to identify persuasive reasons to attend an initial meeting. These reasons should be tailored to individuals and their organizations. Motivation to attend can include interest in addressing the issue you have identified or less direct reasons, such as the commitment of another person to attend, the potential of a business opportunity, or the fear of being "left out of the action."

The first meeting may be simply exploratory, or it may focus on defining some shared understanding of the issues and problem. It is important to set realistic expectations for the meeting so participants do not give up because one meeting fails to end decades of conflict. Ideally, the meeting will build enough sense that progress can be made on issues of interest to all the parties so that they will be willing to meet again. In some cases just the opportunity to hear each others' views without having to deal with escalating conflict may be seen as a significant step forward; in others participants will be disappointed if there is not substantial progress on defining the problem and possible action steps.

Conveners and meeting facilitators may want to work closely with key participants prior to the meeting to establish realistic expectations. In these meetings it may also be possible to persuade parties that are important to the problem but reluctant to come to the meetings and to engage with other parties. Often conveners may have to decide whether meeting are worthwhile if key stakeholders cannot or will not participate -- not all issues can be solved by this approach, particularly when critical parties are unwilling to participate. Or more restricted activities designed to accommodate and encourage future participation of the reluctant party might be undertaken.

An agenda for the first meeting might simply focus upon two things: personal and organizational introductions, and a sharing of viewpoints about the key issue identified as in need of attention. If the players have not had a history of interaction, the meeting might end right there with summary of different viewpoints written for distribution. If the meeting members already know each other, they might move directly on to constructing a problem definition that takes all their perspectives into account. The goal is then to build a shared understanding of the problem that accounts for the perspectives and concerns of many or all of the stakeholders rather than one or a few.

With the first meeting of partners, a collective culture begins to form with its own rules and values. In fact, ongoing definition of ground rules is a valuable norm to consciously encourage. One that is particularly important is to have meetings based upon mutual respect. That value supports many meeting behaviors that are a common part of good group work: making sure everyone participates and feels heard; that decisions cannot be made without key actors assent; that disagreement can be respected and does not demand resolution -- sometimes it is useful to simply put an issue aside to focus upon more fertile ground.

Stage 3: Setting Shared Directions

Usually an ISP is developed of ineffective and disjointed initiatives, in an atmosphere of crisis, a vacuum of ideas or options, or despair. An essential quality of ISPs is their ability to take a new approach to old problems, bringing new energy and creativity to develop a vision. This means, however, that at the outset a key issue is:

3.1   How can the parties establish a climate of hope and a willingness to try new alternatives, especially in a context of conflict or blame?

If the parties can bring their different perspectives and information resources to bear cooperatively, they can usually see new aspects of the problem and options for its solution. The next stage of the partnership's development is joint investigation of the issue, a process which can (but does not always) build trust and confidence, and stretch imaginations through ongoing collective activities. This stage builds vision and develops leadership through various forums, such as meetings, brainstorming sessions, task forces, committees and conferences. There are two sorts of outcomes. One outcome is the creation of shared vision and shared ideas. The other, more concrete outcome is the creation of processes and procedures that lay the groundwork for evolving the action plan. Together they provide a basis on which large amounts of energy and creativity that had previously remained latent may be generated, as in the Gal Oya irrigation scheme described in Box 6.

ISP Example 6. The Gal Oya Irrigation System

> The effort to rehabilitate the Gal Oya Irrigation system in Sri Lanka, one of the largest and most seriously deteriorated systems in the country, was initially seen as a very difficult task. With USAID's help, and with the aid of "institutional organizers" from the area who were able to mobilize water user associations through appeals to shared values, emerging friendships, and a few practical ideas for improving system performance, the program led to dramatic improvements in irrigation and water usage as well as improved relations among water users and between the water user associations and government officials. The level of social energy for work on irrigation problems increased enormously in response to visions for a better future, even in the teeth of escalating ethnic conflict. (Uphoff, 1992)

The diverse ISP stakeholders often begin with very different definitions and analyses of problems, frequently assigning responsibility to other actors. Creating an ISP eventually requires the negotiation of a problem definition that is accepted by the relevant stakeholders. Very commonly, actors initially define the problem in terms of the bad behavior or intentions of other actors. When all the different "villains" are brought together with each other, they are very likely to engage in blame casting and mutual recrimination, rather than productive discussions. An initial step in building cooperative action is to develop a definition of the problems that accounts for the perspectives and concerns of many or all of the stakeholders rather than one or a few. This means other key questions are:

3.2   How can the parties reach a joint definition of the problem?
- What are the ingredients of a successful definition?
- How can a "problem" be defined as an "opportunity"?

Defining issues means each partner must learn about them from the perspective of the other partner. The different sectors, having different missions and cultures, will see issues differently and focus upon different areas. Joint learning requires discussion about both broad issues and concerns, and dialogue about the immediate mobilizing issue. People must learn to see through the eyes of the other partners,

while remaining grounded in the perspective of their own sector. Transforming participants or organizations into simple promoters of others' perspective will not work, however. Such transformations undermine the legitimacy of participants in their own sector, so they lose influence with their constituents, undermine their ability to represent constituent views, and reduce their value for the partnership.

Although it may seem rather simplistic, one valuable action is to simply have all the parties tour an area that is affected by the issue. For example, representatives should make joint visits to slums when the issue is housing, to an environmentally damaged area when the issue is environmental, and to an example of small business potential when the issue is business development. These visits make the issue much more real and also help build a shared experience to create a joint understanding.

The challenge of finding common ground among very diverse stakeholders in a problem has generated a variety of tools for getting out information and perspectives and then articulating common perspectives. For example, the use of "future search conferences" has been growing rapidly in many settings as a way of extracting a shared understanding of complex problems and building a social base for cooperation in solving them.[3] This process allows diverse stakeholders to present their views of the situation and then to identify "common ground" out of the welter of conflicting opinions on which to base collective action in the future.

The development of a shared problem definition can involve a formal research strategy carried out by the participants that provides a framework generally accorded legitimacy by all parties, and at the same time provides a structure to broaden involvement in the initiative and support for action. This can involve, for example, a community survey or meetings about education issues. The survey or meetings could include questions such as willingness to be involved in a specific aspect of resolving the problem. The survey is not just important for its findings, but is important because it provides a means to raise options that individuals may never have thought available to them, and build support for those options through the interaction.

Identifying the intersection of the interests of the three sectoral players is a key to building the relationship. Where do the interests actually overlap? What actions can they take that will address the values and goals of all partners? Answering these questions allows people to shift from a "problem" orientation to an "opportunity" one, where they see a new way to enhance their success by working with others. Often this requires substantial creativity; it always requires good listening and talking. In the Bangladesh Immunization Campaign, for example, it was important to redefine the problem from "providing immunizations" to "getting people to bring their children for immunization." The latter definition highlights the importance of local organizations in mobilizing local cooperation in the campaign, and empowers local partners to play a central role in supporting expansion of the Ministry's services.

One key quality of successful problem definition is that it focuses attention on possible solutions. There is no point in simply overwhelming the parties by leaving a problem in such an amorphous state that the way to take a step forward cannot be defined. Successful definition often means first identifying a relatively small part of the larger problem that can be handled relatively easily and represents a clear movement in the right direction. For example, if the problem is the provision of housing, perhaps the first step is simply joint creation of a pilot project single house that meets some criteria of cost, material availability, ease of construction, etc. While this may be a small achievement in solving the long-term problem, such small successes can catalyze participants to undertake much more intense activities in the future.

Another key quality of successful problem definition is that it involve all of the stakeholders in a meaningful way. If one stakeholder is left outside of the process or problem description, it will almost certainly create significant problems later on. For instance if the problem is garbage collection perhaps a decentralized approach with numerous collectors might be envisioned. This could involve numerous small businesses as the actual collectors, community organizations to help organize citizens to prepare trash for collection, and government as a general contractor or organizer. By building a systemic approach with interdependent activities, the vibrancy of all the sectors is increased and an accountability system will be created to keep all the parties honest.

Your role might most usefully be as a coach, a facilitator, or a team supporter -- *not* as a supervisor or commander. It is critical to provide support to the participants to develop a vision while paying attention to issues like group maintenance and group task functions. The maintenance functions have to do with ensuring people are active participants without dominating the group and with keeping all stakeholders involved. The task functions have to do with defining responsibilities clearly and sharing work between meetings. To maintain the key insight about the value of intersectoral partnerships, however, means keeping in mind the following questions:

3.3   How can parties share information and perspectives that makes constructive use of their differences?
- How can different perspectives be combined to develop strategies that make good use of their diverse resources?

Initially when an issue is presented, people will often refer to failed attempts to address the issue in the past. Sharing perspectives and mutual influence in the development of plans can be central to making use of participant differences to find new solutions. Such processes are not always easy or rewarding at the start. In the Philippines, National Irrigation Authority engineers were initially impatient at the requirements for working out plans with local water user associations, since working with technically unsophisticated farmers required lots of explanation and discussion. But it also became clear that the farmers knew much more about local conditions that might undermine systems based on standard assumptions, so that incorporating that knowledge led to much more effective plans.

ISP Example 7. Reorienting the Philippine National Irrigation Authority

The Philippine National Irrigation Authority (NIA), seeking more ownership and investment from farmers in building and maintaining irrigation systems, undertook a systematic process of reorientation to increase its capacity for building partnerships with water user associations. The process involved working closely with community organizers who worked participatively to involve water user associations in all phases of the design, development and maintenance of irrigation systems. Although the NIA had to redesign much of its planning process and retrain many of its staff, it gradually became clear that the water users were both more effective in using the water and more willing to contribute financially to NIA when they were working in partnership (Korten and Siy, 1988).

Meaningful investigation into each partner's viewpoints often results in discoveries that simply do not occur with discussions that happen when only one sector is present. One powerful asset of the various viewpoints is the ability of the various actors to uncover unrecognized assumptions and limitations to perspectives that have hindered the creation of new responses. Officials of the NIA were often startled at the insights and understanding of water users, who often predicted better than NIA engineers the problems to be faced by new installations.

These sorts of discoveries often happen outside of the context of a specific problem and require a more general understanding of each other's motivation. As long as partners see each other in terms of stereotypes, and as long as partners hold back on discussion of problems they face as individuals, organizations or sectors, the potential solutions to the problems will be constrained. Although parties often come to the table wanting to discuss a specific issue from their perspective, they often find that other parties have different concerns and come up with different solutions. Therefore, direction setting for ISPs means spending time learning about each other's views in forums such as meetings, on-site visits, conferences, and articulating action strategies that build on the resources of all the parties.

The ISPs begin to be driven by discoveries such as recognition of previously unseen resources, new ways to approach common problems, and synergies that can result from collective initiatives. When building relationships, these discoveries are best translated into contained experiments rather than commitments to large-scale action. A government may agree to explore an idea that a community group or company proposes, and commit to reporting back on its findings. Better yet is to actually involve the community group in the exploration, so they can develop further insight on the constraints facing government and help overcome those constraints through creative solutions. Developing participatory planning processes was central to the improved performance of both government and water user associations in the Philippines.

At this stage of direction-setting, the parties are still defining the rules by which they operate. This is an important time to establish principles of joint participation, and create systems to ensure all parties will be meaningfully involved. It is critical that the different actors share ownership of the strategies for solving the problems if they are all going to invest resources in implementation. Different parties will make different contributions to the solution, since they come with different types and scale of resources. However, it is important not to focus simply upon the product as resolution of the target issue, but to also maintain awareness that the process and building of relationships is part of the product.

In terms of constructing processes that will come up with new results, a key issue is building communication skills of participants and norms that support open discussions among them. Many times people simply advocate their own point of view, without learning how to listen effectively, integrate other people's concerns, and come up with new proposals. The more the partnership can set norms for examining assumptions and exploring differences before analyzing problems and constructing strategies for solving them, the more likely it will make good use of the resources provided by diverse stakeholders.

But aside from these process quality strategies, there are clear structural approaches to ensuring participation of all parties. These include both formal rules and developing informal traditions that commit players to receive the support of others in critical decisions. The fact that water user associations had to "sign off" on plans for new or improved irrigation systems in the Philippines program give them significant power over decisions. It also significantly improved their subsequent willingness to contribute financially to supporting the system and the NIA itself.

The information and analysis then has to be combined into an actual plan for action. This raises the question:

3.4   Can parties develop shared strategic direction for a problem that affects all their interests and utilizes their diverse resources?

The ideal ISP makes use of the various resources to understand the problem, and then to act on it. In the Philippines case, NIA and the water user associations both contributed to improving the irrigation systems, each utilizing their special resources as appropriate. Partnerships that appear to be fronts for continuing control or exploitation of some parties by others are not likely to continue over the long term. Partnerships that meet interests of all their members as they solve problems are much more likely to be sustainable.

When identifying the action plan, keep in mind some of the groundrules of partnerships. These include: the right to say "no", honesty and transparency, and commitment to help address other parties' perspective as well as your own.

Stage 4: Implementing Action Strategies

By the time the parties come to the point of actual implementation of a major initiative, they will have already accomplished substantial joint activity. They will have had to make some mechanical and structural decisions about where, when and how to meet. They will have made some programmatic decisions about identifying an analytical strategy. And they will have already carried out some joint activity by actually undertaking a hared analysis of the problem and developing a commonly-held strategy for solving it.

However, implementation activities of major action plans can rearouse many old problems and tensions that were less visible in the more abstract discussion of values and strategies. During this stage, differences are highlighted through the pressures that arise with operational realities. Implementation also often involves new parties, who may not have been parties to the discussions that led to specific problem-solving activities. They need opportunities to test the trustworthiness and commitment of representatives of other sectors, and to develop their own understanding of the situation and what is needed to implement solutions. And even when people know each other and have worked together, there will be on-going tension between the interests of individuals and organizations, as opposed to the way the issue will be ideally addressed. This raises the question:

4.1   How can stakeholders implement detailed plans in ways that respect their differences and interests?

At this stage, stakeholder organizations have to begin to "produce" in their respective capacities towards the collective effort to address the issue. This means participating organizations may have to change policies, reallocate resources, or organize new ones. Inevitably there will be some shortfalls which will result in issues about commitment and power.

These tensions require both flexibility and commitment to resolving the issue. Of course this involves issues of power and politics. In the Indian biogas program, for example, a new head of the state oversight agency was very concerned about the extent to which the NGO was dominating biogas construction in the state, even though the quality of performance remained high. His concerns led to escalating tensions and ultimately the redesign of the program and the exit of the NGO from an active role, a case in which successful implementation led to problems which in turn led to program reorganization later on.

ISP Example 8: Biogas Program in Orissa

The Indian Biogas Program sought to provide alternative energy sources to households in areas where deforestation had led to serious shortages in firewood and other fuels. In Orissa the government-initiated program was largely implemented by an NGO, which used funds from state banks to work with families to build biogas plants that would convert manure from livestock into gas for cooking and lighting. Families with such plants could free wives from hours of drudgery to get firewood and health problems based on cooking over smoky fires. Relations between the implementing NGO and the state oversight agency, initially cordial while the agency was headed by a sympathetic civil servant, deteriorated after several years into a power struggle with the new agency head. The NGO eventually spun off its biogas plant-building teams into independent for-profit organizations and moved on to other activities (Bezboruah & Banerjee, 1991).

During implementation the relationships between sectoral partners will shift. This shift can result in changing power and consequent control issues. These challenges raise the issue of:

4.2   Who will mediate inevitable tensions and conflicts among actors who are often different from the leaders who started the ISP?

Long-term success requires that the participants continue to manage their conflicts and tensions effectively. In most cases, by this time in the relationships' development, internal processes and traditions will be developed sufficiently to address issues. However, in ISPs conflict is often on-going since the relationships are based upon shared power and power distribution and needs are always changing.

Sometimes outside mediators must be appealed to. At times like this, outsiders like foreign donors, academics, and individuals with substantial respect from all relevant parties can have a special role. Other times the issues end up in the hands of the courts, regulators or government tribunals.

After a number of years, the lack of resources to manage the conflicts in the biogas program, in spite of appeals to national as well as state actors, led to the withdrawal of the NGO that had earlier been the key bridging agency and service deliverer -- the central player in an NGO-mediated cooperation among many actors. In other successful partnerships, such conflicts have
been handled effectively. In the Bangladesh immunization campaign, for example, tensions between NGO and Ministry staffs were managed by the coordinating NGO and others in ways that allowed continued cooperation.

The shifting responsibilities with implementation may lead to pressure for the very membership of the partnership to change. This raises the question of:

4.3   How will decisions be handled, and to what extent is participation by grassroots groups required for effective implementation?

A partnership implies a meeting of peers, but intersectoral relationships demand bridging vast differences that raise operational issues. The different sectors come to the table with different resources, perspectives, and interests -- and these differences have operational implications. For example, while the civil society organizations are usually financially the poorest of the partners -- such as the neighborhood groups in the Pakistan sewer case or the village organizations in Bangladesh -- they often bring otherwise difficult-to-replace resources to implementation. The labor of the neighborhood groups and the cooperation of the village organizations was very important to problem-

solving in both countries, even if those organizations were the financial beneficiaries of the other partners. This type of relationship cannot be framed in a traditional "contract", nor is it simple "philanthropy". What the voluntary organizations bring is a different form of wealth: relationships and networks of people, their energy and commitment.

The more important the resources to be brought by such partners, the more important it is that they be able to genuinely participate in decision-making. The investment of time and energy by Karachi residents was a response to their influence on defining the sanitation problem as critical; the financial investment of Philippines water users in irrigation systems was related to their approval of system design. The goals of the partnership cannot be as effectively obtained without all members involvement -- or there is no point in including the members in the partnership.

At certain points in the partnership, there may be a tendency to fall back into old ways of working and to push one of the partners out. After the problem seems "resolved" a party may try to go back to previous approaches, because it simply seems easier to do it on its own without the effort that the partnership requires. If a garbage system has been decentralized among numerous small contractors, a centralized garbage collection system may appear more attractive administratively. But this change risks losing the benefits that come from the intersectoral relationships and may resuscitate the old problems that accompanied the centralized process.

One reason this reversion may occur is that insufficient attention has been given to building up the capacity of sectors and the partnership itself to function most effectively. This raises the question:

4.4   What kinds of capacity-building are necessary for different actors to carry out their parts of the process effectively?

The intersectoral partnership requires generic skills of all partners, and specific skills from each sector. Because "differences" are so great among the partners, decision-making and conflict resolution skills are particularly important. There are also more mundane organizational issues. Not only must the partners decide upon action in response to a specific problem, but they also must make internal operating decisions such as how partnership expenses should be shared. And in a broader vein, the partnerships require development of organizational learning capacity, so they can continue to develop.

Since the three sectors come with different strengths and weaknesses, they each have different skills and abilities that they have to develop to be full-fledged partners. The development issues can be framed around both technical and organizational challenges.

For the civil sector, developing technical expertise is usually a key issue. Because it is not as financially wealthy as the other two sectors, it cannot as easily hire the skills it needs. This means finding new training programs and organizations to build skills like budgeting and accounting that can be applied to civil society organizations. Since civil society organizations grow out of personal relationships with value-based missions, expansion that involves increased technical and organizational capacity is problematic. They have to develop capacity to expand their memberships while maintaining commitment to the core values, develop governance and representation mechanisms sophisticated enough to handle larger-scale action plans, and grow an organization to cover a much larger geographic region.

For the business sector, recognizing the business importance of the problems and building skills in appreciating the strengths and tolerating the shortcomings of the other sectors may be critical.

Sometimes employees are interested in investing time and energy in work on these problems; in other cases, businesses may need to create incentives and allocate internal resources to mobilize the capacity they need to participate. For small projects, the relationship may become the responsibility of a single individual, and separated from the organization's main business. For larger and more important projects, the partnership can become a resource for business opportunities instead of a civic responsibility.

For the government sector, the challenge is often to clarify how the relationship serves the core interests of the public agencies involved and to help staff work effectively with stakeholders with different perspectives. Some opportunities for partnerships start with local civil society and market sector organizations, and may be easily stifled by an unimaginative bureaucratic response. Others are launched by public agencies concerned with implementing public policies. These opportunities often emphasize the challenge of decentralization. Intersectoral partnerships take life at a local level, because they often require an intimacy of response that simply cannot be produced by directives from large, centralized organizations. To flourish, the partnerships require empowering local action that can respond to local issues and opportunities.

Stage 5: Institutionalizing and/or Expanding Successful ISPs

The most successful ISPs generate the human, social, material, and financial capital to maintain or even expand themselves. In the long term, success may involve expanding the program's reach to more people as well as institutionalizing its arrangements to insure that it continues after outside resources have been withdrawn or allocated elsewhere. This raises the questions:

5.1   How do successful ISPs decide to terminate, continue, or expand?
-     How can actors mobilize continuing or expanded resources to support continuing or expanded activity?

Programs that succeed in mobilizing partner information and resources to successfully solve initial problems generate new choices for themselves. In some cases, partnerships that have solved temporary problems or made the decisions for which they were constituted, the choice may be termination. For others, when the problem is a continuing issue, the choice may be to continue as a long-term activity. In still others, where the problem is widespread or escalating and so requires even more future action, the choice may be to expand the process to include many other communities or regions. The issue of generating local capital for improving agricultural productivity, for example, remained a continuing issue in Zimbabwe, so the Savings Development Movement could be expected to remain a viable joint activity into the future.

ISP Example 9: Savings Development Movement in Zimbabwe

> The Savings Development Movement was started by an NGO concerned with improving village level agriculture through the use of local capital. The NGO invented a method by which illiterate village women could save money together, and found that the savings clubs could then carry out improved agriculture with the resulting savings. The NGO leaders persuaded the Ministry of Agriculture to provide technical support to the savings clubs, and then arranged with the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs to train new clubs. They also arranged for financial support for the training materials from a fertilizer company interested in expanding its markets. The Savings Development Movement, linking village clubs, a small NGO, two Ministries, and the fertilizer company, spread to thousands of villages and eventually influenced hundreds of thousands of villagers (Bratton, 1989).

When continuation or expansion is desirable, the partnership may need to generate new resources and wider participation in its activities. One possibility is to scale up the agency or partnership that has been implementing the program so far. Another is to involve other organizations whose interests might be served by participating in a successful partnership. The founders of the Savings Development Movement chose not to scale up their NGO, but rather to encourage participation by other agencies -- such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Community Development and the fertilizer company -- in order to deliver the program to a wider population. To do so they had to help the ministries and the company see the program in terms of their own interests -- in expanding agricultural production and fertilizer sales, for example -- so that they could make a case for participation as consistent with their own organizational agendas.

Another common choice is to support replication of the partnership in a geographically separate location. The original partnership serves as a role model and a forum for transferring knowledge and experience to another group. In this way, a local orientation is maintained. And when there is sufficient success, the organizations can form a collective association to even more broadly both share resources and support mutual development.

LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

Table 2 summarizes some capacities needed at the different stages discussed in the previous section and some interventions that may be appropriate to developing those capacities. In essence Table 2 provides an overview of some of the issues that must be managed at different stages of the development of an intersectoral partnership.

Table 2: Summary of ISP Development Stages

Stage	Capacities Needed	Supporting Interventions
1. Identify Preconditions	▸ Identify nature of the issue ▸ Identify key players ▸ Assess players' interests ▸ Understand parties' histories	▸ Describe the issue in writing ▸ List key players and their interest ▸ One-on-one test players' reaction to your description ▸ Investigate personal relationships
2. Convene Partners and Define Problems	▸ Recognize crisis and failure of existing solutions ▸ Appreciate interdependence of the parties ▸ Explore alternatives to present situation	▸ Convene potential partners (requires credibility with all) ▸ Facilitate initial contacts ▸ Articulate common concerns ▸ Provide ideas about alternatives to present situation
2. Set Shared Directions	▸ Listen to other perspectives ▸ Build shared diagnosis of problems ▸ Assess alternative solutions ▸ Create shared visions that enable mutual gains ▸ Agree on general strategies	▸ Facilitate discussion of problems and perspectives ▸ Articulate strategies that produce mutual gains ▸ Train parties in interest-based negotiations ▸ Mediate agreements on strategy and shared directions

3. Implement Action Strategies	‣ Plan implementation of shared strategy ‣ Design structures to divide work and coordinate partner action ‣ Manage conflicts among members not involved in earlier stages ‣ Mobilize skills and resources for implementing program ‣ Hold parties accountable for performing tasks ‣ Assess and learn from experience with solutions.	‣ Facilitate planning and action steps ‣ Support organizational commitments to carry out plans ‣ Train parties in skills and capacities required ‣ Mediate misunderstandings and disputes from implementation ‣ Support monitoring, evaluation, and learning process of partners
4. Expand or Institution-alize Success	‣ Assess critical factors in success ‣ Design expansion or institutionalization ‣ Mobilize human, financial, and information resources ‣ Codify and simplify initial solutions for wider use	‣ Support conceptualizing and learning from experience ‣ Train, consult for organizing expansion ‣ Enable use of wider experience base ‣ Disseminate learning from pilot projects to wider audiences

Knowledge about ISP formation is still at an early stage of development. However, some tentative "lessons learned" and "promising practices" can be identified. These ideas should be viewed critically, since preconditions and contexts vary widely.

1. Use Experience Elsewhere to Stimulate Locally-Generated Strategies

The successful experiences of others are useful to build confidence and expand imaginations. However, absolutely critical to partnering strategies is to recognize the unique characteristics, histories, and resources that come with every specific location. What works in one location can at best be adapted to another. Make a list of what you might consider the key "assets" -- these may be a particular organization or individual, a particular network or historic event. And make a list of the key "hot" buttons that will be encountered in your strategy. These are the local opportunities and problems that are doorways and walls to adapting more general strategies to partnering.

2. Acknowledge Differences but Focus on Common Ground

Partnering requires that the parties recognize, acknowledge, and respect their differences, but also that they identify and focus on common or complementary interests. In many partnerships there are big differences in values, goals and activities, but partners also see an overlap of interests. The differences do not have to be resolved while common ground is built. Indeed, the differences among the participants are potentially the source of new understanding and new resources for problem-solving. One of the paradoxes of partnering is that differences are both an opportunity for creative action and a threat to the partnership's capacity to survive.

3. Take Time to Build Commitment Early from Key Actors

It takes time and negotiation to build agreement to participate in a partnership among key actors, and especially organizational leaders. In many ways, partnering organizations are much like nations interacting. They each are nominally equal and in some ways have equal status. Without key leaders' support, organizations-as-a-whole are not real partners and cannot cooperate fully in a joint activity.

It is often worthwhile to start slowly and build a basis for later joint action: "Go slow early to go fast later." It is also sometimes useful to focus on problems where previous efforts by one partner have failed, or where there is general agreement that a crisis exists, so that the parties are willing to commit themselves to the difficulties of work with very diverse partners.

4. Balance Power Differences to Enable Mutual Influence

When parties are perceived to be unequal in power, taking steps to insure that they have some degree of influence with each other may be essential. It is often not realistic to try to make them equal, but it is important to create circumstances that enable participants to recognize each other's resources, to speak and listen to each other freely, and to challenge decisions that contradict their interests. When grassroots groups are parties to the partnership, for example, success is more likely if they have had opportunities to build organizations that can speak legitimately for their interests to the other partners.

5. Create Forums for Joint Exploration and Decision

Partnering requires dedication of time, resources and forums where parties can assess problems and issues, explore differences and new perspectives, and create alternative solutions and innovations. A new "space" is needed where people can experiment and break away from old patterns, and gradually build collective resources and understanding.

Such spaces can allow partners to continue work on disagreements in traditional forums, while they explore new possibilities in the new one.

6. Organize to Use Resources from All the Partners

The advantage of partnering is the mobilization of many perspectives and resources to solve complex problems. But continued mutual influence depends on everyone's resources being valued and used, so implementation programs need to be designed to make use of the comparative advantages of different participants. Even when it appears simpler in the short term to have one partner take primary responsibility for implementation, that decision encourages other partners to drop out or become passive in the longer run.

7. Frame Solutions in Terms of Mutual Gains

There is no better way for one partner to build trust with another than to demonstrate commitment to making a strategy "work" that benefits them both. Once the partners understand each others' goals, those goals should be used as measuring sticks to see if joint initiatives will actually work to serve both parties. If partnerships do not produce mutual gains, the long-term commitments of parties that do not benefit will be endangered. Finding these mutual gains is hard, but it is also exciting for all the actors.

8. Emphasize Both Process and Product

There are both process and product outcomes of any partnership. A single-minded focus upon process can paralyze a partnership in endless repetitive discussions, while a single-minded focus upon product can blow it apart. Processes are important: The way decisions are made, the way meetings are conducted, and the level of participation all affect the products and outcomes of the partnership. But products are also essential: decisions and programs that produce concrete results on problems that stimulated organizing the partnership are critical to partners' evaluations of it. Partnerships are more effective when their members pay attention to both process and product.

9. Build Many Bridges to Expand Cooperation

Partnerships are strongest if there are multiple linkages and relationships of trust that connect the organizations involved. If all relationships are simply through organizational leaders, the partnership is very vulnerable to changes in individuals and patterns of organizational leadership. While partnerships may begin with those leaders, it is desirable to involve more people and departments of organizations in the partnership as its activities continue or expand. For long-term partnerships with expanding activities, it may become desirable to institutionalize relationships among organizations so they are less dependent on the continued contacts among a few key individuals.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The last decade has seen an extraordinary increase in ISPs around the world, but their potentials for creative and sustainable solutions to development problems are just beginning to be tapped. This paper has summarized some of the issues and possibilities at various stages of partnership development. It also offers some ideas about key questions to be asked and promising practices identified on the basis of substantial experience in industrialized countries and a little experience in the developing world. But much of the creative work of experimenting with alternative approaches and documenting success and failure remains to be done

REFERENCES

Bezboruah, R., & Banerjee, J. (1991). <u>Multi-Agency Collaboration for Promoting a Low-Cost and Sustainable Rural Energy Source: The Biogas Case</u>. Ekatra, New Delhi.

Bratton, M. (1990). Non-Governmental Organizations in Africa: Can They Influence Public Policy? <u>Development and Change</u>, 21. 87-118.

Brown, L. D. (1991). Bridging Organizations and Sustainable Development. <u>Human Relations</u>, <u>44</u>(8), 807-831.

Gray, B. G. (1989). <u>Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gricar, B.G. & L.D. Brown, (1981). Conflict, Power, and Organization in a Changing Community, <u>Human Relations</u>. 34(10), 877-893.

Hussain, A. (1991) <u>Collaborative Efforts in Rural Immunization: The Bangladesh Case</u>. Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh.

Khan, A.H. (1997). The Orangi Pilot Project: Uplifting a Periurban Settlement Near Karachi, Pakistan in A. Krishna, N. Uphoff & M.J. Esman, <u>Reason for Hope</u>, West Hartford, CT; Kumarian, 29-40.

Korten, F. & R. Siy, (1988). <u>Transforming A Bureaucracy</u>. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian.

Leach, M. (1994). Models of Inter-Organizational Collaboration in Development. <u>IDR Reports</u>. Boston: Institute for Development Research.   Vol. 11, No. 7.

NPI Small Business Task Force, (1996). The Small Business Policy Environmental Report. Washington, D.C: USAID.

Pasmore W., et al., (1997). <u>Coming Together for Sustainable Development: Using the Future Planning Conference to Create Alliances for Action</u>. Boston: Institute for Development Research.

Uphoff, N. (1992). <u>Learning from Gal Oya: Possibilities for Participatory Development and Post-Newtonian Social Science</u>. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Waddell, S. (1997). Social Capital Enterprise: A New Form of Enterprise. Dissertation, Boston College (Unpublished).

Weisbord, M, (1993) <u>Discovering Common Ground</u>. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

End Notes

1. Leach, M. 1994. Models of Inter-Organizational Collaboration in Development. <u>IDR Reports</u>. Boston: Institute for Development Research.   Vol. 11, No. 7.; Gray, B. 1989. <u>Collaborating: Finding common Ground for Multiparty Problems</u>. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

2. Brown, L.D. 1991. Bridging Organizations and Sustainable Development, <u>Human Relations</u>. Vol. 44, No. 8: 807-831.

3. See Pasmore W., et al., <u>Coming Together for Sustainable Development: Using the Future Planning Conference to Create Alliances for Action</u>. Boston: Institute for Development Research, 1997.   See also M. Weisbord, <u>Discovering Common Ground</u>. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1992.