in focus 8

Resource Centre for the social dimensions of business practice

Cross-sector Partnership Initiative

Business Partners for Development

Institutionalising partnerships: Lessons from the front line

Ros Tennyson

IBLF
THE PRINCE OF WALES
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LEADERS FORUM

The International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is a not for profit organisation established in 1990 to promote responsible business practices that benefit business and society and contribute to sustainable development. The IBLF believes that business has a significant role to play in addressing the downsides of globalisation: poverty, social inequity and environmental degradation.

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More information:
International Business Leaders Forum
15-16 Cornwall Terrace
Regent's Park
London NWl 4QP

Tel: +44 (0) 207 467 3600
Fax: +44 (0) 207 3610
Email: info@iblf.org

www.iblf.org

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Introduction

This publication is not quite a research project and yet neither is it simply a stream of consciousness. It falls somewhere between the two. On the one hand it draws on direct cross-sector partnership experience using a form of action research, on the other hand it is a case of 'memory recollected in tranquillity' (to mis-quote Wordsworth!). It tries to characterise aspects of three specific partnerships as they emerged themselves over time, whilst also interpreting the experience – from the perspective of being one of the partners – in a personal way. The author makes no apology for not being entirely objective (whatever that might mean in this context). The interesting question is whether her findings ring true to the experience of other partnership practitioners.

The three partnerships provide the raw material for this publication from which, hopefully, some useful lessons can be drawn. The specific intention is to look beyond the early negotiating and building phases of partnerships[1] to the later stage of 'institutionalising' them. In all three partnerships, the International Business Leaders Forum was (and in one case, still is) centrally involved.

Whilst in some respects the partnerships have some similar features (for example they are all European or USA- based yet with a global mandate) the primary reason for working in partnership in each case is different. This difference is summarised below:

- Profile l (page 36) describes a partnership formed to **initiate** a new project;
- Profile 2 (page 38) describes a **development and delivery mechanism** and
- Profile 3 (page 39) describes a **learning** partnership.

But first things first… even after some ten years of global focus on cross-sector partnerships, it still feels necessary to explore what we mean when we use the term 'partnership' in relationship to sustainable development?

Partnership purists have some highly developed definitions where they stipulate specific pre-conditions before inter-organisational collaboration can, in their view, properly be described as a partnership. But at the same time, the word is increasingly used in a very loose way (by politicians, international agencies and practitioners from all three sectors) to describe almost *any* kind of collaboration.

This is confusing.

And in any case, one might ask: who has the right to define partnership on behalf of anyone else or to decide whether one kind of collaboration is more of a partnership than any other? One of the groups of partners (Profile 3) explored their definition of the term after almost three years of working together (see below).

Our experience suggests that a cross-sector collaboration can be called a partnership when:

- Enough people recognise it as an appropriate description of their working relationship
- Those centrally involved are willing to define themselves as partners and
- The partners continue to accept each others legitimacy

THE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES GROUP: FURTHER LESSONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION, January 2002

We may need to eschew more prescriptive definitions of the term 'partnership' and simply accept that the only realistic operational definition is nothing more nor less than:

> *" … a word used to describe any inter-organisational collaboration where the constituent players (known as 'partners') think of it as such."*

This is the author's current working hypothesis and it underpins what follows.

1. See earlier publications by the same author:

– MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS: TOOLS FOR MOBILISING THE PUBLIC SECTOR, BUSINESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY AS PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT pub.1998, Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum

– THE GUIDING HAND: BROKERING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT co-written with Luke Wilde pub. 2000, United Nations Publications

– GETTING REAL: FACING THE CHALLENGES IN CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS FOR BIO-DIVERSITY pub. 2002, IUCN
All available from www.iblf.org

Sustaining partnerships

It is a common experience that most cross sector partnerships for sustainable development follow a pattern in the early phases:

PHASE	CHARACTERISTIC
1	Starting with cautious identification of potential partners, building working relationships and agreeing a modus operandi
2	Moving into a phase of enthusiasm for working together in new ways across traditional sector boundaries
3	Arriving at an agreed project or programme of work and moving into implementation mode

There are many case studies that track specific partnerships through these three phases and then stop the story thereby leaving the impression that this is all there is to it and that the partnerships are well on course to being successful and sustainable and to achieving their objectives.

But just after this phase, more often than not, something unexpected happens. It is as if the partnership has reached a 'plateau' where the excitement of something new has worn off, the challenges of managing implementation have become irksome and partners have begun to wonder whether the outcomes are really worth the time and effort involved. Quite a lot of partnerships fall apart at this point – rarely offering any detailed analysis of what has gone wrong and all too often sinking without trace.

This crisis centres on the critical issue of sustainability.

There are several reasons why a partnership may be unsustainable but a key reason is that the partners themselves are unable, for any number of reasons, to sustain a high level of day-to-day involvement. Partners typically talk about creating initiatives for sustainable development whilst neglecting to consider the sustainability of their own and/or their organisation's commitment.

In building partnerships, it is usual practice for partners to focus on what each of their organisations contribute and why their contribution is important to the whole. Far less time is dedicated to honest discussion about what each partner organisation needs to gain from the partnership in order to maintain their level of commitment long-term. But it is probable that without clear gains from the partnership, none of the partners (from any sector) will stick with it.

All too often this leaves those individuals representing their institutions within the partnership in a highly unenviable position. They have to speak on behalf of their organisation with confidence (bravado?) whilst knowing that they may only have minimal or short-term institutional backing. At the same time having to represent the partnership robustly within their own organisation even when progress is slow and the organisational benefits far from certain. This not only represents considerable personal pressure for individuals, it puts the partnership at serious risk of being unsustainable because it is too dependent on the individuals concerned successfully juggling these challenges and contradictions.

Every partnership therefore at some stage or other faces the challenge of moving away from **personalised** to **institutionalised** collaboration. In other words, by the time the partnership reaches (a notional) Phase 4 (taking the simple schema suggested above), attention needs to move pretty fast towards institutionalising the partnership to avoid an almost inevitable crisis of sustainability.

Lessons from the front line

At this point, it is recommended that the reader looks at the three profiles summarising the partnerships upon which this paper is based (see pages 36-40) to form an overview of each one and to have a picture of the types of partnership they describe.

Every partnership is, of course, unique and will invariably face its own institutionalising challenges. However, in the three partnerships described here – despite the differences of structure, objectives and management style – there are a surprising number of common issues of which a significant proportion are specific to the institutionalising process.

These common issues have been presented here as 'lessons' in four categories:

- People
- Procedures
- Productivity and
- Progress.

It is hoped that by being clustered in this way, the lessons these partnerships offer to other partnership practitioners will be as accessible as possible.

People

CONCORD AND DISCORD

Concepts like 'trust', 'shared vision' and 'consensus' are assumed to be at the heart of all good development partnerships. In fact, they are often regarded as critical success factors. But the experience of working in the three partnerships outlined here, suggests that these may be both untrue and unhelpful assumptions.

DISAGREEMENT AS THE TRIGGER FOR BUILDING A BETTER PARTNERSHIP

CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS – PROFILE I

The consortium of partners was composed of 'for-profit' as well as 'not-for-profit' organisations. This was a cause of considerable controversy between the consortium and the donor and within the partner group itself. In the early days there was much debate – some of it quite hostile – as to how the consortium could function with such disparate values at its centre. Interestingly, the question was resolved around securing agreement to a 'radical' agenda – which was what the not-for-profit organisations wanted from the beginning and what the for-profit organisations came to believe was least likely to cause them conflicts of interest. Unexpectedly, perhaps, this was an example of the highest (rather than the lowest) common denominator becoming the foundation of the working relationship.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL – PROFILE 2

The three partners operate with a considerable degree of consensus – undertaking agreed roles and tasks with a high level of confidence in each other. In this instance the discord (such as it is) arises in relation to the details of the programme of work rather than points of strategy or principle. Each one of the three co-Directors (representing the different partner organisations) has at some time or other insisted on a re-working or revision of some aspect of the programme. Whilst this has initially led to irritation and/or frustration amongst the other two, the process of understanding why it was seen as so important; agreeing who should do what and finally completing the task satisfactorily has invariably smoothed over any ruffled feathers. It has also tended to re-enforce a sense of respect for the commitment and professional rigour of the partner who stuck his/her neck out by being prepared to be 'difficult'. It is not entirely clear yet whether this process has built a better partnership but it has without question built a better product!

DECIDE FAST: REPENT AT LEISURE – PROFILE 3

This group of partners had to make some key, strategic decisions at their (rare) face-to-face meetings. Sometimes it seemed almost impossible to arrive at agreement within the timeframe available. But invariably, taking the time to fully talk through options and anxieties meant that once decisions were taken they were fully 'owned' by the whole group and therefore accepted and acted upon, once the group had dispersed, without further question. In the instances where a key decision was taken quickly there was always a come-back (in the form of criticism or resistance) from one or more partners when it came to implementation. In this partnership, taking time over the decision-making process (clearly experienced at the time by some as 'time wasting') saved considerably more time at the later (implementation) stage.

Some of the benefits of divergence (and even discord) are that it can:
- Guard against complacency;
- Offer an opportunity to challenge superficial thinking and
- Strengthen individual capacity to argue a position and subsequently to follow through or to give way with good grace, if the latter is more appropriate.

All these can be of considerable value to a partnership. Robust partnerships are those that can build harmony out of diversity and can openly explore different (and perhaps conflicting) perspectives as they arise over the partnership's lifetime.

Key questions that individuals working in partnership who find themselves 'out on a limb' need to ask themselves are:
- Is this particular issue worth holding out for? If so, how can I help my partner colleagues to understand its importance to me and/or my organisation?
- Is this divergence strengthening or weakening the partnership? Is my behaviour or perspective contributing to this positively or negatively? Does it matter? Is it myself or others who need to change?
- What can I/my organisation agree to accept for the sake of our partnership moving forward effectively?

THE ISSUE OF LEADERSHIP

The issue of leadership within a partnership paradigm is a subtle one. It is a mistake to assume that partnerships do not need leadership – indeed most, if not all, partnerships have one or more leaders whether or not they are acknowledged as such. In the case of the Resource Centre (Profile l) the Director of the Resource Centre found herself quite early on in a situation where half the partners resented the leadership role she took and the other half felt that she was too consultative in her approach! One interpretation might be that the first group didn't want to be in a partnership (in other words, they wanted to direct the project themselves in their own ways) and the second group wanted to be in a partnership simply so that they could unload the work onto someone else. This is, of course, over-simplified but it is an attempt to make a point. How does each partnership address the issue of leadership and how does it draw the boundaries around what is and what is not acceptable?

Hidden leaders

The key question for partners is whether the leadership (whatever form it takes) is acceptable/transparent/agreed or whether it is exercised in a hidden way that is ultimately none of these.

Hidden leaders are those who maintain a low profile at meetings or events but who seek to influence others or make decisions on behalf of the partnership behind the scenes. Often hidden leadership arises from good intentions of wanting the partnership to be seen as more collaborative, mature and/or independent than actually it is, but sometimes it arises from a real unwillingness to relinquish control. It is also not uncommon for people to become hidden leaders by accident – because another partner or other key player seeks them out and pushes or persuades them adopt this role.

Undoubtedly leadership is as important for partnerships as it is for any other initiative. Indeed partnerships quite clearly depend heavily on the commitment, vision and determination of individuals (see the section entitled FOUNDERS AND FOLLOWERS below) but there is no reason why this should not be open and celebrated rather than conducted in a secretive manner.

Powerless leadership

Perhaps what partnerships require is what might be described as 'powerless leadership' where individuals take on the leadership role by agreement – often short-term rather than long-term – and have limited authority with pre-agreed areas of independent decision-making. Such leaders operate out of an understanding of what is needed for the partnership and tend to see themselves as 'servants' of the partnership – as such they recognise that they are ultimately answerable for their actions to the partners.

Non-formal leadership roles

It is clear that partners often carry multiple 'leadership' roles within and on behalf of the partnership – which may be unconscious and/or unrecognised. These include:

- Acting as guardians of the partnership's mission – internally or externally
- Providing ad hoc and informal support to key individuals (including project staff or other partners)
- Coaching each other directly or by role-modelling behaviour (for example, in the 'art' of creative critique or the 'science' of meeting-management)
- Promoting the partnership to others (including those who want to learn about partnerships).

Power: responsibility balance

Above all – power in a partnership needs to be closely linked to responsibility. Each partnership will find its own ways of achieving this balance but in most partnerships there is only a finite amount of time until 'sleeping partners' (those who do not pull their weight) become intolerable. The role of partners may change over time – and sometimes any one partner may be more or less active for a number of legitimate reasons – but a partner who continues to expect to wield power without carrying their fair share of responsibility almost inevitably becomes a destructive rather than a constructive element.

There is a particular challenge in this respect with regard to external (non-partner) resource providers. It is common (and understandable, perhaps) for those who fund partnerships and partnership-based initiatives to expect a considerable degree of control – perhaps even a level of control that undermines the partnership itself. This is explored elsewhere (see section entitled: RELATIONSHIP TO DONORS/EXTERNAL RESOURCE PROVIDERS below).

THREE FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

There is a curious phenomenon that comes into play when working with a group of individuals operating in a partnership. In effect each individual has (at least) three distinct aspects to the way they contribute. Individuals operating in partnerships may (and often do) joke about wearing a number of different hats – but sometimes they can even be experienced as being almost three different people! Each one is:

1) An **individual** with professional expertise, specialist knowledge and/or unique experience
2) A **representative** of their organisation and their organisation's expectations of the partnership
3) A **personality** with a particular style of behaviour.

MANAGING PARTNER MEETINGS

"In chairing the Consortium meeting today – it felt as if I was actually managing 27 rather than 9 people. Whenever one person had a reaction to an important issue that was at odds with the rest of the group, I felt I had to 'unpick' whether their objection was arising from a difference of professional judgement or whether it was evidence of potentially serious organisational divergence or whether it was simply a personality clash with one or more of the others. Only when I felt that I had clearly ascertained from which of these perspectives they were speaking could I properly assess (on behalf of the group) how much their views should be allowed to sway the decision-making process.

Looking back, I can see this has been a feature of our meetings from the beginning – no wonder they are so often cumbersome, time-consuming and frustrating."

Logbook entry: October 1999 **(Profile I)**

This may be a phenomenon in other situations too, but in partnerships it is undoubtedly a particularly important issue and it requires considerable skill to manage well – including a willingness to challenge the basis on which opinions are being given.

In addition, clearly some people function better in groups than others. Those in any group with quick and 'feisty' personalities can often have undue influence. Those with more reflective personalities can be easily over-shadowed and may have to resort to influencing decisions in other ways – which may be perceived by others as less transparent/more manipulative.

Since partnerships depend quite heavily on group decision-making processes, how does one ensure equity between different people where (invariably) there may be considerable diversity in operating style?

LICENCE TO OPERATE

It is important to know how far individuals have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the organisation they represent. Each representative should be encouraged to clarify their level of decision-making authority and to secure clear terms of reference from their own organisation. As the partnership proceeds, such mandates need to be regularly checked out to ensure that the individual's authority, as initially agreed, still holds.

Equally, individual representatives within the partnership need to be clear with each other about the degree of authority each one of them has. Do they or do they not have a 'licence to operate' within the partnership on behalf of their organisation? If they seem to have limited authority will this hold back the partnership? If so, can anything be done by the partnership to change the situation for the better?

DEGREE OF INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY IN DECISION-MAKING

'How much autonomy does each member of this group have? In other words: how many decisions can be taken immediately within the group and in how many cases do decisions have to be deferred to the partner organisation or the cluster committee? Is this simply a question of the individual's level of authority within their own organisational hierarchy or is it a reflection of the degree of engagement of the organisation/cluster in the partnership? In practice, four of the seven of us seem to be able to take most decisions unilaterally whereas the other three defer decisions until they have 'sign off' from the organisation/cluster they represent.

I can already think of at least 2 major decisions having been postponed by several weeks because one partner organisation was unable to commit to it without building its own internal consensus. One might assume that it would be this organisation that was most 'engaged' in the partnership but, perhaps surprisingly, it is actually the one that has proved itself most ambivalent. In other words, it seems where there is least organisational/cluster commitment to the work of the BPD-wide partnership, there seems to be most need to control its decisions. I wonder whether this is generally true or specific to this situation'

Logbook entry: May 2001 **(Profile 3)**

ACCEPTABLE OPPORTUNISM

Is opportunism a good or a bad thing in the partnership paradigm? Much innovation can come from 'seizing the moment' and building on opportunities as they present themselves. On the other hand being too ready to take on something unexpected can spread a partnership pretty thin and can risk a loss of focus.

Some individuals can be highly opportunistic in the way they work which may add an exciting and useful dimension to a partnership – but can also risk alienating cautious (or competitive) partners. Where are the boundaries between enlightened self-interest, altruism and opportunism? And how does a partnership decide whether an opportunistic piece of behaviour is or is not acceptable?

The experiences of the three case studies suggest that where one partner's actions cause discomfort, these are best explored openly in discussion with the whole partner group and – where appropriate – used as 'test cases' for the partnership. This process may yield interesting lessons. It may also lead to creating new policies and/or useful ground rules for future partner behaviour.

FOUNDERS AND FOLLOWERS

In all initiatives there is likely to be an issue of succession – the process of handing over leadership from founder to follower. In partnerships this is no different, though it is often more complicated since there can be several founders and followers involved.

In any event, partnerships need to move beyond charismatic leadership if they are to be genuinely collaborative in style and genuinely consensus-driven. It may also be an important principle that the vision of the partnership should evolve from within the partner group rather than be pre-determined by an individual. Where partners experience their partnership as too dependent on – or too controlled by – any one individual they seek (overtly or covertly) to make the balance of power more equitable.

For these reasons, founders may find they have quite a short-term role within a partnership and that they will need to re-define and re-structure their relationship and/or withdraw to enable the partnership to truly flourish as a 'team of equals'. This not only applies to the individuals who initiate a partnership but to all those who represent the partner organisations in the first phase – since they are also, in their own way, founders.

In any partnership or partnership institution, therefore, succession planning is vital. Strategies need to be in place to:

- Ensure the partnership survives the departure of individuals;
- Enable newcomers to catch up and fit in quickly and
- Enlist the active participation of those who follow on, no matter how different their style of engagement is from their predecessor's.

OTHER INFLUENCERS

There are many non-partners who may have a strong (formal or non-formal) relationship to the partnership including: donors; community leaders; local or central governments. Which (if any) non-partners should have the right to influence the partnership? Is this external influence – wherever it comes from – openly acknowledged? Agreed? Accepted? How is it managed? Reviewed? Restricted? Above all, do the external 'influencers' understand and respect the partnership's autonomy and right to self-determination? If the answer to this last question is 'no' what strategies do the partners have for building such understanding and respect?

INSIDERS:OUTSIDERS

Partnerships are difficult to establish and perhaps even more difficult to maintain. They also very quickly develop complex dynamics that are hard to penetrate for those not centrally involved. This makes it problematic for those outside the partnership to have any useful in-put into its development or to adequately understand either its coherence or its more subtle achievements.

Some partnerships (including Profiles 2 and 3 outlined here) develop a network of 'critical friends' – individuals who are not partners themselves but are kept informed and engaged in the partnership's work as advisors or associates.

These 'insider: outsiders' can fulfil a number of useful functions including:

- Supplying regular critique or feedback to partners (as in Profile 2)
- Undertaking reviews or action research on behalf of the partnership (as in Profile 3)
- Arbitrating in unresolved conflicts between partners
- Acting as 'stewards' over the partnership's assets – on behalf of external beneficiaries or non-partner donors.

Procedures

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Partnerships are notorious for the cumbersome nature of decision-making. Indeed, many a partnership has come to grief over this issue when the tension has led to relationship breakdown between those who are wedded to consensus-building no matter how long that takes and those who want immediate decisions regardless of unresolved issues.

BENEFITS AND COSTS OF A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

It is clear in this collaborative approach that there is a balance to be struck between the benefits (sense of co-ownership; shared responsibility and diversity of in-puts) and the costs (slowness of decision-making; risk of settling for the lowest common denominator and high levels of exasperation).

KRG seemed to work most successfully (ie the benefits were experienced as outweighing the costs) when KRG members were engaged in either of the following activities:

- In depth and 'off the record' discussions about challenges faced and
- Working together on specific tasks especially when faced with an external deadline.

THE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES GROUP: FURTHER LESSONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION, January 2002 **(Profile 3)**

Partnerships that successfully meet this challenge tend to be those where:

- There are clear decision-making protocols/procedures agreed and in place
- Most day-to-day decisions are carried by individuals or small groups on behalf of the partnership
- Only major decisions (for example, of policy or expenditure) are brought to the partners as a whole group
- There is regular, easily accessible and succinct information-sharing between the partners.

In other words only particularly important decisions need the whole group's involvement and most decisions can be carried on behalf of the group as long as all parties know (or know how to find out) what is going on.

PROS AND CONS OF CENTRALISED MANAGEMENT

Both the Resource Centre (Profile 1) and the Cross-sector Partnership Initiative (Profile 2) delegated the management function to one of the partner organisations – clearly seen by all partners as the most appropriate partner for this role. Drawing on the experiences (in Profile l from the perspective of the managing partner and in Profile 2 from the perspective of a non-managing partner) it is clear that there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to this approach summarised below:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Maximum efficiency	Too distant from diverse/complementary experience of other partners
Clear decision-making procedures and day-to-day management systems	Too much influence/control perceived to be in the hands of one partner – other partners may have to fight to be heard Managing partners feeling (their expertise) too challenged by non managing partners

ADVANTAGES continued	**DISADVANTAGES** continued
Familiar management approach	Too conventional for flexible needs of the partnership
'One-stop shop' for external agencies/individuals	Confusion about ownership/leadership from external agencies/individuals
Quick response time – because mandated to act on behalf of partners	Tendency for managing partner to take development as well as management decisions

Based on log-book notes **(Profiles 1 and 2)**

PROS AND CONS OF DE-CENTRALISED MANAGEMENT

Increasing numbers of partnerships are de-centralised in their management structure – and there are pros and cons here too. After three years, members of the Knowledge Resources Group (Profile 3) were able to summarise their experiences of being a highly de-centralised partnership as follows:

ADVANTAGES	**DISADVANTAGES**
Maximum diversity at operational levels	Greater risk of conflicts of interest
Opportunities for individual leadership	High levels of personal isolation
Shared sense of 'ownership' based on co-created working principles	Cumbersome decision-making processes
Moving away from conventional 'power bases'	Tendency for power to be exercised in hidden ways
Freedom of operation	Lack of coherence

Extract from minutes of a KRG meeting, May 2001 **(Profile 3)**

MANAGEMENT BY MANDATE

Most partnerships evolve a system of dividing tasks between the partners or handing them over to a paid broker or manager who will act on their behalf. Somewhat different to a typical line management system (since those undertaking tasks are likely to be answerable to the partners as a group) this requires that tasks are clarified and allocated with particularly careful consideration. It also requires the partners to let go of direct day-to-day control and, perhaps, to accept that the task may be done quite differently to how they as individual professionals might have done it themselves.

MANDATING TASKS

"It quickly became KRG practice that specific tasks were allocated not to those who might be expected to do them best, but rather to those who cared about them most or for whom undertaking the task would add value to their own or their organisation or cluster priorities. This suggests that the voluntary rather than contractual nature of many partnerships requires a somewhat different approach to the allocation and carrying out of tasks"

THE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES GROUP: FURTHER LESSONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION, January 2002 **(Profile 3)**

It may be necessary for every partnership to develop appropriate mandating systems and/or mandate agreements so that there is no confusion about who does what and by when.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Accountability in a partnership may be a particularly complex issue because (in effect) there are three (rather than the more common two) levels. Accountability to:

1. (non-partner) beneficiaries
2. (non-partner/external) donors and
3. the partners/partner organisations themselves

Some of the specific difficulties in accountability systems include:

- Conflicting loyalties: which comes first, allegiance to each individual's own organisation or to the partnership? (Profiles 1 and 2)
- The individuals representing the partner organisations constantly having to take account of the different imperatives emanating from the (hopefully complementary but not necessarily common) missions of each partner organisation. (Profile 2)
- In a meeting of 'equals' how do partners develop ways – when necessary – of criticising each other's work/in-puts? In the case of the Resource Centre (Profile 1) the partners found this particularly difficult and increasingly opted out leaving it to the Director to act as an intermediary and (all too often) the carrier of unpleasant or bad news.

In any event it is likely that accountability is much more of a 'driver' of a partnership than is commonly understood or acknowledged. Those partnerships that put it at the heart of their activities rather than an 'add on' are likely to be more sustainable and successful.

EVALUATION SYSTEMS

As with accountability, evaluation can be more complex in a partnership than in other paradigms. Once again, a partnership needs to be evaluated not only at its level of impact on the object(s) of its work (ie the non-partner beneficiaries whether human or environmental) but also in terms of its impact on the partner organisations themselves (who are also 'beneficiaries' since partnerships are normally built on an assumption of mutual benefit).

It may be that different forms of evaluation need to be adopted for these different purposes – and there are many sources of information about research/evaluation options – but what seems to be emerging is a particular challenge for partnership initiatives. This is that such initiatives are often so multi-levelled and complex that it is simply not realistic to expect evaluations to be undertaken effectively by people completely external to the partnership. In a different example (the research programme run over three years by the Copenhagen Centre reviewing the development and impact of 6 partnerships in Europe), whilst clear distinctions were drawn between the research role and that of consultant, inevitably over the life of the programme, the researcher became a kind of 'critical friend' developing an empathy for the partnership and providing a useful mirror to the partners that helped the partnership to become more self-conscious and more self-critical.

In a different example (The Knowledge Resources Group – Profile 3) the final phase of work required a comprehensive report of the partnership lessons learnt in Business Partners for Development (BPD) as a whole organism and the relevance of those lessons to key sector groups (business, governments, civil society and financial institutions). It was agreed, for the sake of (so-called) objectivity and in order to conform to a notion of external credibility, to invite external organisations to tender for completing this piece of work. In the event, the only organisation that actually felt able to tender for the work (because they had the capacity to complete the work within the required timescale) was a for-profit, international consulting firm. In practice, once awarded the contract, it became clear that the time it took for the research team to get 'inside the skin' of the BPD partnership work in all its complexity meant that the days (funding) allocated to the task were simply inadequate and that – at the last possible moment – the members of the Knowledge Resources Group themselves had to take hold of (effectively take over) the project to infuse it with enough depth and insight to make it worth publishing. This was the exact opposite of what was intended, but perhaps reinforces the point that entirely external researchers simply cannot be expected to penetrate deeply enough if they do not have primary experience of the partnership paradigm and/or only become involved at a late stage and/or are kept at a 'neutral' distance from the experience.

These research/review experiences may, of course, be short-term phenomena. The partnership paradigm is still in its infancy. Perhaps in due course a new breed of specialist researchers ('research facilitators'?) will be able to take on such partnership assessments in new ways because they will have had a greater level of exposure to partnerships in all their diversity and been freed up from more traditional research constraints. However – in the short to medium term – what is suggested by the experiences of the partnerships cited here is that much more emphasis needs to be placed on innovation in the evaluation of cross-sector partnerships. To this end there is a strong case for creating new research approaches that build on the following:

- Peer review systems
- Open questioning/penetrating conversation as an approved research method and
- Research relationships that provide constructive 'critical friendship' to the partners as a key part of the evolving partnership-building process.

RELATIONSHIP TO DONORS/EXTERNAL RESOURCE PROVIDERS

Of course the people who most often require evaluation or reviews of a partnership are the donors (whether they are actively involved as partners or they are more distant external funders). In the case of the Knowledge Resource Group (Profile 3) the work had three donors with different types of relationship to the project:

DONOR	RELATIONSHIP	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
World Bank Group (WBG)	Initiating/lead partner	• Essential as the foundation for the KRG's work (ie unlikely that any other organisation would have funded such an open-ended experiment from the beginning) • Sympathetic to the complexity of the KRG's task • Vested interest in continuing support (ie it couldn't allow the project to fail for lack of support because it was too important to the organisation's own focus/ priorities at that time)	• Such a significant funding role arguably gave the WBG too much control/too strong a power base within the partnership • Often unclear when an in-put to the work of the KRG was being made by the WBG as 'partner' and when it was being made by the WBG as 'donor'

DONOR	RELATIONSHIP	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Ford Foundation	External donor	• Interested in supporting a final product that was focussed on 'learning and sharing' rather than a pre-conceived notion of 'success'	• Slow in reaching a funding decision (in other words, the application process itself held up the flow of the work – always a problem for a partnership initiative with a short life-span)
UK's Department for International Development (DFID)	External donor with a 3-year funding relationship to other aspects of the BPD project at 'cluster' level	• Willing to come in to a funding relationship to KRG at a comparatively late stage to ensure a completed programme of work • Had invested heavily in (and had a close working relationship with) BPD at a number of levels therefore had a vested interest in providing such support in the project's final stages.	• There was a tendency for the KRG work to be concluded as a partnership between the two most powerful donors (the World Bank and DFID) rather than continuing to operate as the more complex partnership of 7 who had worked together during the three years of the project.

Taken from notes compiled for the final report on the KRG (2001)

A key issue for partners is to explore (and learn how to manage effectively) the on-going relationship to external donors. Almost invariably this requires considerable effort and time allocated to donors and partners deepening their understanding of each other's priorities and anxieties. Donors expect (rightly or wrongly) to have control and they tend to prefer funding the tangible rather than the intangible – this can be a particular challenge for partnerships. Many partnerships have been forced into restrictive compromises by donor demands. Some partnerships have collapsed because external donors (even when they have described themselves as 'partners') have become impatient and moved on to other things before the partnership has matured to the point of self-sufficiency. A few partnerships have collapsed (as with Profile l) largely because the gulf between the innovative aspirations of the partners and the more traditional requirements of the donor was simply to big to bridge.

Partnerships are likely to have a more sound operating basis where they:

- Are designed to be temporary and have their resources secured in advance for the duration of the programme of work or
- Have multiple resource arrangements in place so they are less dependent on a single source and/or
- Mix and match partner and non-partner resource provision (including non-cash resources) and/or
- Have external donors who accept the 'trial and error' nature of many partnership approaches and are willing to stick with the partnership medium- to long-term (and benefit themselves from the learning involved) and/or
- Are designed to be income-generating in the medium to long-term.

Productivity

It is enormously important that partnerships are productive – no matter how important it is to build solid collaborative relationships this cannot be at the cost of losing focus on the tasks to be undertaken. Early decisions on what the goals of the partnership are and a suitable investment of time in negotiating and planning specific 'deliverables' are often indications of a robust partnership that is likely to lead to solid and practical achievements.

PARTNERSHIP PRODUCTIVITY

In reflecting on the Consortium experience to date, the conclusion seems to be that partnerships are most functional, effective and sustainable when:

- They are highly task-focussed;
- The 'products' of the partnership are tangible and
- The partnership meets the expectations pre-agreed by the partners (and – in this case – donors).

Logbook entry: April 2000 **(Profile I)**

AGREEING THE 'PRODUCT'

It has taken many people some time to recognise that the partnership and the 'product' of the partnership (ie the project or programme of work) are two different things. A partnership is a means to an end and rarely an end in itself, but there is much value to separating out clearly the partnership (as an on-going collaborative relationship between different players that may have many different aspects and outcomes) from the activity or deliverables emanating from the partnership.

Partnerships can be formed around a specific need/challenge (eg 'how do we most effectively provide health services to this community?') or they can be formed around an open-ended collaboration of players (eg 'we are concerned about environmental degradation, who can we work with to have maximum impact? How? Where?').

Whether the 'product' is the starting point for the partnership or arrived at as a result of a partnership exploration, it is essential that the partners all commit to an agreed programme of work. The more specific the 'deliverables', the more focussed the collaboration and the more strongly the partnership becomes achievement/target-oriented. Is it coincidence that in the partnerships cited here, the partnership that is still in tact is the one that had the most specific 'product' and – because of this – the tightest timetable for delivery (Profile 2). (Interestingly, it is also the partnership that did **not** have an external donor. But perhaps this is just coincidence. Or perhaps it is because it is only 2 years old at the time of writing).

INTERFACE BETWEEN PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

Partnerships can get very stuck in the planning phase – partners often find the move from rhetoric to reality very hard. In effect the partnership is at this stage moving from private meetings behind closed doors to the much greater exposure involved in 'going public'. So at the same stage in a partnership there are two major new challenges to contend with: the first that of being in the public eye and the second being the need to move from negotiation to management mode.

It is useful for the partners to take stock at this point and to actually explore how they/their partnership will be different as it goes into this new phase. Who will be responsible for supervising implementation? How will 'productivity' be monitored or evaluated? In a large partnership it may be decided to have a smaller 'steering' or 'oversight' group to oversee implementation on behalf of the partnership. Here it may be useful to take a lesson from business: to give those responsible for implementation very specific targets and deliverables and a timetable for delivery against which they are asked to report regularly. It may also be valuable to develop 'quality assurance' procedures and some kind of quality control system– after all, it is important in most partnerships to be able to demonstrate that both efficiency and quality are enhanced by a collaborative approach. It is easy for slippage to occur where there are complex management structures and/or too much fluidity in operational style.

OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

A successful partnership can have many outputs and outcomes – both those intended at the outset and those that are unexpected. It is not uncommon for a partnership to actually do something quite different from what was intended at its commencement. A certain flexibility and open-ness is important but not at the expense of achieving the goals around which the partnership was formed. In most partnerships there are those who are more 'output' oriented and those who are more 'outcome' oriented ('product' versus 'process' is the way it is often described). But most partnerships need both outputs **and** outcomes and it is a key challenge to record not only the outputs and the outcomes but also those that are unexpected as well as those that are pre-agreed. The simple table below suggests how such a record might be compiled – both to provide a basis of research/evaluation and to provide partners with a mechanism for reflecting on the partnerships productivity. In this instance, the table has been completed as a retrospective summary of the Resource Centre's 'products' as they might have been summarised at the end of year 3 (see Profile l).

	OUTPUTS ie Tangible products of the partnership	**OUTCOMES** ie More intangible impacts on partners, significant others or target group(s)
PRE-AGREED ie As part of an mou or contract between the partners or at the start of a specific partnership project	• x10 pilot projects and reports completed • Research fund set up and x10 research grants awarded • Resource Centre established and Business and Poverty database in place	• The partner organisations more actively/creatively engaged in business and poverty issues • Experience of Consortium management and development approaches to share with others • The issue of poverty moving onto the 'agenda' for the corporate sector
UNEXPECTED ie Activities, products, influences that have been an unanticipated result of the partnership	• Creation of a series of modules in responsible business practice developed and adapted for business organisations in poorer countries • BUSINESS AND POVERTY: BRIDGING THE GAP researched and published	• Resource Centre acquiring a reputation for leadership on the business and poverty issue • Attracting a wider group of partners and practitioners • Other income-generating work (research/ publications/facilitation) commissioned by DFID, World Bank Group and other agencies
REVISED/NEW ie New (more realistic? more ambitious?) aims for outcomes and outputs from the partnership	• Resource Centre providing a research, advice and information service on issues of responsible business practice as well as business and poverty issues • Resource Centre managing the Partnershipbrokersforum.net and coordinating a Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (on behalf of IBLF and the ODI)	• IBLF (managing partner) recognised as an organisation at the forefront of engaging business in meeting the millennium development goals • Resource Centre self-financing by being linked to a new global project (Digital Partnership) and by a range of income generating activities

CHANGING THE PRODUCT

As the table above suggests, partners can agree to change their 'products' at any time for any of the following reasons:

- because a specific task is completed but the partnership decides to move on to new activities or
- it has become clear it was the wrong 'product' and should be abandoned in favour of something else or
- a completely different way of the partnership achieving its goals has been found.

Progress

COMMUNICATING ACHIEVEMENTS

Partnerships need to be productive or they will not last. But more than that they need to be able to communicate achievements convincingly to their primary audiences including:

- Each other
- Colleagues within each of the partner organisations
- Key partner stakeholder groups
- Target beneficiaries of the partnership's activities.

Achievements (or at least indications of progress) may also need to be convincingly demonstrated to 'significant others' including:

- Wider communities where the partnership operates
- Donors
- Politicians/policy makers/local or national governments
- Media
- Watchdog groups
- The general public.

On the whole, partnerships are better at telling the story as they want to tell it than they are at tailoring the story to suit the requirements of each different audience. Partners typically tend to spend too little time on the communications challenge and can be caught out – or at least surprised – when achievements go virtually unnoticed by those outside the immediate orbit of the partnership.

DEFINING 'SUCCESS'

But this brings us back rather sharply to a consideration of how we define 'success' in partnership practice.

SUCCESS CAN BE 'MESSY'

"Could we have done things better?
The immediate answer must be 'yes'. But in all honesty it is not easy to see how *given both the highly innovative nature of this partnership and the fact that the members of KRG were all individuals whose primary focus of attention was elsewhere.*

With the benefit of hindsight we might have done it differently but in reality doesn't every partnership actually have to evolve its own mechanisms to be appropriate for each unique situation? You simply can't pick anyone else's model 'off the shelf'. Our experience with KRG suggests that it is inevitable that 'institutionalising' a partnership will always take more time than is anticipated. It will also always be something of a hit and miss process ('messy') whilst the tasks become more defined, the procedures more structured and the partners more skilled at working collaboratively."

THE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES GROUP: FURTHER LESSONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION, January 2002 **(Profile 3)**

Was this success?

DEFINING 'FAILURE'

And if success can be messy what does 'failure' look like?

CHANGING GOALPOSTS: THE MAJOR CAUSE OF A PARTNERSHIP FAILING?

In the report its first phase, the Resource Centre (RC) staff team raised questions about the nature of the RC: Donor (DFID) relationship. It described the relationship as follows:

> "The relationship is both subtle and complex: it is not simply one of conventional purchaser: provider. In fact it can be interpreted in 3 distinct ways. We characterise this below as a way of 'flagging up' some areas that need clarification prior to Phase 2.
> Option 1. RC as ***provider of services*** to DFID (ie DFID as client)
> Option 2. RC as DFID ***partner*** (ie DFID as associate)
> Option 3. RC as ***independent project*** (ie DFID as funder)
> Whilst it is not necessarily impossible to fulfil these three different functions, it raises interesting questions about:
> • How the RC should prioritise its activities
> • How DFID sets criteria for assessing the RC's effectiveness and
> • RC governance"

Extract from: Resource Centre Phase I report to DFID, January 1999

In year 2 – in part at least as a result of the questions raised in the phase I report – the RC was encouraged by DFID to focus on developing as an independent project (the 3rd of the options outlined above). It began to do this with some success.

Towards the end of its third year, DFID decided not to allocate further funding to the project. This decision seems to have been made on the basis that the RC had failed to provide services to DFID (the lst option outlined above). In other words, the RC was judged to have failed because it was retrospectively evaluated against different criteria than those that had been agreed at the beginning of phase 2.

(Profile I)

Was this failure?

CRISIS:OPPORTUNITY

It is not always clear whether or when a partnership is 'working' and sometimes the gulf between success and failure is very narrow. In the Knowledge Resources Group (Profile 3) the core group felt for much of the three years that we were somewhat groping in the dark (as mentioned elsewhere – a lot of partnership experience is uncharted territory so this is hardly surprising). It seemed very hard to know exactly what the key tasks should be and what form the products should take. We started, for example, with the expectation of a creating a wide network of practitioners and a partnership resource bank but this transmuted into (effectively) becoming an action research group ourselves.

At its best, a good partnership will have created working relationships where it is possible to be honest about what isn't working; where history is examined not ignored or re-written and where partners do not feel under pressure to be either naïve or excessively positive.

At its **very** best, a good partnership will be capable of turning even crises into opportunities for developing something new by creating a learning culture where mistakes and disappointments are the springboard for reflection, revision and transformation.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Above all, a successful partnership is likely to be one that learns from what goes wrong. In all three of the partnerships profiled here there was an enormous amount of learning not all of which was integrated into the partnership during its lifetime. In the case of KRG (Profile 3 – which was, after all, designed as a learning partnership) the learning was perhaps most explicit. For example the group actually committed time to collectively extracting lessons that would be useful to those working in other partnerships. The box below was the result of one such brainstorm…

LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

BE PRECISE about:

- Titles – they matter, get them right!
- Not building on assumptions – or if you do, define them and agree them between partners
- Communicating well between partners – use different communications tools appropriately and creatively

BE EFFICIENT by:

- Mandating/delegating tasks wherever possible – with agreed (and straight-forward) 'sign off' procedures
- Not wasting time on small decisions
- Moving fast once decisions are made

BE FLEXIBLE in order to:

- Create open systems that allow for changes as necessary
- Encourage creativity and innovation within the partner group
- Build on unexpected opportunities when they arise

BE CLEAR about:

- Roles and responsibilities – re-define them as necessary and always differentiate between management, development and guardianship roles
- Governance procedures
- Which partner organisations (and/or others) have the right to represent the partnership to whom and when

Extract from minutes of a KRG meeting, May 2001 **(Profile 3)**

Partners in any partnership need to be aware that learning has two aspects. It is not enough to extract lessons from experience if the partnership does not also have an operating culture in which those lessons can be usefully internalised and acted upon.

CELEBRATING TEMPORARINESS

We have a tendency to assume that only those things that endure have value. But is this always the case? Of course there can be partnerships that come to an end because they have not been effective but there are also instances where a partnership achieves a considerable amount and is dissolved because the job has been done and it is time for the partners to move on to other things. In these situations the task itself may have been short-term or the partnership created specifically to explore solutions rather than to deliver them. Built-in obsolescence is usually regarded as a bad thing but where a challenge has been met then it is infinitely preferable than dragging out a relationship that is past its 'sell-by' date. (See type 4 in Table – inside back cover).

The Knowledge Resources Group (Profile 3) was designed (as was Business Partners for Development as a programme) to be temporary. The advantage of this form of partnership is that it can be particularly task-focussed and the fixed deadline can prove to be hugely helpful in pushing for completion. This form of partnership 'institution' runs against the grain of the general assumption that a partnership is only successful if it endures indefinitely.

But partnership may be a paradigm that leads us into a new way of understanding value. A temporary partnership at its best can:

- Launch or 'seed' a new idea or approach
- Challenge the status quo
- Empower others to carry on the work independently
- Achieve short-term, visible goals quickly
- Demonstrate a new way of working
- Bring about significant (and long-term) changes in organisational/institutional or individual behaviour
- Provide a useful range of lessons to others – especially if it takes a more 'high risk'/ experimental approach.

EXIT STRATEGIES

Whether or not a partnership is designed to be 'temporary' (perhaps even measured in months rather than years), many partnerships do come to an end eventually. This can be a difficult decision for partners to make since it can feel as if an ending cancels out the partnership's achievements. We tend to invest much more quality time into partnership-building than partnership-dismantling. Most partnerships that end – even highly successful ones – end clumsily. How can we as partnership practitioners develop the same good practice procedures around endings that we have developed for beginnings?

Some ideas to work on include:

- Capturing and communicating the partnership's story
- Celebrating achievements
- Using an external broker or facilitator to manage the dismantling process professionally
- Acknowledging (and supporting?) activities that have resulted from the partnership
- Making a clean break.

Partnerships that draw to a close successfully tend to see the end of the partnership as a new beginning. In other words, endings (or departures of individuals/organisations from a partnership) are understood and built on as opportunities for change.

Maybe using 'exit strategy' as a term is simply inappropriate in the partnership context since it suggests abandonment and it does not accord with the preceding investment in collaboration, consensus and quality relationship-maintenance. Making plans to move on as part of regular reviews between partners, negotiated and adapted in the light of discussions and aligned with a continuing commitment to working this through together, is perhaps an approach that is more appropriate. Future Scenario Planning may be a useful tool for partners to use at times of significant change and/or upon completion of agreed activities.

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All these (and perhaps many more) lessons emanate from a review of just three partnerships. They all have implications for the institutionalising process. And if we agree that sustainable and/or effective partnerships need to move from a personalised relationship to an institutionalised one (a working hypothesis presented on page 6) then we now need to address the institutionalising process in more detail.

The term 'institutionalising' is used here in the broad sense of *formalising a working relationship.*

This publication focuses on the institutionalising process (in various forms) however it may not always be desirable to 'institutionalise' a partnership. The mere process of institutionalising a partnership does not necessarily guarantee its longevity or success – in fact, the institutionalising process may itself become a decisive factor in the partnership failing. Partner organisations often seek to collaborate with other sectors – to some degree at least – to get away from the limitations of their traditional organisational and sectoral relationships. In other words their central value is perceived as being a result of comparative distance/detachment from existing institutions thereby a achieving a level of freedom from the constraints of conventional (bureaucratic?) institutional procedures.

And, for many of the key individuals taking leading roles in partnership initiatives, the appeal of cross-sector partnership work is the potential it offers them as professionals of working on the edge of or outside their institutions and the rigidities of their organisational cultures (this applies to all sectors!). It is not uncommon to find, for example, that once a partnership is finished (or has failed), these same individuals move sectors and/or radically change their careers rather than return to a former (perhaps now perceived as restrictive) role within their organisation.

Cross-sector partnerships in their early (pre-institutionalised phase) often have a special dynamism precisely because they are relatively un-structured, informal and *ad hoc*.
In the light of this partners need to think long and hard about the pros and cons of the institutionalising process. The tool below suggests some of the aspects that may be usefully considered:

TOOL 1

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST INSTITUTIONALISING A PARTNERSHIP

FOR INSTITUTIONALISING THE PARTNERSHIP	**AGAINST** INSTITUTIONALISING THE PARTNERSHIP
More stability and security of investment	More flexibility and freedom of operation
More mainstreamed	More risk-taking
Less dependency on individuals	Less buck-passing
More conventional administrative and management systems in place	More innovative administration and management systems
More access to conventional resources	More creativity in locating new resources
Potential for impact based on existing partner profiles/networks	Potential for impact based on the fact that it is different from existing institutions
More 'checks and balances' and greater accountability built into the working relationships – more formal	More opportunity for appropriate governance systems to be developed by the partners – more tailored
Greater influence with donors and policy makers because part of 'the system'	Greater influence with NGOs and community-based organisations because outside 'the system'
Able to build on existing reputation/networks of partner institutions	Free from any negative reputation/baggage of partner institutions

(Footnote 2)

Assuming that a large number of partnerships will have to 'institutionalise' in some form or other, we now consider the institutionalising process in more detail. The three forms of institutionalising partnerships addressed below are:

- Institutional engagement
- Institution-building
- Institutional reform.

Institutional engagement

At the primary level, institutional engagement involves the fuller involvement of the partner organisations themselves in the partnership both in terms of contributing to the partnership and in being positively impacted by the partnership. In other words a measure of institutional engagement is the degree to which the partnership has penetrated into the partner organisations. Experience suggests that it is not uncommon for a partnership to be quite peripheral to the very organisations in whose name it is operating.

Why might this matter?

Failure to effectively engage partner organisations can mean at best a less vigorous and comprehensive involvement from the organisation, and at worst the collapse of the partnership relationship if one or two key players move on. It may well be that more active involvement of partner organisations may be far more important than is generally recognised.

However, without a process of internalising the partnership effectively, the organisation as a whole cannot be expected to understand it or feel a relationship to it. Sometimes it is simply a matter of time – but more often it is a matter of combating (active or passive) resistance. In these instances, effective institutional engagement is highly dependent on one or two key individuals determinedly drawing the partnership experience into their own organisational culture.

Tool 2, below, has been developed out of the experiences from the three case studies in engaging partner institutions (sometimes more and sometimes less) successfully. It is designed to apply to partner organisations from any sector.

TOOL 2

INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

PRIORITY	ACTIVITY OPTIONS	PRIORITY RATING 1=low 5=high
ORGANISATION CULTURE CHANGE	• Learning that other organisations do things differently (and sometimes more effectively) and sharing this with colleagues for the benefit of the organisation	1 2 3 4 5
	• Influencing the culture of organisations by working with internal change agents and supporting the development of a 'learning culture'	1 2 3 4 5
	• Promoting a more 'values-based' organisational culture at all levels (ie by exploring personal/professional boundaries as well as cultural and sectoral diversity)	1 2 3 4 5
	• Seeking to impact management systems by encouraging such systems to embrace the partnership ethos and to incorporate learning/experiences from the partnership	1 2 3 4 5
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	• 'Selling' the value of cross-sector engagement as a professional development opportunity to HR managers	1 2 3 4 5
	• Engaging employees in practical ways in the partnership/partnership's initiatives – particularly where it enhances their skills, understanding and/or their organisational loyalty	1 2 3 4 5
	• Introducing senior managers to the value of partnerships as a way of more effectively achieving organisational objectives (via workshops/ seminars/site visits)	1 2 3 4 5
PUBLIC RELATIONS	• Arguing the case that public relations/stakeholder relationships are more robust and sustainable through building effective cross-sector partnerships	1 2 3 4 5
	• Building networks that will lead to useful contacts; new opportunities for effective work and interesting 'challenges'	1 2 3 4 5
	• Inviting key partners and stakeholders to have a role within the organisation (eg NGO partners could advise corporate partners on their community relations practices; corporate partners could advise public sector agencies or NGOs on their management systems)	1 2 3 4 5
COMMUNICATIONS	• Seeking external media coverage that acknowledges/applauds institutional engagement	1 2 3 4 5
	• Promoting internal publicity via in-house newsletters/intranet	1 2 3 4 5
	• Creating special information-sharing materials and events accessible throughout the organisation	1 2 3 4 5
GETTING OUT OF 'THE BOX'	• Creating opportunities for 'transformational' experiences eg putting people into new situations/unexpected settings	1 2 3 4 5
	• Creatively setting up and managing 'encounters' between key people who do not normally meet but who may have much of value to say to each other	1 2 3 4 5
	• Developing new 'experiential learning' opportunities (eg across-sector 'job swaps', personal development learning programmes, internal learning workshops with an emphasis on developing vision/imagination)	1 2 3 4 5

(Footnote 2)

The intention is that this tool can be used at any stage of a partnership – whenever it seems appropriate either to an individual partner organisation or to all the partners to focus more directly on raising the levels of organisational engagement in the partnership. It simply gives some suggestions (by no means exhaustive) about how such organisational engagement can be undertaken.

And what of key **non-**partner organisations?

At a secondary level, institutional engagement with any number of other (non-partner) organisations either impacted by or impacting the partnership can also be of critical importance. Such non-partner organisations can include:

- Organisations at OPERATIONAL LEVEL – for example, other companies/NGOs/public sector agencies working in the same field; community-based organisations
- Institutions or agencies at STRATEGIC/POLICY LEVEL – government departments, political parties, international agencies as well as
- DONORS – external resource providers.

Any of these can be vitally – even critically – important to a partnership and, for this reason, they will need to be seen as part of any strategy aimed at engaging institutions effectively – both to sustain the partnership and to secure the partnership's impact and influence. Partnerships that ignore this do so at their peril!

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This is one aspect of the 'institutionalising' imperative. A different aspect concerns the creation of completely new institutions designed specifically as vehicles for coordinating and implementing partnership-based initiatives.

Institution-building

At a certain point in the creation of a successful partnership the issue arises of how it (the partnership) is to be sustained and how the partnership-based programme is to be managed or the proposed project is to be implemented. What may be required is a new kind of partnership-based 'institution': a mechanism that stays true to the diversity of the different partner organisations and is able to reflect their differing interests and priorities whilst at the same time creating an efficient and effective delivery system that does not require micro-management from the partners themselves.

Any new partnership institution needs to get the balance right between formal procedures that ensure accountability (a potential benefit of 'institutionalisation') whilst avoiding the undue bureaucracy typical of many institutions (a potential un-doer of a good partnership).

What seems to be occurring quite spontaneously is a proliferation of what one might describe as 'new-style partnership institutions' – created specifically to meet the complex requirements of cross-sector partnerships to enable them to be efficient and effective as well as genuinely collaborative.

There is an interesting conundrum here.

An important aspect of the partnership paradigm is its capacity to break through traditional approaches and conventional sector boundaries. In other words, a key feature of partnerships is that there are no 'rules' so mechanisms and procedures have, by default, to be invented. But partnerships are by their nature complex and often unwieldy and it is not easy to take risks and be innovative in such circumstances. A certain amount of trial and error is inevitable – perhaps even necessary as a way for the partners to build their shared identity and agree their common vision and values.

Whether or not to create a new institution to formalise the partnership is a big issue for which there are no short cuts or easy answers. It is a question of working through the options and ensuring that the partners themselves are centrally involved in the decision-making process. Indeed, working out how the partners can continue to work collaboratively and maintain their commitment and involvement is one of the key challenges a partnership faces in any institution-building process.

What follows is a simple check-list designed to enable partners to work through the process constructively.

TOOL 3
INSTITUTION-BUILDING GUIDELINES

1. MAKING THE DECISION: KEY QUESTIONS FOR PARTNERS TO ASK:
- Is it really necessary to build a new institution for this partnership?
  If so, why? If not, do we need to create other mechanisms/procedures?
- Will doing this enable the partnership to have greater strategic impact?
  Are we sure about this?
- Is it possible to build a new institution without the partnership losing its spontaneity? If so, how?
- How open and flexible can the management and accountability structures be?
  Can they be changed if they don't work?
- What is it about this partnership that we most want to safe-guard?
  How can we ensure that any new institution will safeguard these things appropriately?

2. INSTITUTION-BUILDING: OPTIONS
- Do start from the assumption that it is possible to create an appropriate institution to suit the specific requirements of your partnership
- Do research other partnership structures and see where you can benefit from and build on other's experience
- Do be sure that the institution you design is acceptable to all partners
- Don't create a new institution unless it is really necessary!

3. PRE-REQUISITES FOR SUCCESSFUL INSTITUTION-BUILDING
- Track record of successful partnering and/or tangible evidence of strong commitment from partners
- Negotiation and brokering skills within the group (or agreement to 'buy in' these skills if necessary)
- Shared sense of ownership/responsibility from all partners
- Solid backing/engagement from partner organisations
- Solid backing/engagement from non partner resource providers
- Resources available for medium-term implementation

4. GROUND RULES
- Co-create working principles/ground rules
- Stick to them
- Review them regularly
- Change them if necessary

(Footnote 2)

As a starting point to considering the range of possible partnership institutions, there is a simple table (see inside back cover) that briefly describes seven different 'typologies'. Between them, they cover a range of new-style partnership structures with a specific example given to illustrate the key characteristics of each type. They are intended as a starting point for thinking about what partnership institutions are possible – but this may be only a beginning. The potential types of new partnership institution are – probably – limitless. In fact, there is no reason why every partnership should not develop its own model and register it (or not) as an independent organisation as the partners themselves see fit.

Last but not least we address the potential of a partnership to provide the stimulus for significant institutional transformation or reform.

2. Tools 1, 2 and 3 have been developed out of the experiences of the three partnerships profiled in this paper.

Institutional reform

Ben Okri in one his seminal essays – published under the tantalising title THE WAY OF BEING FREE – observes that human beings are *'blessed with the necessity of transformation'* [3]. It is probably this innately human characteristic that ensures that we continue to seek solutions to the vast panoply of apparently intractable problems that we as a species face – whether of a societal or an organisational nature.

The motivation for creating appropriate cross-sector partnerships in the first place is to explore an approach that will be more innovative and far-reaching in social, economic and/or environmental terms than single sector approaches. We turn to partnerships as a paradigm in the hope that they will prove to be capable of transforming a negative situation but if the partnership fails to challenge and ultimately change the status quo of institutional/sectoral behaviour then it is likely its impacts will be merely transitory or superficial.

At some stage sooner rather than later it will become clear that partnerships have a potentially major role to play in reviewing and revising the central values, roles and primary activities of the different sectors – whether public, private or civil society. So how can partnerships begin to review, challenge and (where necessary) change organisational and institutional structures?

Some partnerships are evolving methodologies and tools for assessing the (actual and potential) level and types of organisational/institutional change as a result of partnership activity. Below is one such example: a self-assessment tool for organisations/institutions involved in cross-sector partnerships – whether as partners or significant non-partners.

TOOL 4

REVIEWING THE PARTNERSHIP'S CONTRIBUTION TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

TOPIC AREA	KEY QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
Background to the partnership	❙ Aims of the partnership? ❙ Incentives for forming partnership? ❙ Targets/expectations of the partners? ❙ Key externalities and their impact on the partnership (positive and negative)?	❙ To provide: • a brief overview of the partnership from the perspective of the partner institution/ organisation • an exploration of the surrounding circumstances to give a context for the institution's involvement.
Partners and significant others	❙ Key partners? ❙ Significant non-partners? ❙ Structure of partnership? ❙ Roles and responsibilities? ❙ Resources? ❙ Communications? ❙ Evolution of involvement? ❙ Observable changes in behaviour? ❙ Conclusion, termination or exits?	❙ To provide a brief summary of the partnership's structure and functionality in order to place the institution's involvement in the context of the whole.
Institution's involvement	❙ Initial expectations of the institution? ❙ Description of involvement? ❙ Have expected outcomes been achieved? ❙ Are there unexpected outcomes? ❙ Risks and rewards for the institution? ❙ Level of integration into institution?	❙ To involve key people within the institution/ organisation by asking them for details of their expectations and experiences of the partnership – positive and negative. This is an opportunity for learning and improving their relationship to the partnership rather than 'point-scoring'.
Lessons for the institution	What do the findings reveal about the: • Value of the partnership to the institution? • Value of the institution to the partnership? • Priorities, strategy and operational competence of the institution? ❙ What inhibits greater engagement between the institution and the partnership? ❙ Where is there most potential for greater involvement? ❙ (If appropriate) Are there appropriate 'moving on' strategies in place?	❙ To provide as penetrating an analysis as possible. It may call for an external 'observer' or 'researcher' to provide a level of objectivity. ❙ A key issue to agree is: who are the lessons for? Partners? Key staff? Operational managers? Donors? Senior management? Once this is clear it will be easier to articulate the lessons in an appropriate way. ❙ Lessons may be best presented verbally and followed up with a written summary. Some lessons are best 'drawn out' in a workshop or group discussion.
Recommendations for change	❙ What key internal changes would make the institution a more effective partner? ❙ How will this be achieved? ❙ What changes within the partnership would enable more effective engagement of the institution in the partnership? ❙ How will this be achieved? ❙ How far is the partnership impacting the institution to date? Is this adequate? ❙ How might the partnership have greater impact on the mission, management and working methods of the institution? ❙ Is this an explicit (primary or secondary) aim of the partnership? ❙ Is it realistic? ❙ How will this be achieved?	❙ This exercise is designed as a tool for change. In some instances the change required may be simply that of convincing the institution that the partnership is central rather than peripheral and that its benefits to the institution outweigh the risks and/or the challenges. ❙ Change is most likely to be acceptable, effective and sustainable where both the institution and the partnership are involved and where key people in both are given leadership roles as 'change agents'. ❙ It may be that a key (even if unintended) benefit of the partnership is radical change within the institution itself.

Footnote (4)

Once a systematic review has been completed, the development of a comprehensive strategy for institutional change can be agreed between the key players.

Simon Zadek – well known as a writer, advisor and researcher on cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development[5] – has developed a model of 'three generations of partnership' where the first level (most current partnerships in his view) is a partnership that simply seeks to deliver a **practical benefit** to a specific target group or environmental concern. The second level is a partnership in which a **learning agenda** is central to the partnership leading to wider benefits and outcomes for the partners and their sectors. The third level is reserved for those (few) partnerships that strive to **change the rules**. This is a viewpoint that has intrigued and excited (to date) two cadres of enthusiastic partnership practitioners on the Post-graduate Course in Cross-sector Partnership (see Profile 2).

Institutional reform is a 'level 3' outcome of a successful partnership.

Ultimately, institutional reform may be a more important outcome of the partnership than any other. In other words, if the partnership leads to a government department functioning more creatively and efficiently; or to an international corporation contributing more vigorously and systematically to sustainable development in all aspects of its operations; or to an NGO having a much larger-scale and more credible impact as an organisation, then the 'outcomes' of the partnership will have become significantly more substantial than its 'outputs'.

3. Quote taken from THE WAY OF BEING FREE, A collection of essays by the Nigerian writer Ben Okri. Published by Phoenix, 1997

4. Tool 4 has been adapted from: INSTITUTIONAL/PARTNERSHIP INTERFACE TOOL

   A tool developed by the Water and Sanitation Cluster of BUSINESS PARTNERS FOR DEVELOPMENT in 2002 (ref: Profile 3) with many thanks to Ken Caplan – Cluster Coordinator – for his permission to adapt it and use it in this context.

5. Simon Zadek is Chief Executive of Accountability. He was also an advisor to the Knowledge Resources Group (Profile 3) and is the external examiner and advisor to the Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (Profile 2). A recent paper of his has been published in CSPI's annual journal: PARTNERSHIP MATTERS, published May 2003. Available from: www.cpi.cam.ac.uk//cspi//

Courage and chaos

How much priority should be given to institutional engagement, institutional reform or building a new partnership institution? These are difficult questions for any partnership. And there are unlikely ever to be easy answers. Each group of partners will need to take account of the specific imperatives and constraints surrounding their particular partnership and how heavily these considerations weigh compared with other priorities. In any event, it is unlikely to be a simple or predictable process since this remains a largely unmapped journey.

'IF IT WAS EASY IT WOULDN'T BE NECESSARY' [6]

KRG's experience seems to suggest that, for all its weaknesses, a structure that retains the capacity to be fluid and self-determining has the most potential for achieving results through a genuine collaboration of equals. It may just be that such structures simply need to be allowed to be 'messy' and that we as partnership practitioners will, over time, learn to accept and live with a level of chaos and uncertainty. There is, after all, a close connection between risk and innovation.

THE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES GROUP: FURTHER LESSONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION, January 2002 **(Profile 3)**

In some instances (as with Profile 3) a level of 'chaos' ultimately paid off. In other instances (as with Profile 2) a fairly formalised mechanism has been essential to quick and effective delivery. Perhaps the key lesson to be drawn from these (and other) experiences 'on the front line' is that we simply have to learn to work systematically through the many challenges that institutionalising partnerships seems inevitably to involve. At least it is a major mistake to ignore such challenges since they are likely to have negative impacts on partnerships in the medium to long-term if they are left unattended to.

With apologies both to William Shakespeare and Aldous Huxley [7] – in this brave new world of cross-sector partnership approaches, if we are to ensure that our initiatives have the greatest possible chance of being effective and having lasting impacts, we need to be courageous enough to face, survive and rise above the chaos involved in building brave new institutions.

6. This is a quote stolen from Robert Davies, Chief Executive of the IBLF, with whom it has been my privilege to work for more than 11 years as a 'partnership pioneer' – he always manages to lob this line into IBLF senior management meetings whenever his instinct suggests that we (his small band of dedicated 'front line' colleagues) may be veering away from our high-risk, cutting edge, 'ahead of the evidence' mandate.
7. Ref: THE TEMPEST – a play by William Shakespeare. Miranda, an innocent child who has been brought up in isolation, sees human beings (other than Prospero, her father, and the 'slave' Caliban) for the first time and spontaneously says: 'Oh brave new world that has such people in it.' The phrase Brave New World was subsequently adopted by the author Aldous Huxley as the title of his most widely read and admired futuristic novel.

Profiles

PROFILE 1: AN INITIATING PARTNERSHIP

Resource Centre for the Social Dimensions of Business Practice

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE 'INSTITUTION'

The Resource Centre (RC) was set up by a consortium of 9 organisations working together to initiate a project promoting the social dimensions of business practice.

B. THE PARTNERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INITIATIVE

- Centre for Development Studies, Swansea (University)
- Corporate Citizenship Company (Consultancy)
- ERM Social Strategies (Consultancy)
- Natural Resources Institute (University)
- Oxfam (NGO)
- Shared View Social Responsibility Ltd (Consultancy)
- The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) (NGO)
- Triodos Bank (Ethical investment institution)
- Warwick Business School (University)

The consortium came together to compile a bid to the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Though the consortium organisations were UK-based they all had operations overseas. This was important since the focus of the RC's work was on the development of socially responsible business activity that would have international impact specifically in countries with high levels of poverty.

In Phase I of the RC (8 months) the consortium met often and worked very closely together to build a consensus about the RC's priorities and key activities. In Phase 2, at their request, the consortium partners became a non-executive Advisory Group meeting twice a year – maintaining their active engagement through undertaking some of the RC's pilot projects leaving IBLF to manage and develop the project. In Phase 3, the Advisory Group was effectively dissolved and the RC continued to function with a more direct working relationship to the donor (DFID). The partnership, therefore, took responsibility for initiating and (absolutely critically) shaping the project in its early stages rather than managing its delivery.

C. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The IBLF was the lead partner from the outset – having been responsible for putting together and coordinating the consortium. Management was located in the IBLF offices since they were seen by the consortium to be the logical and appropriate choice. This meant that the project benefited from day to day access to IBLF resources including specialist staff, global networks, regional activities and leading edge experience in responsible business practices and cross-sector partnerships. These arrangements may, however, have led to an actual or perceived lack of clarity about what was IBLF and what was RC activity.

Perhaps inevitably, management arrangements were increasingly made between IBLF and DFID (donors) – this is explored in more detail below.

D. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Governance structures were complex (perhaps 'confused' is more accurate). There were three types of accountability in the first phase (ie when the RC was operating most clearly as a partnership). These are characterised below:

Accountability to the donor:
The RC was accountable to DFID as donor – a DFID steering group was established in the early stages though this was seen as essentially an 'advisory' rather than an 'oversight' body. It met on an ad hoc basis. Governance was therefore largely exercised retrospectively through a series of reports produced at the end of each 'phase' and discussed in detail with the DFID Senior Advisor and Project Officer responsible for the relationship.

Accountability to the lead partner organisation:
The RC was also accountable to the IBLF (Chief Executive, Finance Director and the IBLF Board) because the IBLF carried the contract with DFID and managed the financial arrangements. Within the IBLF structure the RC had to demonstrate adherence to IBLF priorities and 'mission' and to link in practical ways to other IBLF initiatives.

Accountability to the partnership:
The RC also had a clear (moral if not formal) obligation to the other 8 consortium partners who had committed themselves to the project and given considerable time and effort to preparing the initial bid to DFID. Consortium partners expected all RC activities to be pre-agreed by the whole partner group in part because as individuals they were genuinely engaged and enthusiastic and in part because they were (rightly) protecting their own organisation's involvement and, ultimately, reputation.

PROFILE 1: AN INITIATING PARTNERSHIP (continued)

Resource Centre for the Social Dimensions of Business Practice

In its early days, therefore, the RC operated within three parallel governance structures without much clarity as to which was pre-eminent. What becomes clear in retrospect is that the more the governance structure became simplified (in Phases 2 and 3) – in effect by reverting to a direct (and more conventional) arrangement between the RC and DFID – the less the RC operated as a partnership.

E. KEY TASKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

At the end of its first three years, the RC had:

- Completed a number of 'pilot' research projects on a range of subjects including: supply chains; gender issues in the workplace; management in garment manufacturing; consultation processes amongst the poorest stakeholders
- Produced a comprehensive website and database on BUSINESS AND POVERTY
- Produced more than 20 publications on key issues (of which this publication is one)
- Published and distributed BUSINESS AND POVERTY: BRIDGING THE GAP – the first publication to deal explicitly with the interface between business and poverty
- Completed commissioned research and project development work from a number of other bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies.

PROFILE 2: A PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY MECHANISM

The Cross-sector Partnership Initiative

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTNERSHIP 'INSTITUTION'

The Cross-sector Partnership Initiative (CSPI) is a formal partnership of 3 organisations providing the development and delivery of an on-going programme of work

B. THE PARTNERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INITIATIVE

- Cambridge Programme for Industry, University of Cambridge (specialising in courses for executives linking business and the university)
- The Copenhagen Centre (focussed on partnerships and corporate social responsibility in Europe)
- The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) (focussed on partnerships and responsible business practices in transition economies and the developing world)

These three organisations came together specifically to develop a post-graduate course in cross-sector partnerships. The diversity of skills, experience and 'reach' brought together by this combination of organisations gave the initiative an appropriate mix of practical and academic experience as well as a strongly cross-sectoral and international perspective. Within 18 months of signing the partnership agreement, the partners had delivered the first course with more than 30 international participants and put together a strategic plan for a much broader range of services and activities to be developed and delivered collaboratively.

Development decisions are made collectively by the three partner organisations working on an equal basis. Planning and review meetings take place between the three co-directors (one from each partner organisation) two to three times a year. There are also teleconferences on a regular basis.

C. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The administration and day-to-day management of the programme resides in the Cambridge Programme for Industry (CPI) with a Programme Manager and administrative staff appointed and managed by CPI but working closely with all three co-directors.
The partners have created a group of 'Associates' from those organisations who have supported the programme most vigorously (this group includes: 3 corporations; UNDP and an international development NGO – the intention being that the Associate group is itself genuinely cross-sectoral). Associates meet annually to give the co-directors and their respective organisations feedback on the developing programme and to ensure that it remains at the forefront of partnership thinking and action globally. This is an advisory group with no decision-making authority *per se*.

D. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The CEOs of the three partner organisations meet annually to review the programme of work, oversee income and expenditure and agree development proposals. CSPI is therefore de facto accountable to the individual governance structures of all three partner organisations.

E. KEY TASKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

CSPI is comparatively new but even in its first 18 months it has:

- Established a highly successful post-graduate certificate in cross-sector partnerships attracting high-calibre participants from all sectors and many different parts of the world
- Produced its first annual publication entitled PARTNERSHIP MATTERS that aims to be at the forefront of partnership thinking and practice
- Begun to work on the development of a range of regional, customised and other follow-up projects
- Been asked to advise on a number of partnership initiatives and
- Designed and/or been commissioned to undertake some innovative action research projects.

More information: **www.cpi.cam.ac.uk//cspi//**

PROFILE 3: A LEARNING PARTNERSHIP
The Knowledge Resources Group

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTNERSHIP 'INSTITUTION'
The Knowledge Resource Group (KRG) was designed as the 'learning and sharing' unit of the World Bank-initiated BPD (Business Partners for Development) programme. The work involved developing BPD-wide research on the first-hand experiences of local partnerships and the systematic dissemination of findings.

B. THE PARTNERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INITIATIVE
KRG was initially co-chaired by the 3 organisational representatives (see below) and was intended to be an open network of interested and relevant organisations. It became clear, however, that the objectives of the group would be impossible to achieve without the active and equal engagement of the four theme-based cluster co-ordinators.

The 4 Cluster Coordinators came from:
- Natural Resources Cluster
  (based at Care International, UK – in London)
- Road Safety Cluster
  (based at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society – in Geneva)
- Water and Sanitation Cluster
  (based at WaterAid – in London)
- Youth Cluster
  (based at the International Youth Foundation – in Baltimore)

The three organisational representatives were from:
- CIVICUS (working with civil society)
- The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) (working with business)
- The World Bank Group (working with governments)

In year 2 of the programme, KRG became a 'closed' group of 7 individuals working as a 'virtual' institution to agree research and dissemination priorities as well as allocating and overseeing the implementation of agreed tasks.

C. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS
It was agreed that responsibilities should be shared between the three organisations. Initially this meant that CIVICUS carried the administrative and coordination functions for KRG with the World Bank leading on resource-procurement and web-site development and IBLF undertaking specific research tasks (a major piece of work on 'study visits' and a scoping exercise on how BPD findings could be disseminated effectively to business).

In due course, other tasks were 'mandated' to any KRG member who was willing to take them on and the secretariat function was increasingly shared. IBLF, for example, coordinated and hosted 3 of the main KRG meetings at its offices in London during 1999 and 2000. The secretariat ended up (during the last year of operation) based at the World Bank offices in Washington. It became clear that this was the most expedient arrangement if the final tasks were to be completed effectively and on time.

In other words, development decisions were made collectively until the end of the project but delivery was increasingly centralised during the project's life.

Early on, a small group of 5 'advisors' was appointed, each of whom had first hand cross-sector partnership experience, with the intention that they would accompany the KRG throughout its work – offering peer review and specialist advice on a regular basis. In the event, the original advisory group met with the KRG only once (albeit at an important and formative stage of its work). It simply became too cumbersome and expensive to continue with this arrangement. It also became increasingly clear that the Cluster Coordinators wanted KRG to be a repository of their BPD experiences rather than a wider resource drawing on guidance from others.

However, interestingly, one of these original advisors was chosen by KRG to lead the research for its interim report and, in KRG's last phase, another advisory group member was asked to join a new group of advisors (this time selected to represent the five different BPD 'audiences') to critically review the final report.

D. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES
In theory there was no centralised governance structure for BPD as a whole – each cluster having its own independent and quite different governance arrangements. At an early KRG meeting it was agreed (rather emphatically!) that KRG was *not* the governance structure of BPD. Perhaps inevitably, the World Bank continued to hold a level of decision-making authority (in part, because it was the initiating organisation; in part because it provided funding

to support the KRG's work and in part because the KRG decision left a governance vacuum).

In practice something more interesting happened. KRG undoubtedly operated in a 'guardianship' role – ensuring that the BPD mission stayed on course and was not entirely fragmented into cluster-specific activity. Cluster co-ordinators (who had been most resistant to KRG having any kind of authority over their cluster-based work) began to see the KRG as a good vehicle for their own learning and to concede that there was an interesting BPD-wide research agenda to which they could contribute and which would add further dimension to their work.

In other words, over time, KRG evolved into a voluntary governance structure in that it governed the design and delivery of the BPD mission.

E. KEY TASKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

KRG in its three years of existence:

- Provided a forum for the cluster co-ordinators to share and learn from each other's experience
- Designed, commissioned and worked collaboratively on BPD-wide research – publishing an interim review of findings ENGAGING MYTHS: ENDURING TRUTHS and a comprehensive final report with specific guidelines for BPD's main target 'audiences' (business, governments, civil society and financial institutions)
- Provided a range of materials that have subsequently been used as case studies in publications and the media as well as for teaching purposes.

Ros Tennyson (author) has led the pioneering cross-sector partnership work of the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) since 1992. She has worked in more than 20 countries undergoing economic and/or political transition including: Bangladesh, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Brazil, Egypt, India, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. She developed the IBLF's experiential learning programme 'INSIGHT' which promotes global cross-sectoral and cross-cultural exchanges between innovative partnership practitioners as well as business and community leaders. She is currently the IBLF's Director of Learning Programmes – this includes steering the development of the organisation's Learning and Leadership Academy.

In addition, Ros has been at the forefront of developing new learning and training initiatives for those involved in partnership work in Central and Eastern Europe and, more recently, at a global level with the United Nations and The World Bank Group. She has researched and published widely on a range of partnership issues.

On behalf of the IBLF, she:

- Led a Consortium of 9 organisations in a successful bid for funding and subsequently acted as the director the **Resource Centre for the Social Dimensions of Business Practice** in its first year of operation (1999-2000)
- Was co-founder and continues to act as a co-director of the **Cross-sector Partnership Initiative** (CSPI) (2001 to present). CSPI is a collaborative venture developed by the Copenhagen Centre, the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry and the IBLF
- Was one of the team of 7 working in the **Knowledge Resources Group** of the 3-year Business Partners for Development programme initiated by the World Bank (1998-2001).

This publication is based on formal documentation of meetings and official reports together with material from the author's own (off the record) 'log-books' compiled during the her active engagement with all three partnerships.

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TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP 'INSTITUTION'	CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLE
1 LOCAL ALLIANCE	Partners from all main sectors given equity of involvement and decision-making responsibility within an independent formal structure operating at a local level.	**GROUNDWORK** – UK Aims: To engage local people in environmental issues – especially those in disadvantaged areas. Partners: Businesses, local government, 'green' NGOs, schools and higher
2 GLOBAL ALLIANCE	Partners from all main sectors given equity of involvement and decision-making responsibility within an independent formal structure operating at an international level.	**APOC** (AFRICAN PROGRAMME FO Aims: To eliminate the disease (commonly known as 'river blindness') as a public health problem and to reduce the socio-economic consequences of the disease in ways that will be locally sustainable.
3 DISPERSED	Partners have agreed a common aim and a modus operandi but they rarely meet. Instead they operate by different partners (or sub-groups of partners) being mandated to complete tasks on behalf of the partnership – to which they are ultimately accountable.	**PLYMOUTH SKILLS PARTNERSH** Aims: To enhance the contribution of learning to social and economic development by promoting collaboration between (previously competing) learning providers in response to local learning needs of individuals, community and employers.
4 TEMPORARY	The partnership structure is designed for obsolescence. It is time-specific and therefore is dispensed with once the agreed programme of work is completed.	**NATURAL RESOURCES CLUSTE** Aims: Working with the oil, gas and mining industrial sector at local levels to explore the value of tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development to all parties involved. Partners: Several international companies, CARE International UK (an international
5 CONSULTATIVE	The 'task' of the partnership institution is to provide advice and/or a 'sounding board' for new ideas rather than to develop or implement a project.	**NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOP** Aims: Established in 1995 by the South African government to provide advice to policy makers by building consensus amongst the different sectors on all aspects of economic and social policy.
6 INTERMEDIARY	An intermediary organisation operating between (and on behalf of) many other players. It essentially supports the development of a number of independent partnership initiatives rather than being a partnership itself.	**KRAKOW DEVELOPMENT FORU** Aims: To work effectively across all sectors for the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of the city of Krakow and the surrounding region. To provide a partnership model which other cities in Poland can adapt and adopt.
7 LEARNING	The partnership is established with the primary goal of learning and sharing information arising from other partnership experiences rather than creating new partnership programmes or projects ***per se***.	**CAMBRIDGE PROJECT GROUPS** Aims: To undertake a piece of collaborative research in order to analyse and understand partnerships in action. Partners: 5 individuals studying partnerships as part of a post-graduate course. The 'partnership' was created by the course directors drawing together individuals from different cultures and sectors as indicated

More information: www.groundwork.org.uk

education institutions, community-based groups.
Management: A UK-wide independently constituted charitable organisation with a network of local structures. Trustees and local committees drawn from partner organisations.

Fully staffed local project offices – often including educational resource centre and shop – offering a focal point/meeting place for all those involved as well as the general public.

Strengths: Strong local sense of ownership and self-determination; builds and 'institutionalises' local collaboration.

R ONCHOCERCIASIS CONTROL) – International

More information: www.who.int/ocp/apoc

Partners: Representatives from 30 African nations, a major international pharmaceutical company, 12 international NGOs and key international agencies including the World Bank Group, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.
Management: The project is managed on behalf of the partners by WHO.
Strengths: Specific and finite target; economies of scale; building strategic linkages between key players who together bring power, resources and influence.

IP – UK

More information: c/o www.plymouth2020.co.uk

Partners: Over 60 organisational partners including: schools, further / higher education institutions, private sector training providers, voluntary sector, community-based groups. Plus representatives of local authority, local education authority, a national government job creation agency.
Management: A 'Board' composed of representatives of each of the sectors decides on policy and strategy. All activities are run autonomously by different 'Action Groups' and bring together appropriate partners on a programme-by-programme basis. A Director (in reality operating as a broker or intermediary) has been appointed to operate independently of any of the partners.
Strengths: Maximum flexibility; freedom of operation and self-determination.

R, BPD – International

More information: www.bpd-naturalresources.org

development NGO) and the World Bank Group.
Management: This was one of four 'clusters' created as a 3-year action research programme initiated by the World Bank Group under the title: Business Partners for Development (BPD). The secretariat for the Natural Resources Cluster was based in the offices of the NGO partner organisation for 3 years – led by a full-time 'co-ordinator'. The programme of work was developed, agreed and overseen by a committee of representatives from all partner organisations.

Strengths: The short-term nature of this partnership encouraged an intensity of involvement by partners and a high level focus on immediate gains/benefits.

PMENT AND LABOUR COUNCIL (NEDLAC) – South Africa

More information: www.nedlac.org.za

Partners: Business, government, labour (trade unions) and civil society
Management: Coordinated by a secretariat based in Pretoria (seat of government) serving a series of 'chambers' responsible for specific policy issues. Executive Council meets four times a year with 18 delegates from each sector. There is also an annual summit at which recommendations are presented and discussed.

Strengths: Built into the political process therefore considerable influence. Authority (drawn from consensus) rather than power.

M – Poland

More information: c/o www.epce.org.pl

Partners: Local and regional government, Business (local and national companies plus local representatives of international companies based in Krakow), NGOs, universities and technical colleges.

Management: An independent project office established with a small secretariat. A number of projects linked to the Forum are all cross-sectoral and independently financed and managed. The Forum provides an 'umbrella' and an opportunity for cross-sectoral meetings at which new initiatives can be explored. There is a Co-ordinating Group of four people – representing each sector.
Strengths: A highly 'empowering' model that is focussed on building a culture of collaboration as well as appropriate support structures.

– International

More information: www.cpi.cam.ac.uk/pccp/

below:

- Business person (Croatia) – re-structuring a major company around partnership principles
- Business person (UK) – director of a small printing firm engaged with a number of successful community partnerships
- Unemployed person (Portugal) – developing a theory and practice of partnership appropriate for the national economic and political situation
- UNDP officer (Palestine) – working to build a 'culture of partnership' in preparation for post-conflict reconstruction
- Development Consultant (UK) – working as a partnership advisor in the UK and elsewhere.

Management: The group was self-managing over a six-month period – with email as the main communication vehicle and leadership being shared on a basis determined by the partners at an early stage of the partnership.
Strengths: Flexibility; self-determination; drawing on diversity as a strength; building knowledge and capacity as a primary aim.

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