The Coordination SUD Guides

Partnership Guide

A Practical Guide to be Used by Partners from the North and the South

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Introduction

The concept of partnership emerged among French NGOs in the seventies as part of the evolving approach to development assistance. It was motivated by their wish to leave behind the traditional development aid logic. With the gradual emergence, organisation and professionalisation of numerous civil society actors from countries in the South and the East, the intervention strategies imposed by Northern NGOs have been questioned. Little by little, the role of French NGOs has changed from direct implementation of development activities to accompaniment of development activities and dynamics.

Since the beginning of the nineties, the partnerships between northern NGOs and their southern and eastern partners have gradually evolved from very operational alliances to more strategic relationships in order to influence policy making at national and international level. New alliances are emerging. For example, northern NGOs and their partners have joined international networks together during recent World Social Forums, aiming to influence the politics of globalisation.

The growing influence of new forms of co-operation (decentralised co-operation, multi-actor programmes, South-South co-operation) has also put pressure on French NGOs to change their practices, for example by playing a mediator role between similar social actors in the North, the South, and the East. As civil society organisations in the South grow stronger and the public funding from France and Europe channelled through development NGOs decreases, while the results of the decentralisation processes are beginning to show, it is the overall strategy of French NGOs for how they position themselves and what development activities they choose to implement that is being questioned.

In the light of these developments, French NGOs have recognised certain weaknesses and are seeking to manage, strengthen and evaluate the partnerships in which they engage more effectively. As a consequence, they are aiming to improve their partnership strategy development and make these strategies more explicit.

Presentation of the Guide

In order to accompany French NGOs and their southern and eastern partners in their partnership reflections and practices, Coordination SUD facilitated several workshops in 2004 and 2005. These resulted in the identification of three principal themes to be explored: the formulation of a partnership strategy, capacity building in partnerships, and the contractualisation process.

Four learning workshops were held between September and December 2005 for two half days with the participation of 36 representatives from French and Foreign NGOs[1]. Each workshop was prepared and facilitated by a participant from a French NGO assisted by a consultant from the association Consultants Sans Frontières.

The methods proposed here have emerged from the lessons learnt as a result of the exchanges between the NGOs that have participated in the process. This has led to the development of a particularly interesting and rich methodology. In turn, the principal limitation of this guide is that it is based exclusively on the methods presented by the NGOs present during these workshops.

This methodological guide primarily targets development actors engaging in partnerships. It proposes simple ideas and methodological tools that may help improve the practices in the following three areas:

- **The Development of Partnership Strategies.** Due to the great diversity and heterogeneity of French NGOs, they have different visions of partnership. The nature of the partnership approaches which they adopt depends not only on these visions, but also on the specific situations and contexts in the South and East in which they intervene. The partnerships from very operational to more strategic relationships, i.e. from short-term partnerships established in order to implement a project to alliances promoting a political or societal project.

  The guide proposes a simple methodology to help organisations develop a consequent approach to partner selection, taking into account the different contexts in which interventions may take place.

- **Capacity Building in Partnerships.** For French NGOs, capacity building is closely connected to partnership. Often, it is provided as a range of projects targeting the beneficiaries. Meanwhile, capacity building requires specific competencies and a clear strategy. For example, it is difficult to pursue result-oriented project objectives while accompanying the partner on the path towards actual autonomy.

  This guide contributes to the reflections on how to support a partner organisation in its needs assessment and the implementation of its capacity building programmes. It analyses the different capacity building objectives, discusses the role of the support organisation and the relationship between the support organisation and the supported organisation (i.e. the organisation receiving capacity building support). Furthermore, it presents the different capacity building phases as well as the principal tools that may be used to build capacity.

- **Partnership Contractualisation.** In practice, few French NGOs currently formalise their partnership agreements with southern and eastern partners, but many organisations are expressing the need to do so. Partnerships may be very formalised in a partnership agreement or contract or, on the contrary, very informal and negotiated continuously.

  This guide brings out the challenges and limitations of contractualisation. It proposes two types of partnership agreements: a partnership convention and a partnership contract. Both may be easily adapted and used by NGOs and their partners.

[1] AFVP, Agir ici, ALCS (Maroc), ASMAE, CCFD, CEFRAP (Burkina Faso), CIMADE, Cirque pour tous, COSEFEB, Consultants sans frontières, Enda Graf, Enfants réfugiés du Monde, Fédération Peuples Solidaires, Gret, Hed Tamat (Niger), Handicap International, Inter Aide, Partage, Scouts et guides de France, Secours Catholique-Caritas France, SIPAR

Partnership Strategy

Partnership Approaches and Practices in French NGOs

What is Partnership?

The NGO identity has its foundations deeply rooted in strong values such as solidarity, ethics, commitment etc. on which their development approaches and missions are based. Partnership constitutes an important part of their identity.

The Partnership Visions of 4 French NGOs :

For **GRET**, partnership refers to relationships with similar organisations that are financially autonomous, with whom they share a political vision and wish to develop long-term relationships that last beyond operational types of co-operation. In turn, Gret does not necessarily consider on-going co-operation with selected organisations as partnership.

CCFD defines partnership as a dynamic process of mutual accompaniment over a period of several years based on shared references and values. In this context, a project is not considered as an end in itself but as an activity supporting the partnership.

According to **VSF-Cicda**, the fundamental purpose of development is to provide technical and methodological support, rooted at local level with national partners contributing to the wider dynamics of social and political change. This development approach[6] corresponds to the evolution of VSF-Cicda's development practice from direct implementation of development activities to support provision to such activities and the development dynamics in general. It can be seen as a response to the emergence, organisation, and professionalisation of numerous civil society actors in the developing countries.

Handicap International (HI) places partnership at the centre as its principal approach to co-operation in when implementing development activities. To HI, partnership consists of a relationship and projects. These projects may target a third party or one of the partners. An institutional and contractual framework is set up to preserve the coherence of this constellation. The partnership only exists through the combination of these three components, i.e. the combination of some sort of relationship and framework with one or more projects. In order to better understand each of these components, one may explore them as three distinct entities. However, HI sees the partnership concept as one whole containing the three components. If some of the components are left out, this constellation may no longer be considered as partnership. In concrete terms, this implies that a strong relationship of interdependence exists between the projects, the relationship and the framework. It is therefore necessary to examine the whole in order to understand and develop partnerships.

[1] CUBILLOS Carlos and APPOLIN, 2004.

Despite the diversity of the approaches and practices adopted by French NGOs, there is a general consensus about the definition of partnership[2].

■ *Partnership is the relationship between two or more organisations established for the purpose of project implementation. The pillars of the partnership should be co-operation and equal power relations, and it should be based on exchange, confidence, commitment to the agreements made, transparency and reciprocity. It is a dynamic, long-term process evolving around the recognition of the competencies and responsibilities of each partner and a shared vision of development.*

In this context, the definition of a "project" is broad and may refer to a development project, a development education project, an advocacy project etc. Generally, in practice French NGOs distinguish between short-term partnerships whose purpose is the implementation of a specific project, and more strategic partnerships built around a political project.

[2] In 2004, Coordination SUD's Europe platform was asked by Concord's working group "*Funding Development and Relief*" (FDR) to explore how to define the quality of a North-South partnership. The outcome of this assignment was a proposed partnership definition as well as related quality criteria.

Types of Partners

Depending on the context and situation, in practice French NGOs work with different types of partners:

- Self-help groups. These are informal groups (women's groups, peasant groups, etc.) that carry out development activities at community level or work actively to defend the interests of the group. In general, they are not very structured, with strong social and local roots.
- Professional organisations (trade unions, consumer associations, peasant organisations etc.). They are organised at local, national, and regional level, and some have become significant players interacting with government institutions.
- Professional NGOs. Some were set up as self-help groups, but have since become more structured and professional; others are very specialised and ressemble consultancy firms. Over the past twenty years, they have emerged with donor support in various fields (social sectors, local development, basic education, rural development, economic development etc.), as the service provision by the public sector has deteriorated
- "Collectivités territoriales". These include local government institutions such as town halls and local councils. They are autonomous units with their own budgets in charge of the management and development of the territory which they have been assigned. They have been established at local level as a result of the decentralisation processes in many countries.
- State institutions at national and local level (central and decentralised state institutions such as ministries, local public services etc.). In certain countries, such as Vietnam or Cuba, there are no non-governmental actors and northern NGOs work with decentralised government institutions or mass organisations.
- Religious authorities. Religious authorities at different levels (from national level to local level) may be selected as partners due to their social activities in areas such as education, health and community development and their deep roots in the communities.
- Companies and private organisations. In certain sectors, such as the financial sector, cooperatives have emerged in response to the deficiencies of traditional banking. They receive technical and financial support from northern donors.

Quality Criteria for Partnership Assessments

For a project defined in its broad sense (operational or political), French NGOs have identified **9 quality criteria**[3] for partnerships.

1. Identical project goals
2. Joint development of an implementation strategy
3. The degree and type of involvement of each partner in the project
4. Agreement on the distribution of the roles, activities, and resource provision
5. Complementary competences and means
6. Reciprocity
7. Long-term relationship
8. The quality of the human relationships
9. Transparency

On-going Discussion About the Applicability of These Criteria:

The debates concerning the relevance of these criteria for the evaluation of the quality of partnership have shown that the nature of relationships may vary depending on the context, the partnership history, and the type of partnership. It has therefore been acknowledged that a partnership will not necessarily be able to live up to all these criteria. The objective should rather be to use these criteria as a frame of reference; a value system.

While a general consensus has been reached among French NGOs concerning the 5 first criteria as well as the last criteria, this is not the case for criteria 6, 7, and 8.

- The two first criteria refer to an agreement on the common project goals and a decision-making process based on negotiations between the partners, while criteria 3 and 4 refer to the shared responsibility and the decision-making mechanisms. The use of these four criteria should result in clear negotiation and decision-making processes.
- The fifth criteria emphasises a strong development principle regarding the complementarity between the actors in question and the rejection of the idea of substitution between partners.
- Finally, while French NGOs agree to follow the general principle of transparency between partners, there are diverging opinions with respect to the level of transparency required and the principle of reciprocal transparency.
- The notion of reciprocity may be contested. To some, no partnership can exist without reciprocity, as the northern NGOs need their southern and eastern partners. For others, reciprocity is not a quality criterion.
- The notion of process seems more pertinent than that of duration or time (number of years). Some NGOs accept that their partnerships are terminated, when the projects end.
- The quality of the relationship between partners should be examined at two levels; between individuals and between organisations (the latter is more difficult to measure). This criterion refers to the human relationships that constitute the basis for the partnership and should be characterised by respect and quality exchanges.

For many NGOs, it is risky to formulate such quality criteria based on the ideal outcomes to be achieved. It is key to use these criteria to monitor the partnership process and evaluate the evolution of the partnership.

For example, a relationship between partners may be assessed at a certain point in time (T) by analysing the relationship using each of these criteria. For each criteria, objectives may then be formulated with corresponding and precise indicators to be measured after a predetermined period of time(T+1). With the help of an evaluation grid developed before the beginning of the partnership *(ex-ante)* and after the partnership has been ended *(ex-post)*, the evolution from T to T+1 may be evaluated in relation to the formulated objectives.

[3] These criteria have been defined by Coordination SUD's Commission on Funding and Institutional Strengthening, COFRI, in consultation with 15 French NGOs.

Constraints Affecting the Partnership

French NGOs recognise that they are subject to constraints that affect the quality and nature of the partnership and result in a gap between perceptions of ideal partnership - and reality.

Funding and Partnership:

Are the relationships between partners predetermined by the funding provision by the North to help satisfy the needs in the South?

Some long-term partnerships build on financial support. This reduces the role of the northern partner to that of the donor. However, as it is stated in the ancient African proverb, *"People who are not hungry are not standing up",* northern and southern partners are facing a challenge: The funding introduced in a partnership often leads to a distorted and unequal relationship, and there is a risk that reciprocity becomes a means of justifying the partnership. In turn, when the southern partners have access to financial resources, the relationships tend to be more equal.

Donors impose project implementation in partnerships with southern organisations. Today, the survival of some northern NGOs, who have become "development service providers", depends on such activities. As a consequence, opportunistic partnerships emerge that are driven by the project logic. The project approach and the expectation of immediate returns on the investment lead to volatile actions and short-term visions that are incompatible with the investment required in order to initiate long-term change.

The funding pressure and the decrease in the public funding channelled through NGOs have led to increased competition between non-governmental actors. Donor policies influence the approaches which these actors adopt and the issues which they choose to engage in. Therefore, there is a risk of standardisation of the civil society approaches to development which may over time erase the specific characteristics of civil societies in different contexts.

Donor policies and pressures force NGOs to develop and rethink the way they position themselves. It seems pertinent to make two comments in this context:

- The influence of funders on the development objectives of the NGOs: the accountability required by donors and private donators is not the same. Donators tend to leave NGOs the freedom to develop their own policies and strategies, but in many cases their support is limited to specific types of development assistance. These donators need to be exposed to development education, so they may change their ways of thinking and begin to adhere to the types of development interventions which NGOs undertake and the partnerships which they seek to establish.
- The competition between northern and southern NGOs in relation to the sources of the funding which they receive: despite the fact that they all wish to build the capacity of southern organisations, and hence pursue a common goal, the question of southern autonomy and northern disengagement is more sensitive and requires the NGOs in the North to position themselves clearly.

How can the differences between the partners in a partnership be addressed?

How can the differences between the development visions, strategies, and interests of the partners in a partnership be reconciled?

The question of difference is related to the partner selection. Experience has shown that it is easier for similar organisations to work together. However, a good partner is not necessarily a similar organisation. For example, the importance of informal groups should not be overlooked. In some sectors, they represent up to 80% of the activity, and yet they are marginalised. It is essential to have a good understanding of civil society to identify the best option and find the most legitimate partner.

The difference between development approaches may be addressed in two ways: either we choose the partners with whom we feel closely related or, on the contrary, each partner is given the opportunity to challenge the approach of the other partner for mutual influence.

How may the southern partners be allowed to choose and influence without having to accept what is imposed by the northern partners?

The political rhythm is imposed by the North. The decision-making process is becoming more and more decentralised[4]. The transfer of concepts takes place as a one way process from the English-speaking countries to the rest of Europe and finally to the countries in the South and the East. In order to participate in policy making, civil society organisations (CSOs) must succeed in following the rhythms imposed by the donors and the international organisations, as well as northern NGOs. CSOs need to organise and anticipate, define clear strategies, invest time and resources etc.

[4] For example, in Niger the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) participate in the decision-making concerning the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers prepared by the national government.

Forms of Governance

The existence or absence of democratic spaces in society and in the CSOs influence the relationships between partners as well as the ways of working in the respective organisations. What requirements should the southern partners be expected to live up to regarding the level of democracy in their organisations?

For example, should partners be required to demonstrate their respect for gender equality in their current ways of working and set objectives to achieve this?

Strategy Development Tool

What is the Purpose of Developing a Partnership Strategy?

In practice, partnerships often emerge as a result of an encounter or as a response to an opportunity. A well-defined partnership strategy facilitates the partner selection and helps form a relationship in a specific situation, which is in accordance with the identity, vision, and overall strategy of the organisation in question. In other words, an NGO should act consciously, respond to the challenges which it is facing, and pursue the objectives which it has set.

In this chapter, we propose a simple methodology for partnership strategy development: a systematic approach which takes into account the need to adapt to different development contexts.

The Methodology

A strategy is about making choices. It is developed according to the reoccuring criteria on which choices are made.

One may distinguish between two types of approaches:

- An empirical approach: the criteria for making choices are developed on a regular basis for each new situation. When the criteria used are reoccuring, they may be systematised and lead to the development of a more formal strategy.
- A formalised approach: the criteria on which the choice to enter into a partnership will be based are defined prior to the partnership selection.

■ Strategy development consists in **identifying and formulating the key questions to ask before acting as well as the corresponding criteria for making choices.**

One may distinguish between three levels of partnership strategy development:

- **The general organisational strategy**, which builds on its vision and identity. It defines the organisation's overall partnership strategy.

  For example: choose partners with whom the organisation shares its development vision; who respect human rights; whose ways of working are democratic etc.....

- **A country strategy**, which determines the strategic principles in a specific political, sociological, economic and cultural context.

  For example: the choice to intervene under certain conditions in a country with an unstable political context; the choice to set up partnerships with government organisations in a country like Vietnam; the choice to provide support to self-help organisations in a country where civil society is weak and unstructured.

- **A partnership strategy in relation to a specific activity or project**, which seeks to satisfy a specific need in a particular situation.

■ *For an organisation, this approach consists in specifying and formalising its partnership vision before developing a partnership strategy in a country and for a particular activity.*

Handicap International

Handicap International often works in highly complex contexts which may be characterised by rapid changes. This requires the organisation to take a clear position and develop flexible procedures for any project it may choose to implement. HI has therefore developed an approach with critical factors which need to be considered before planning, monitoring, and evaluating a project:

1. The purpose : What are we doing ? What would we like to do ? What is the purpose of the intervention? And why ?
2. The stakeholder system (analysis of the situation and the context)
   - The identity and national profile of Handicap International : Who are we, and how are we perceived as foreign stakeholders operating in the local context?
   - The identity of the others : Who are the other stakeholders? What are they doing? What do they want?
3. The interpretation and synthesis of the results: What is our position in this context or field? With whom do we work (criteria for partner selection)? Why ?
4. The evolution: What evolution would we like to see? What are the indicators to be measured?

Development of a Decision-making Tool

In order to help you choose a partner according to your own criteria in each situation, we suggest you create a tailormade tool. You should **develop your partnership strategy** in 4 steps at three levels (the partnership vision and overall strategy, a country strategy and a strategy for a specific activity or project) as well as an exit strategy.

The way you will use the tool in the preparation phase prior to a development intervention will of course depend on the time and resources which will be at your disposal at the time.

The 4 Key Steps in Partnership Strategy Development

In order to develop your own decision-making tool, you should first develop a checklist with key questions which you will need to answer before choosing a partner.

Step 1: Analyse My Own Organisation

The purpose of this step is to unpick your organisation's partnership approach, in general or in relation to a specific theme, by answering all the questions below.

- *What is our identity (history, vision, values, mission, internal structure, etc.)?*
- *What is our area of intervention?*
- *What is our level of expertise and in what fields?*

- *What are our organisation's dimensions (available human, material and financial resources)?*
- *What is the internal decision-making process (who decides and how?)?*

■ *Synthesis : brief organisational analysis*

Step 2: Analyse the Development Context

The purpose of this step is to evaluate the current situation; identify potential partners; position your organisation in a stakeholder system, in order to develop a country strategy that takes into account context-specific issues.

In order to do this, we suggest you **adapt and complement** the list below by choosing the questions which seem most relevant to your organisation to help you choose your partners. You should distinguish between the questions that are purely informative and those that are of a more strategic nature. Subsequently, for each strategic question, you should develop **the corresponding criteria** for partner selection by distinguishing between **priority** criteria and **negotiable** criteria (see the examples below).

CCFD's Approach to General Strategy Development

In order to formulate a general strategy which includes partnership as a major element, le CCFD went through several steps:

1. Reminder of CCFDs overall objective: work to address inequalities that have been identified by undertaking an analysis of the global geopolitical and economic context as well as the values and vision of CCFD.
2. Definition of a partnership policy in 4 areas based on an analysis of CCFD's motivation, capacity and limits:
   - For a diversified partnership
   - Support to the poorest
   - Support to innovators
   - Religious and humanistic values.
3. Formulation of one strategy per continent :
   a. Analysis of the context and challenges for each geographical zone
   b. Formulation of thematic and geographic priorities based on the identified challenges
   c. Derived from these challenges: principles concerning the activities and partnerships to be implemented (for example setting up a network of partners, civil society strengthening etc.)

Contextual Analysis

This is an analysis of the geographic, social, political, and economic situation in the country as well as the target groups in relation to the organisation and the sector in which your organisation intervenes.

Stakeholder Analysis

This step should help you position your organisation in a specific field, with your strengths and weaknesses; assess the value added of an intervention in relation to already on-going activities; and assess the relevance of possible alliances.

- *Who are the organisations that are already present (those that are there and those that are no longer there)?*
- *What are their areas of intervention (technical support, funding, service provision, coordination, etc.) ?*

  Example of associated criteria for partner selection: We intervene exclusively in zones where no international NGO working in our field is already present (priority criteria).
- *How would you characterise the relationships between the different stakeholders in terms of influence, dependency, control, conflict etc.?*
- *What is their capacity to intervene in the local context?*

- *What is their level of legitimacy when intervening in the local context?*
- *What is their organisational development potential?*

> ■ *Synthesis : the relevance of establishing a partnership in this context*
> *a. In relation to the situational analysis and the needs assessment carried out.*
> *b. In relation to the position of the other stakeholders (potential allies, competitors, donors)*

Step 3: Analyse the Other Organisation

The purpose of this step is to analyse what implications a partnership with the potential partner organisation might have. By answering a number of questions, it will be possible to establish what the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation in question are, and on this basis determine whether it would be of interest to your organisation to enter into a partnership .

Again, we suggest that you **adapt and complement** the list below by choosing the questions which seem most relevant when choosing a partner for your organisation. You should distinguish between the questions that are purely informative and those that are of a more strategic nature. Subsequently, for each strategic question, you should develop the **corresponding criteria** for partner selection by distinguishing between **priority** criteria and **negotiable** criteria (see the examples below).

The Origins of the Partnership Request

- *What is the partnership history between our two organisations?*
- *Who is requesting the partnership?*
  Examples of associated criteria for partner selection: we only intervene, if a formal request has been made by a potential southern partner (priority criteria).
- *What are the underlying motivations behind this request ?*
  Examples: search for specific competencies; search for an organisation with a local constituency; wish to increase the legitimacy of one's own organisation when dealing with donors etc.

Organisational Analysis

- *What type of organisation is it?*
  Example of associated criteria for partner selection: we only work with organisations that provide support to self-help organisations (priority criteria).
- *What is the organisation's area of intervention?*
  Example of associated criteria for partner selection: we only work with organisations working to eradicate HIV-AIDS (priority criteria).
- *What is the organisation's identity (history, vision, values, mission, internal structure etc.)?*
- *What are the organisation's dimensions? (available human, physical, and financial resources)?*
- *What is the organisation's experience in the field in question?*
  Example of associated criteria for partner selection: we prefer to work with organisations that have developed a certain level of expertise in awareness-raising about HIV-Aids (negotiable criteria).
- *What is the organisation's level of legitimacy as a development actor intervening in the sector (number of members and their level of satisfaction; level*

of recognition; level of representation; constituency and roots in the local community etc.)?
Example of associated criteria for partner selection: our partners must have a social base in order to be perceived as legitimate in their field (priority criteria).

- *How effective are their actions, and do they implement quality activities?*
  Example of associated criteria for partner selection: we prefer to operate with a gender mainstreaming approach.
- *What is the organisation's governance system (internal decision-making process)?*
- *What is the organisation's development potential?*
- *What are its underlying motivations for entering into a partnership with our organisation?*
  Examples: search for specific competencies; search for an organisation with a local constituency; wish to increase the legitimacy of one's own organisation when dealing with donors etc.
- *Does the organisation have other partners?*
  This may or may not be a critical criteria: other partners may provide financial and technical support. On the other hand, the first partnership may help attract other donors.

The VSF-Cicda Case:

In order to choose one or more partners and develop a partnership strategy, VSF-Cicda has adopted a pragmatic method based on analytical elements which should be covered systematically[1].

A contextual analysis of the issues and stakeholders: identification of the challenges; identification of the actors and the *"proposition makers"* at local, regional, and national level. VSF-Cicda undertakes this analysis with resource persons, representatives of social movements, peasant organisations, local NGOs, etc.

An analysis of the mutual interests. The construction of an alliance requires that all the stakeholders that have been identified are interested in and take the initiative to co-operate; that the interests of their partners are clearly presented; and that VSF-Cicda's own interests are also clearly expressed. At this stage, mutual transparency is also required regarding the strategic priorities and expectations of each partner; their ways of working; and the resources available.

The analytical criteria for the selection of alliances and partners concerning social integration, legitimacy and representation; the organisational ways of working; the technical and methodological capacity; administrative and financial indicators.

For example concerning the technical and methodological capacities: coherence between the mission, the goals, and the organisational structure; specific area of expertise in relation to the suggested activity; human resources available for monitoring and follow-up of the activity; internal communication, information management.

According to VSF-Cicda, using these criteria does not solve the following question about partner selection: should one choose the organisation with the strongest capacity or, on the contrary, an organisation that needs capacity building? A organisation cannot make the final decision about what partner to choose based on an analysis drawing on these criteria alone. However, the contextual analysis and the stakeholder analysis will help identify one or more potential partners. It is hence possible to provide support to a federation of peasant organisations with a high level of legitimacy and strong social relationships at national level, even if its administrative capacities are very weak: the terms and conditions in the partnership agreement will simply be adjusted accordingly.

A joint construction that recognises the competencies and autonomy of each partner. According to VSF-Cicda, a partnership should be based on a joint situational and contextual analysis which will lead to the ***joint formulation*** of the type of co-operation which should characterise the partnership and a recognition of the approaches and competencies of each of the associated organisations.

This process should help determine the functions which each partner should be in charge of in connection with the planned activity and the joint responsibility for the formulation, implementation, management, and financial sustainability of the activity as well as the lessons to be learnt from the process. It should also lead to the determination of the spaces and mechanisms for adjusting these functions. Subsequently, these elements should be included in a partnership agreement.

[1] CUBILLOS Carlos and APPOLIN Frédéric, 2004.

Analysis of the Expectations of the Potential Partner Organisation:

Analysis of the needs which have been expressed by the potential partner in different areas, as well as those that have not.

Examples: the exchange of practices, networking, support for an organisation to achieve institutional recognition, methodological support, provision of physical and human resources etc.

■ *General synthesis: the coherence of the potential partnership with your partnership approach, with your development strategy in this context, with the expressed and unexpressed needs of the potential partner and the capacity of your organisation to fulfil these needs.*

Step 4: Determine the Terms of Disengagement (or the Exit Strategy)

It is preferable to plan from the outset what criteria or situations should lead to disengagement from the partnership. In general, this step will be the last when preparing for a partnership regarding a specific project, while the terms for disengagement may be determined as a first or second step, when entering into a strategic partnership.

In a framework convention of 3 to 5 years[2], the criteria for disengagement will be specified in an ad hoc article.

Examples of Typical Situations Where It May Be Relevant to Disengage:

The partner has become autonomous

The partner becomes autonomous when it has acquired different capacities.

Examples: structural autonomy (organisational capacity in the areas of human resource management, financial management, project implementation and follow-up; financial autonomy (fundraising capacity); technical autonomy (specific competencies in a particular area: health, education etc.; the ability to use and maintain the tools and equipment); autonomous and empowered leaders (capacity to develop strategies, appropriate governance functions, independent use of power).

In social sectors (education, health) for example, the objective is not that the partner organisation makes a profit, but rather that it develops the capacity to satisfy its own financial needs.

The partnership objectives have been reached

Regular and formalised monitoring is required to assess whether the objectives have been reached. If this is not the case, the organisations should establish what is not working. They may also choose to set deadlines:

- Formal analysis of the gaps
- Identification of possible action to be taken (for example plan to implement a capacity building programme before withdrawing)
- Develop an implementation calendar.

In this situation, it is important to make a quick decision about whether the partnership should be continued or ended (whether the objectives have been achieved or the partnership is seen to be unsuccessful).

[2] Read the chapter on partnership contractualisation.

The available resources are insufficient or the partnership has become irrelevant to the objectives of the organisations.

Unexpected strategic changes (imposed or intended) in one of the partner organisations may mean that the continuation of the partnership becomes unrealistic. In such cases, a quick formal decision should be made and communicated to the partner with valid arguments.

The partners should then together define a disengagement approach:
– A quick capacity building programme with a specified deadline.
– A capacity building programme accompanying gradual disengagement

One of the partners is not respecting one or more of the clauses in the partnership agreement.

If it is established that one of the partners is not respecting one or more of the clauses in the partnership agreement, the partnership will be terminated according to the terms and conditions specified in the framework convention or contract.

■ General synthesis: description of the criteria (or the situation) which, according to you and your partner, may justify:
- Ending the partnership in its current (or planned) form.
- Evolving into another form of partnership.

Formalising the Partnership Strategy by Creating a Partner File

The information which has been gathered and the analysis which has been carried out at each of the 4 steps should be formalised. A "partner file" may be created which provides an overview of the answers to the questions from the checklists, providing an exact description at a specific point in time of the potential partner and the reasoning behind the decision to enter into a partnership with the organisation or not.

Partnership is a dynamic process. The type of relationship and the contributions which each partner makes will evolve over time, as the potential of each organisation evolves (economic, technical, organisational, political etc..) and the context in which they interact changes.

Such a document which describes the partnership history, and the criteria for partner selection that justified it, will be particularly relevant for the evaluation of the partnership, together with the contracts.

At the same time, the partner file constitutes an **analytical tool** and **a piece of the partnership history**. In order to be useful, it needs to be updated regularly (for example bi-annually).

Capacity Building and Partnership

A Reflective Framework

Pierre-Michel Rosner – GRET
Department: Institutional Development, Actors, Territories

What Is the Purpose of Capacity Building in Partnerships?

This fundamental question is posed between the lines in three other more complicated questions: what is capacity building (CB)? What is partnership? And how may the notions of capacity building and partnership complement each other? The answers to these questions are not simple. In each of these areas, the terminology remains rather vague, and one term may cover very different realities (for example, capacity building may be about training an organisation's technical staff or helping the organisation become autonomous; while a partnership may be concerned with funding a specific project in the South through an organisation or strategy development for joint action in the longer term within a specific thematic area, etc.). It therefore seems useful to begin by determining the perspective from which a question is being addressed.

For purposes of simplification, let us work with the hypothesis of a relationship between a northern and southern NGO. The northern NGO is explicitly providing support to the southern organisation (technical, financial, or other types of support). The southern organisation may also be an NGO or any other group of individuals (non-profit, public or private) pursuing a common goal. This is clearly an **asymmetrical relationship** between a **support *organisation*** (SO) and a **supported partner *organisation*** (SPO).

In general, partnership is perceived by French NGOs as a necessary precondition for undertaking capacity building activities, as it is meant to:

- guarantee the existence of a basic agreement between the two concerned parties (the SO and the SPO) on specific objectives or strategies which they both consider essential.
- provide a framework for longer-term co-operation.

After this introduction to the question of "*who is who?*", we will now explore current capacity building practices within partnerships and the objectives pursued.

How Do NGOs Build Capacity?

An organisation can be characterised by its values and areas of intervention as well as the resources which enable it to function. One may therefore analyse different capacity building activities by grouping them under three axes :

- **Capacity building through enhanced organisational resources, functions and structures to help the organisation become more autonomous.** The underlying logic of this axis is that an organisation needs to develop its internal capacities to build its autonomy. Therefore, the overall purpose of achieving autonomy goes far beyond questions in relation to resources, functions and structures.[1]

Examples of enhancing resources: direct financial support, donations of materials and equipment, access to office space and technical staff, etc.

Examples of strengthening of the organisational functions and structure: in general, this is concerned with, on the one hand, human resource training, and on the other hand, activities that aim to improve organisational effectiveness[2]: financial management support, human resource management, knowledge mangement and sharing, institutional memory and organisational learning, implementation of activities or projects that are more or less complex, fundraising, donor diversification, collective decision-making, etc.

An empowered and autonomous organisation is effectively managed. The question of organisational management is thus at the heart of the notion of *capacity building*. This may be obvious to some, but considering how hesitant NGOs and development actors in general are to use this term and apply the concept, it seems even more necessary to emphasise at this point.

An essential capacity building objective is to *"set the creativity free"* in the organisations whose capacity is being built, as this is crucial for an organisation to become completely autonomous. Organisational capacity building is less about building the competencies of the individuals concerned by the capacity building activities or provding support for a short-term project than about building the capacity of the organisation as a whole. Rather than focusing on the "competencies" of these individuals, this capacity building axis concentrates on building the "capacities" of the organisation to implement activities. For example, the accountant in an organisation may be trained in accountancy, but *for the organisation* there is a difference between training in traditional bookkeeping and verification of the financial balance between revenues and expenses, on the one hand, and training in financial management of specific budget lines as required for a project funded by the EU, on the other hand.

In the same way, capacity building is not only about improving the capacities required for the implementation of currently on-going activities, but also concerns the capacities needed for future organisational development. Such future capacity needs should be anticipated as flexibly as possible, with an open mind.

- **Strengthening the internal organisational identity to enable the organisation to take into account the values and practices of other organisations**

Evidence based on analysis of long-term partnerships suggests that SPOs tend to build on a values-base which constitute a determining element for their identity: it may be faith-based (whether it is religious or political), based on a general or specific common goal (working for or against the construction of a barrage, "develop the community", etc.) - or constructed on the adherence and feeling of belonging to… (a group, a space, a culture, a shared history, etc.). This primarily concerns activities that aim to consolidate the feeling of belonging or identity: support to the organisation of an annual party, support to the formulation of the organisation's constitution and statutes, or support to the formulation of the organisational mission or core values, etc.

Over time, these SPOs evolve and are confronted with other values than their own. It is not enough to be committed to "developing the community". The implemented projects should also be pertinent and impact positively on the peo-

[1] This type of capacity building is related to the notion of "*empowerment*".

[2] I.e. the organisation's ability to optimise the use of its capacities and resources.

ple concerned. In other words, the development activities of the SPOs should be perceived by the beneficiaries as legitimate. In the same way, even if being an implementing organisation at grassroots level is often a good argument for starting a partnership between a southern and northern NGO in a particular region, this will quickly be insufficient to the partners, if there are no concrete outcomes to be seen. And obviously, a donor will react the same way. It is important for the organisation to demonstrate that it has the expected know how. It is also necessary to be able to ensure that this capacity is known and recognised by the partner or donor in question.

Hence, this capacity building axis is concerned with the support activities aiming to help the SPO speak the language and understand the culture of the partner or donor organisation (logical framework training, integration of budgetary donor procedures, training in gender mainstreaming, etc.), and activities that will enable the organisation to communicate more effectively about its own identity and know how (tools for external communication, access to means of communication, etc.) as well as internal support to these new organisational ways of working.

The implicit challenge posed by this capacity building axis does not only concern the question of organisational identity but also the organisation's capacity to anticipate future challenges and participate proactively in the interplay with existing development actors and know how to play by the rules – and perhaps even change the rules – rather than being confined to acting as an instrument of their aspirations.

- **Moving from defining the organisation's own areas of intervention to participating in development issues emerging in the political, economic and social context.**

Just as SPOs tend to operate based on fundamental values that have helped form their organisational identity, they also engage in more or less specialised development activities: sewing workshops for small groups, support to children's education, accompaniment of sick people, provision of clean drinking water in a district etc.

Also in this respect, SPOs will be challenged to evolve and review their own areas of intervention. After managing micro projects, they may end up being in charge of bigger projets and programmes : e.g. an organisation which was originally specialised in setting up collective gardens may become involved in community development; another organisation may have to face the challenge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and not only undergo forced restructuring on a regular basis, but also have to review the relevance of the choices it makes almost every day to adapt to the evolution of the epidemic and that of the public institutions in the country.

It is therefore not only a question of operating more or less effectively in a particular area of intervention, but also of being able to position the organisation in relation to the evolving context, taking into account political, economic, and social developments, while at the same time preserving and strengthening the organisational mission and purpose. Such situations require the organisation to make use of its strategic and analytical capacities rather than its operational and technical capacities.

Such strategic and analytical capacity building is included in a third type of capacity building activities aiming to help the SPOs understand their own context better, become an integral and sustainable part of this environment in the long-term and contribute to changing it. Such capacity building tends to take the form of highly specialised advice by scientific, technical or strategic experts on support missions or long and comprehensive training courses.

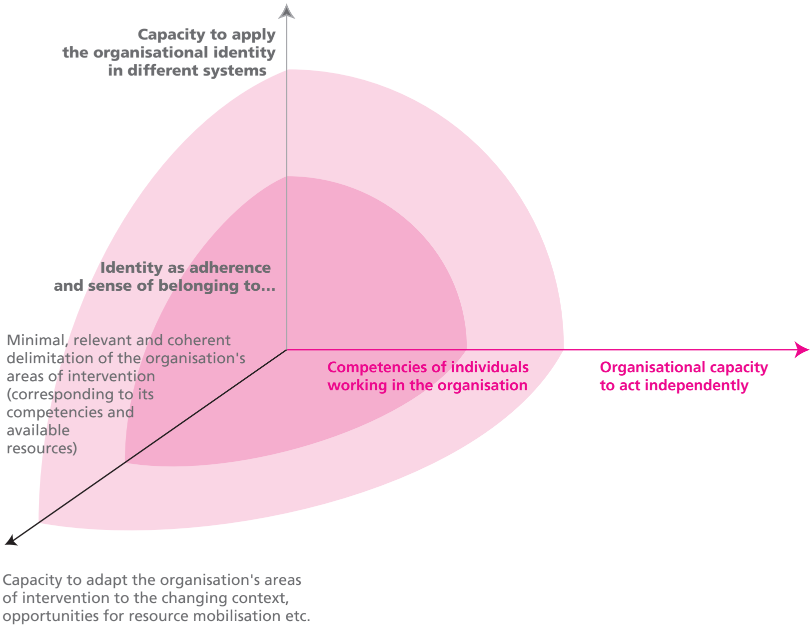
For those organisations that present themselves as the voice of civil society, the capacity building challenge at this stage is to ensure that the "professionalisation" required does not take place at the cost of preserving the values and the mission which constitute the intrinsic organisational identity[3].

The importance attributed to addressing the overall context in which these SPOs operate as part of the capacity building efforts is clearly a way of taking into account the socio-political dimension. Therefore, it is key at this point to emphasise that capacity building is not limited to satisfying the operational and functional needs of an organisation. By their very nature, NGOs position themselves politically, as they organise to voice the concerns of civil society[4]. It is thus at this level that the real capacity building challenge lies.

[3] This brings a second empowerment aspect into play.

[4] Naturally, the voice of civil society is not expressed by NGOs as the sole channels.

The Three Axes of Organisational Capacity Building



What Should Be the Role and Place of the Support Organisation?

It may seem surprising to some to ask the question of the role and place of the support organisation, the SO (*in this guide, this refers to organisations in the North)*. Most frequently, the focus is on the role and place of the supported partner organisation, the SPO (*in this guide, this refers to organisations in the South)*. However, a significant part of the difficulties arising during the implementation of capacity building activities are in fact caused by the support organisation.

Let us adopt the hypothesis that the competencies inside the organisation which is supposed to provide support exist or may be mobilised by the SO to avoid the discussion about insufficient competencies. There are two other major issues that need to be addressed: clarifying the role of the northern NGOs in North-South partnerships and the capacity of the support organisation to evolve and adapt.

- **Clarifying the role of the northern NGOs in North-South partnerships.**

It is a widely recognised necessity for northern NGOs to review their role. With the increasing number of civil society actors in the South and the continously evolving role of these organisations, in particular those that are receiving capacity building support or have been beneficiaries of capacity building programmes, northern NGOs are rethinking and redefining their own roles. Many northern NGOs develop their advocacy functions and increasingly engage in mediation concerning development issues between different types of actors.

- **In order for the SO to provide capacity building, it needs to be able to develop as an organisation and adapt to the context.**

French NGOs are realising that their own organisations will necessarily have to evolve, as they provide capacity building to other organisations: they have to facilitate the exchange of experiences, position themselves differently in their networks, be able to provide consultancy support, manage the financial support offered to southern organisations differently, etc.

Capacity building in partnerships may hence appear to be a *"joint construction"*, a dynamic process during which the partners evolve together.

The wide-reaching impact of this evolution appears to be underestimated: in addition to the establishment of new operational functions, there is often a need for new human resources (to be mobilised inside or outside the organisation), but it is also critical to design new financial management processes, decision-making processes, organisational ways of working etc. This leads to changes…sometimes radical…in the management processes and the organisational culture! Those directly involved will soon become aware of this, while the organisational hierarchy and the organisation as a whole, especially the members, will realise only little by little

From Theory to Practice: "It Isn't As Simple As It Seems !"

The support organisation (SO) "United Against Poverty", has started to provide capacity building to a partner organisation (SPO) which requires the use of a specialised expert. The SO is therefore looking to recruit an external consultant. However:

a) the SO does not know any consultants and the nature of its organisational culture does not enable the organisation to deal with such a "rare species";

b) the SO knows a few consultants, but there are no guidelines indicating who should be dealing with this "rare species": the project manager, his or her superior, a person involved in the monitoring and follow-up? And who should deal with what?: setting the objectives, negotiating the financial terms – in the end, who decides what? About the recruitment of the consultant? About his/her contract (consultancy fees, terms and conditions regarding the mission)? – and the terms of payment?

c) the mission has been arranged but requires a minimum of logistical support: who should make the decisions about such support? - An assistant? The person in charge?

d) The person in charge of the assignment is very clever. Even before starting the process, he realised that these questions were going to come up necessitating internal procedures that do not correspond to the usual ways of working in his organisation. He asks himself: Should I discretely initiate a gradual process in order to put the required procedures into place? Or should I rather warn my line manager about the problems we will need to deal with? And by the way, is he in a position to respond to this challenge? Or would it be wiser to contact a person higher placed in the hierarchy?

e) Everything has been organised (it is always possible to find solutions), but Mr. Dupont, who is an honourary founding member, the former president of the organisation, a generous donator as well as one of the board members, hears about it and starts interfering: "My organisation was not created to recruit consultants. This is a voluntary organisation! You'll just have to look for someone else… !". The mission is cancelled, and the organisers have to start all over again. The mission and the related activities are delayed for six months. The board decides to limit this type of interventions, as they are perceived to be conflicting with the "core mission" of the organisation and the need to concentrate on "concrete development activities with visible material outcomes rather than support provision to organisations whose activities are not producing clear results!".

that such changes are taking place. In a sense, "*the snake is biting its own tale*" - it is all interlinked!: in order to build the capacities of a southern partner, the support organisation will need to strengthen its own capacities.

Working on Governance and Democracy.

To some French NGOs, organisational capacity building only makes sense on two conditions: the internal practices in SPOs concerning member participation in decision-making about strategic direction, and management as well as gender equality in the decision-making organs should be improved, and the capacity to voice civil society needs, in specially with respect to democracy should be enhanced. Overall, the capacity building activities implemented with a partner organisation should therefore in one way or the other pursue this double goal. Apart from the formulation of these principles, there is a need to determine how these are translated into capacity building activities and on what basis, as this is still not very clear.

To sum up, at the present three themes deserve to be further explored and reflected on with the aim to develop tools and methods that are better adapted to dealing with partners and partnerships:

1. Is it appropriate to seek to define the major types of partner organisations and possible ways of developing, and how can this help adapt the capacity building tools and methods to their needs?
2. What ways of organising and working of support organisations currently appear to be obstacles, and how may these be modified in order to satisfy the needs of their partners, while pursuing their own strategic objectives?
3. How may tools for setting up partnership agreements between SOs and SPOs be adapted to satisfy specific capacity building needs?

A Few Analytical Points Concerning the Capacity Building Practices of French NGOs

An examination of the tools and methods that are currently being used by a number of French NGOs in their capacity building work has uncovered the following issues:

- Despite the diversity of the NGOs, the tools and approaches applied are relatively similar. This seems to confirm that capacity building is becoming an increasingly important area of intervention – to varying degrees – in the current practices of French NGOs.
- The systematic adaptation of capacity building tools to the needs and specific conditions of the partners appears to be a necessity.
- The approaches applied by support providing NGOs seem to be relatively similar and shared in most cases. Meanwhile, they remain methodologically and conceptually quite informal. While this should not be seen as an obstacle, it certainly does not help clarify the challenges and commitments of the partners, or the nature of partnership.
- Even if most existing tools are known, and used by some organisations, formal assessment of partner needs seems to be neglected in current approaches. This situation is probably linked to, on the one hand, the methodological questions mentioned above, and on the other hand, the material difficulties which the NGOs experience in ensuring regular and in-depth monitoring and follow-up of the activities with their partner organisations.

Proposing a Method

Pierre-Michel Rosner – GRET
Department: Institutional Development, Actors, Territories

Setting Up a Capacity Building Programme within a Partnership: 6 Key Steps

The text below is not intended to constitute a method that may be directly applied in the design of a capacity building programme. Its purpose is to uncover the important phases in a capacity building process[1]. Capacity building is a dynamic process. It is not lineary, but will go through the different key steps at different times depending on the specific situation.

Step 1: Carry Out an Initial Analysis

The capacity building process cannot be initiated without a simple analysis, which may take different forms, in order to position the organisation in its context: the geographical location, the social, political and economic situation in the country, the target groups, other stakeholders.

There are many ways of carrying out such analysis, from more formal assessment, with a formatted "scientific" design, field visits, missions, evaluation reports…to less formal methods. Any approaches that are likely to provide information about the context and the organisation in question are relevant. The choice of method will depend on the time and resources attributed to the exercise.

Step 2: Review the Shared History

As capacity building should be designed to facilitate an *evolving* and *dynamic* transformation process in the SPO, it seems appropriate to examine the partnership history and review what has been achieved (by the partners together or by each partner) in order to develop a shared understanding of the partnership history.

- *What have the partners achieved together?*
  - *How did it go?*
  - *What was the outcome of the co-operation?*
- *What have the partners achieved separately?*
  - *How did it go?*
  - *Why did the partners not carry out the activity together?*
- *Would they like to implement more activities together?*
- *What values do the partners share?*
- *Do they wish to continue co-operating in other ways than project implementation in the field?*

While all these questions are often reflected on indirectly, this review needs to provide direct and explicit answers. At this point, it is insufficient to come up with approximate answers.

[1] Steps identified during the workshop organised by Coordination SUD in November 2005 to facilitate the exchange of experiences.

Step 3: Undertake an Organisational Assessment

It has emerged clearly from the discussions between French NGOs that capacity building work should ideally focus on organisations rather than individuals. Several organisational capacity building methods have proved to be effective: SWOT-analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and strengths, strategic analysis of the organisation's vision, management (financial and human resource management, managing decision-making processes, etc), communication processes etc. Technically, organisational capacity building may be perceived as related to organisational management in private companies, although the ultimate objectives are obviously not all identical.

A Tool: Organisational Typology

It is impossible to build the capacity of an organisation without understanding its identity, its ways of working and its specific characteristics. The assessment of the SPO should therefore be undertaken prior to any capacity building intervention. However, the organisational assessment tools often provide checklists of general themes, with some guidance as to how these themes may be approached. However, it is rare to find concepts that are useful for interpreting the results of an assessment.

In order to adapt a capacity building approach to the needs of an organisation, it is key to understand its current and potential specific characteristics. An NGO typology may serve as an analytical tool in this regard. Without going into detail at this point about the analysis and the ways to approach it, it seems useful to determine:

- How structured the organisation is. For example: is it a self-help organisation or an organisation with a more consolidated structure?
- The type of activities which the organisation implements. Is it a specialised NGO or a support organisation?
- What is its mandate? Is the NGO similar to a consultancy firm or research institute? Is it a political organisation or a trade union? Or is it a civil society organisation able to influence national policy-making?

The reader may develop his/her own typology and terminology based on the types of partner organisations with which he/she works. This effort at categorising the organisations from the outset should be seen, not as a way of stereotyping the partner organisations and "putting them in boxes", but rather as a way of predicting how these organisations may evolve.

A last point should be made concerning the organisational assessment approach: it is important to decide whether it should be participatory or not. This is a frequently reoccurring debate between arguments that are not always relevant. Whether the assessment is participatory or not, the SO and the SPO will have to negotiate the capacity building challenges and objectives, and if possible, enter them into the partnership agreement (see below). And these negotiations are more important than the methods applied for the analysis. The fact that an assessment is carried out in a participatory way may help kickstart this debate, as long as it is completed (and included in an agreement). In addition, as it is the case for all participatory approaches, it is important to remember that each of the partners has "the duty" to undertake its own analysis of reality and allow it to evolve as a result of the discussion with the other partner. The question of adopting appropriate behaviour is essential.

Step 4: Identify the Capacity Building Objective

In the development NGO sector, an organisation's approach to capacity building will be shaped by the target groups, donors and contractors, the socio-economic context and the institutional environment.

While the capacity building intervention may include specific activities, it should not be considered as an end in itself. It is above all a means to help the SPO implement its projects and activities more effectively. It therefore seems appropriate at this point to revisit some of the questions that are typically asked in connection with more traditional field projects, before discussing how to build the capacity of a partner organisation:

- What are the needs of the target groups? Is the SPO in a position to help satisfy these needs?
- What is the general development context in which the partner organisation intervenes? And in what ways are the activities which the partner implements pertinent in the local context, economically, socially or politically?
- What characterises the supplier system in this area? In other words, are there other local development actors than the SPO that may potentially provide similar services? What unique contribution may the SPO have to make? Why support this organisation and not another?
- At what point does the SPO fulfil the expectations of the donors or contractors? Is it necessary to continue to build the capacity of the SPO in order to implement other activities jointly in the future?

In long-term partnerships, it is important to be specific about the answers to these questions, not only because of their content but also because of the underlying values. For example, it can be perfectly legitimate for an SO to help build the capacity of one of its partners, even if the SO is aware that this SPO is implementing activities that are not pertinent and only partly satisfy the needs of the target group, while other organisations that are present locally are better placed to satisfy these needs, and have gained the confidence of their donors. In such cases, it is the existence of a shared values-base supporting the partnership strategy that will be decisive.

Step 5: Set Up a Capacity Building Programme Together

The notion of joint development of capacity building programmes is essential for "the way to go about it". Joint development means that the capacity building programme should be developed jointly as part of an approach where each partner, SO and SPO, will present and make explicit their requests, propositions, objectives, and perceived obstacles to implementation. It is therefore a question of succeeding in setting up the capacity building programme on the basis of exchanges of requests and propositions from both partners.

Put this way, the idea behind the approach seems obvious. But it is perhaps necessary to remind the reader of the precondition; that is, that capacity building necessarily implies an assymmetrical relationship between the two partners, where one partner is providing the support, while the other partner is receiving it. One partner is therefore, at least in certain respects, in a position to share expertise and know how while the other has more or less explicitly formulated needs. If this phase is to succeed, it is critical to avoid two traps: one is the powerful SO that imposes its solution in the name of "expertise", and the other is the "*shopping-list*" with the expressed needs of the SPO based on practical day-to-day working experience. Both organisations have reason to believe that they know best what is "useful and necessary". It is hence the clash between two beliefs that should be avoided. This can be achieved, if the two partners listen to each other and explain their points of view. It is not that simple, especially not for the SO which is supposed to contribute to this dialogue with relevant points by drawing on its long experience. The determining factors will be how this is done, and whether the two organisational combinations of knowledge (or "*savoir-faire!"*) and behaviour *(or "savoir-être")* are compatible.

Step 6: Decide "Who Does What?"

Here, the typical check list for all project types is revisited. It is worth using it as a reminder, as it may help determine and clarify the fields of intervention and responsibilities of the northern and southern organisation in a field project (for example for each component). The question of "*who does what?"* becomes even more complex, because organisational capacity building will necessarily affect the organisational identity and will lead to the establishment of closer relationships and more connections between the different parties involved.

In this context, all aspects of the relationship between the SO and the SPO need to be clarified, in order to clearly define the responsibilities and who should be in charge of them.

- Apart from the content of the activities, the specific competencies required for their implementation need to be defined.
- These competencies should be well-represented within the SO. Alternatively, external specialists with competencies in the specific area should be identified and their availability checked.
- The SO therefore needs to find out, whether such specialists may be mobilised in accordance with the organisational procedures in place, and whether their approaches are manageable and compatible with the ways of working of the SO and the SPO.

The SO can only use these three competency criteria – available, accessible and manageable – if it is able to step back and analyse objectively its own internal ways of working and its actual implementation capacities. It is no use to make a commitment to intervening in a field, if the required competencies are not available internally and may exist externally, but are difficult to mobilise because of the organisation's inadequate decision-making or management processesses. In the same way, ending up with solutions that may meet all the challenges but do not provide the expertise that the partners were looking for would not be the most effective outcome.

In this context, there are two basic tools which may help understand the type of relationships between a support organisation and a supported partner organisation: an analytical tool – stakeholder analysis; and a practical tool – the contract.

Stakeholder Analysis

No relationship between an SO and an SPO should be adopted and replicated uncritically as an ideal model. All relationships ought to be considered as unique and their specific characteristics nurtured.

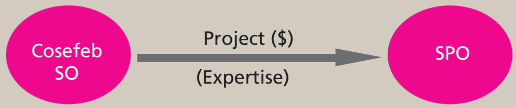
Meanwhile, it is useful to draw on a relationship typology for reference, where capacity building is provided in a partnership. The following example illustrates three such relationship types.

The three case studies below may be used for reference, but the attractiveness of these models[2] is also that they draw attention to the whole stakeholder system in which the capacity building activities are introduced. At the centre of this system are the partners, the SO and the SPO, but other actors may also be included that play an essential and complementary role in the capacity building process. The latter are often left out.

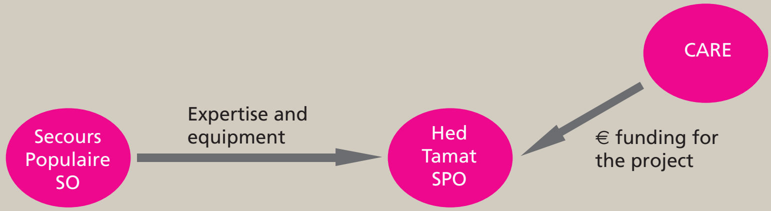
The diverse group of decision-makers. Even if all the activities are implemented as part of the partnership and all parties have been consulted, it is clear that the decision-maker status is not shared in the same way in the different cases. In the case of Cosefeb, the nature of the capacity building activities is clearly linked to the content of the projects implemented by the saupport providing NGO. In the two other cases, the capacity building intervention is aimed at the organisation as a whole, and the approach is therefore less limited by the nature of the projects and the thematic focus of the NGOs providing the project funding. Hence, the capacity building intervention becomes a project in its own right and is negotiated as such.

[2] These models are simplifications of reality.

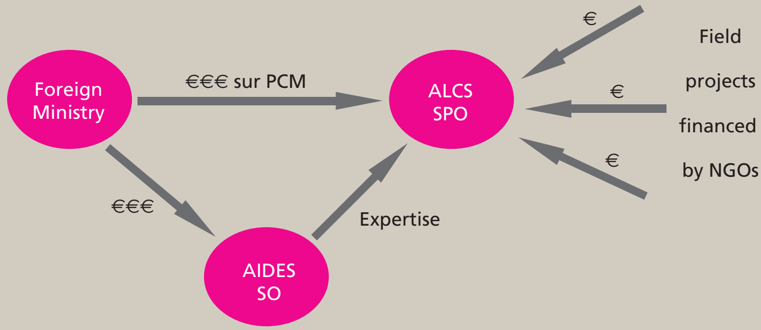
Three Distinct Relationship Forms



The **Cosefeb** case is a classical example of capacity building activities incorporated in a more general development project. Cosefeb is a small French NGO whose staff base consists of volunteers. It provides support to women organisations in Thailand whose members are refugees from Burma. The support includes project funding for education of young children and income-generating activities (including sewing workshops). In addition, the organisation organises training courses, some of which are now aimed at training of trainers.



The case of the NGO **People Environment Development** (HED-TAMAT) in Niger constitutes a more specific example. HED-TAMAT receives support from Care International Germany that finances the implementation of an important development programme. The French NGO, Secours Populaire, finances micro-projects and is involved in building the capacity of the organisation HED-Tamat as a whole. The support from Secours Populaire has not only been provided as specific support to the first project. It is also carried out as a form of organisational capacity building combining advice, training, specialist support, exchanges of experiences, and networking with other international organisations.



The third case illustrates this logic from an even more complex angle. **ALCS** (Morocco) is a respected organisation that operates in the area of HIV-Aids and works to obtain the recognition of the rights of people living with HIV/Aids. It implements a number of projects, alone or in partnerships with foreign NGOs that primarily play the donor role. The organisation is funded by the French Foreign Ministry under the Morocco Cooperative Programme (Programme concerté Maroc - PCM) and receives specific support in the form of specialist advice from Aides, an NGO specialised in HIV/Aids issues. Aides has been ALCS' partner for 13 years and has provided organisational capacity building support to its formalisation and structuration process. Today, Aides only carries out activities funded by the donor, without even going through ALCS, although the three-party relationship has been contractualised by all three partners.

- **Who pays, who decides, and who does the work?** The donor is not necessarily the implementor or the decisionmaker, as is the case with ALCS. To simplify the relationship: the French Foreign Ministry finances ALCS, ALCS makes the decisions, and the support organisation (SO) carries out the activities. Obviously, reality is more complex, the decisions are shared to a greater extent etc. In any case, it is helpful to simplify the relationship between the different stakeholders and illustrate it with a model which shows that the remuneration, work and decision-making functions are not necessarily mixed in the system. However, the delegation mechanisms should subsequently be examined in detail to provide the whole picture.
- **The capacity building conditions may vary:** the capacity building activities and the conditions under which the intervention is carried out by these support organisations (funding, organisational equipment, project support, etc.) may vary, but they may all be considered as forms of capacity building.

Capacity Building Contracts

A joint programme must be formalised by signing a contract[3] specifying the change objectives and results of the SPO and the resources (financial, human, physical etc.) which each organisation is committing to contribute to its partner organisation within a specific period of time . In this context, two difficulties may arise:

The first difficulty is related to time management. Capacity building deals with a dynamic change process in a sociological and human field. In this area, it is very difficult to predict what will happen. A mobilisation dynamics or event acting in favour of or against a project may constitute a powerful accelerateur for the organisation of a collective effort. But at the same time, it may lead to overprioritising some of the restructuring objectives. Frequently, organisational restructuring will work against existing practices and habits, internally and externally, and is therefore likely to face a conservative opposition within the organisation. It is not always easy to commit to specific implementation schedules in such environments – and committing to producing results within a certain period of time is even more challenging.

The second difficulty is that the SO often has to include implicit information regarding its own internal change objectives in the contract. For the SPO on the other hand, the change objective is explicit and hence constitutes the very core of the contract. In turn, if the SO wishes to adapt as much as possible to the needs and constraints of the SPO, it will need to define the conditions for providing the support which will be specifically designed for the programme, both in terms of content and management (unless the SO only commits to predefined activities in a standard format which it has implemented many times before). However, in this situation, the SO will have to face a dilemma: either the contract explicitly mentions the need (and aim) to change its own internal ways of working, or the organisation chooses not to mention it. The first solution, where the need for change in the SO is made explicit, may at first seem preferable… . However, it is extremely difficult to apply in practice. This solution assumes that the management team in the SO commits to introducing specific coherent implementation and management procedures internally for each capacity building programme which it implements. One way to address this challenge is to consider the obligations of the SO to adapt as part of the capacity building process as implicit and discuss them orally, as opposed to making them explicit by mentioning them in the contract. In addition, the SO may accept to organise internally as an adhocracy. This implies that the management

[3] See tool on page 40

team recognises the right and capacity of the implementing organisational functions to self-organise in ad hoc teams for each new project or opportunity to carry out an activity, and delegates most of the decision-making and management responsibilities to these levels of the organisation.[4]

A Few Examples of Capacity Building Tools

After attempting to delimit the field of capacity building, its role and how to go about setting up a capacity building programme, we will now list the different types of applicable tools and discuss some of their strengths and weaknesses (whether these are related to the nature of the tools, the fields in which they are applied, or the conditions under which they are used).

The list presented below is not exhaustive, but may help undertake a qualitative assessment of current practices and the way they are implemented and perceived by the SO.

Funding: Funding provided by the northern partner to finance the resources required for organisational strengthening (office space, equipment and materials, salary payments…). The financial support to a partner is often considered as the initial support provided to help the organisation survive or continue its activities. It is a contested issue whether this is reasonable, as a sustainable organisation should be in a position to cover its financial costs from the very beginning. Meanwhile, many organisations have to go through different development stages (for example, move from a volunteer base to an employed staff base, and then undergo a process of professionalisation). In such cases, a little support from time to time may be very helpful. It should however be noted that donors are more inclined to fund materials and equipment or project implementation than to cover administrative costs.

Training. Even if the capacity building intervention primarily targets the organisation, it is clear that capacity cannot be built without enhancing the competencies of the individuals working for the organisation. However, training should only be seen as one tool among many. In addition, it should be noted that the focus tends to be on specific training courses aiming to help staff and volunteers become more professional. While they may be theoretical, it is important that they are designed to strengthen specific competencies in the organisation (e.g. project formulation, training an accountant) and if possible, that they be replicated subsequently (e.g. training of trainers).

Exchanges, visits, study trips, networking. The core idea is to support the learning and reflection processes rather than providing a solution with all the answers. Therefore, it is critical to ensure proper accompaniment of the process. Otherwise, the outcome for the SPO will be limited to "a nice trip" or "meeting interesting people to share experiences". How can such exchanges of experiences be transformed into useful lessons that are applicable to the concrete activities of the SPO? Apart from choosing what type of meetings should be promoted and organised, experience has shown that the specific efforts made to accompany the organisations before, during and after the process constitute the principal value-added of the exchanges and visits. The exchanges and visits themselves are in a sense mechanisms supporting this process of accompaniment and follow-up.

Contracts, project documents, conventions, procedural guides, ethical charts, etc. These documents are frequently referred to by NGOs as capacity building tools,

[4] The notion of adhocracy was developed by Henry Mintzberg (Mintzberg, 2004). Organisational forms have yet to be explored comprehensively in the NGO sector. When applying the Mintzberg terminology, it would seem that most NGOs may be situated between the organisational forms: *ad hoc, political,* or *missionary*. The challenge when seeking to identify pertinent forms of organisation is probably exacerbated in France by the legal status of non-profit organisations according to which the president and the treasurer are considered as solely responsible for the management of the organisation's activities. The delegation of management responsibility can hence only take place informally and implicitly.

but in reality they are mostly the outcome or result of capacity building work. This paradox reflects the way most NGOs operate: the formalisation proces in itself (at the specific point in time when the documents are written) constitutes a core element in the capacity building interventions implemented to strengthen the partners.

■ *Two key comments should be made concerning the tools used by French NGOs. The first is that the range of capacity building tools developed or applied in practice by the NGOs seems relatively wide, at least in qualitative terms. The fact that there are no statistics concerning the actual NGO practices means that it is unfortunately not possible to find out how many NGOs engage in each type of practice. The second concerns the apparent confusion between the means (visits, formal and informal meetings…), the results (a strategic document), and the goals of the capacity building intervention (accompany an organisation, help it develop…, etc.). The NGOs need to make the exact nature of their capacity building interventions more explicit. Might it be the lack of theoretical references to help define what this work really represents ? – or the lack of institutional recognition of the nature of capacity building in relation to the objectives of the development assistance? The question ought to be posed.*

Studies, lesson learning from experiences, technical guides, situational analyses. These are here considered as tools that may help stimulate discussions internally about the organisational ways of working, in order to improve these methods.

Specialist advice and consultancy support deals with general organisational issues or technical and specialised issues in relation to a specific activity. This is an effective way of accompanying a change process.

Support to internal and external communication by disseminating publications, organising a seminar or workshop, identifying the communication channels and networks of contacts etc.

Seconded staff members from the SO, as a means to support the organisation through the provision of financed human resources.

Specific Comments Concerning the Use of the Tools

Rather than exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the different tools (which are not intrinsic), it is critical to examine the strengths and weaknesses resulting from the nature of the circumstances under which these tools are applied.

- **The Danger of Standardisation**. The comments above may be used to argue that tools should be used on a case-by-case basis, looking at each individual SPO, operating in specific fields, and without standardisation. The implementation of predefined modules is therefore to be avoided, especially for training, as it does not correspond to the practices.
- **Specify the Needs of Each SPO Type**. Even if the capacity building support should be adapted to each organisation, it seems useful to reflect more systematically on the nature and the content of the different types of support required depending on how structured the SPOs are with which the SOs work.

For example, it seems obvious that it is not a priority for a self-help organisation which still finds it difficult to define its objectives and identity clearly to receive support in the area of external communication. In turn, if there is a need to continue to train staff in an organisation which is well-structured and capable of implementing several big projects, it is perhaps caused by human resource management problems rather than simply being a question of competency development. In the same way, training of a bookkeeper in a small SPO which only receives private funding from one NGO will not need to respond to the same requirements as training of the same bookkeeper 15 years later, when the same SPO is implementing several projects financed in collaboration with the EU.

- **Clarify the Possibilities for the Support Organisation to Intervene.** Just as the needs of the SPOs will vary depending on how structured they are, the capacities of the SOs to respond to these needs are not necessarily identical, either on all the themes or at the different organisational levels. It is important to know in what areas or with what tools it is legitimate to intervene, know how to delegate, and have the required procedures in place… This is how the capacity building tools are applied in an effective manner.
- **Organisational Strengthening Tools With Wide-Reaching Effects**. For the purpose of capacity building, the interest and at the same time the danger of using the tools is that they may lead to organisational strengthening with wide reaching effects across the organisation. For example, a training course on organisational assessment, setting up an evaluation team, or developing the organisational capacity in external communication will necessarily help the SPO develop its activities in these areas, and it is likely that the organisation will need to change all its activities. Change is thus both the purpose and the risk of this type of intervention. An organisation cannot afford to fail when undergoing a process of transformation. An organisation that has not made the right choices may disappear, because it has not been strengthened in the right area or no longer corresponds to the most crucial beneficiary needs which it has underestimated.
- **Training Courses… should be dealt with more specifically.** The field of training is far too vast to be treated in-depth in this guide due to the numerous issues that ought to be addressed (technical, organisational, scientific), objectives to be met (fully mastering the knowledge, know how and appropriate behaviour required or simply being aware of the references which may be consulted, learning methods (theoretical, experience-based…), adjustment of the levels to be attained, the training conditions (short or long training course, training in the field…), etc. – All these aspects of the training need to be covered when designing a training course. Today, the range of potential training activities within the field of capacity building are far more wide-reaching than NGOs would have imagined even a few years ago, as are the related capacity buildning needs and challenges.

Partnership Contractualisation

Presentation of the Different Tools: Challenges and Limits

Why Set Up Partnership Contracts?

Whether the contract is set up up for a project promoting economic, social, and cultural rights; a capacity building project; or an operational project which directly targets the beneficiaries on the ground, the contractualisation process should aim at ensuring that the partnership objectives are pursued and the attribution of resources for the partnership is shared between the different partners. By outlining the interplay between the partners and clarifying the commitments which they have made, the contractualisation process helps formulate in writing the responsibilities of each partner in relation to the other partner, the beneficiaries, the donors, the authorities.

French NGOs use different terms to refer to the documents with which they formalise the partnership agreements: partnership convention, contract, agreement, memorandum of understanding, etc. Among these different documents, there are two distinct tools that fulfil specific purposes.

- **The framework convention:** a general long-term agreement which presents the overall partnership strategy.
- **The partnership contract:** a more specific short-term agreement that explains how the partners work together to fulfill the objectives for the implementation of the partnership.

These documents should be negociated in order to be recognised by each partner.

The Principal Features of the Two Tools:

	The Framework Convention	The Partnership Contract
Objective	The convention formalises the commitment of the partners to work together and establishes the general framework for the relationship.	The contract explains the content of the partnership in detail as well as the commitments made by each partner and the deadlines for their fulfilment.
Strategic Level	The convention covers the strategic and institutional dimension of the partnership.	The contract covers project activities at the operational level.
Duration	The convention is used for long-term partnership.	The contract covers short-term activities.
Level of Contractualisation	A good convention should make it possible for the partnership to evolve continuously.	The contract serves to protect one partner who has made a financial agreement with a donor, by ensuring that its requirements are respected by the other partner.
Content	The convention presents each partner and the general content of the partnership.	The contract explains the objectives, the resources, the method, the deadlines, the amounts, etc.

Choosing the appropriate tool – a few examples:

- For a partnership based on the protection on shared views (the exchange of ideas, experiences, content) the framework convention is the most appropriate tool.
- In emergency situations, where the northern partner is financed by a donor like ECHO[1], the contract should contain specific points corresponding to the expectations of the donor, with for example a calendar and very short reporting deadlines.
- The contract constitutes a protective measure, when activities are to be transferred to the southern partner, as it provides an overview of the process, with its deadlines, content, calendar and the exact amounts of funding. The operational, financial, and structural capacities of the partners should be mentioned in the contract: there may be imbalances at the three levels and it is important to assess these before setting up the contract.
- For a short-term partnership, a hybrid tool may be used which covers the principal elements contained in a convention or a contract (regarding the shared vision and the operational aspects).

In practice, many NGOs have adopted a pragmatic approach: they first establish the contracts for operational short-term projects. When several such projects have been initiated, the NGOs often see the need to add a more organisational dimension to the partnership and, as a result, set up a framework convention that will constitute the basis for a long-term relationship.

It may also happen, especially for confederations, that the partners start out by establishing a framework convention that formalises their commitment to work together without any well-defined operational projects in place. If the partnership remains inactive for several years, the existence of a framework convention will ensure that the partners remain connected and facilitate the initiation of a more operational partnership on a solid foundation.

[1] The Humanitarian Aid Office in The European Commission (ECHO) .

The Contractualisation Challenges

The contractualisation challenges should be made clear and explicit to both partners. Otherwise, there is a significant risk that the agreement will not be respected.

Contractualisation Challenges	The Challenges of Framework Conventions	The Challenges of Partnership Contracts
Ensure that the partner organisations take ownership of the project	Formulate a common vision with concrete objectives.	Clarify the way funding and financial resources should be perceived and used.
Strengthen the parties involved (pedagogical dimension)	Mutual recognition of the mission of each partner to move beyond the donor-implementor relationship.	Clarify the commitments of each partner.
Negotiate on an equal basis	Ensure the continuation of the relationship in the long term.	Formalise the objectives, the resources and the method.
Prioritise	Avoid limiting the partnership to the implementation of one specific project but allow it to evolve.	
Have access to tool for imposing sanctions, if one partner were to feel that the other partner does not respect the rules.		
Agree on the values on which the convention should be based		

- **Who should be involved?**

In general, it is a board member (the chairman of the board) or the executive director that signs the contract or the convention. However, experience has shown that it is important to include the operational levels of the organisation more in the reflection processes and the tool development, as this process may help individuals at these levels develop competencies and take ownership of the challenges and responsibilities.

- **Time constraints**

The tiime available for the formulation of framework conventions or contracts negotiated by the two partners generally represents a significant constraint. The use of standard convention or contract formats helps save time, on the condition that these are discussed and adapted in consultation with the partners. If the southern partners are able to provide such standard templates, information about local habits and practices (especially legal practices), which may prove to be important, can be shared.

- **Interpretation of the Contract**

Communication problems or barriers to mutual understanding caused by linguistic or cultural differences may lead the partners to interpret the contracts differently. Apart from the openness and reciprocal willingness of the partners to get to know each other, training and explanation of the terms and conditions in the agreement are indispensable for the partners when identifying the challenges of the contract or the convention to each partner.

- **Contractualisation between two partners in a triangular relationship with a donor**

The donors increasingly demand that partnerships be contractualised, even if it is the organisation through which the donor funding is channelled that will be held responsible by the donor, if problems arise. This is the reason why it is important for this organisation to include as many elements as possible in the contract with its partner organisation, in complementary agreements or by putting specific commitments in writing.

- **Power Relations Between Partners**

When one partner is the donor or acts as an intermediary for the donor, the power relations will tend to be unequal at the time when the contract is set up. This organisation will be in a stronger position, and there is a risk that it may impose its conditions. The balance of the power relations may shift during the project implementation where the funder will depend more on the recipient to produce results of the implemented activities. Therefore, it is important to clarify the relationship between the partners to the funding and separate the financial interests from the partner relations, when the contract or

Scouts et Guides de France (French scouts and guides):

The NGO "Scouts et Guides de France" has established numerous partnerships with scout and guide associations. After a long evaluation process, they wished to make their decision-making and strategy development regarding the scout/guide partnerships more transparent. They therefore felt it was necessary to contractualise their relationships in a flexible way, as partnerships may evolve very quickly and require shifting from one type of relationship to another.

"Scouts et Guides de France" are convinced that partnership contractualisation is a first step in the right direction towards obtaining more democratic partnerships and encouraging the 56.000 volunteers in the movement to participate in the dynamics.

The Marrakech Charter, a reference document signed in 1995, lists all the areas which the partnerships between scout associations may concern (educational projects, youth exchanges, organisational strengthening). Based on this document, Scouts et Guides de France signs partnership conventions for three years at a time which express the value of the exchanges and the areas of intervention covered by the partnerships. In addition, there is an annual operational convention which establishes the concrete project on which they will co-operate and the practical terms and conditions.

The partnership convention and the operational convention are the two principal tools which they use in their efforts to contractualise. However, they are very aware that the contractualisation process should be accompanied by regular exchanges without which these efforts may easily be reduced to a few additional sheets of paper on the shelf...

convention is established. It may become necessary to terminate the contractual agreement in cases of fundamental disagreement or non-compliance.

- **Possible Action or Sanctions if the Partnership Agreement is not Respected**

It is not always easy to demand strict compliance with the contract in a relationship such as a partnership, which often becomes very personal over time. However, it is important to include possible action or sanctions in the event of non-compliance in the contract, such as amicable settlement, mediation, or arbitration by a moral authority recognised by all parties involved.

Contrary to the practices in the private sector, NGOs rarely designate an arbitrator or mention possible action or sanctions for cases where the contractual agreement is violated. They prefer to resolve their problems amicably. For an international constellation such as the North-South partnership, it is complicated to find a third party with authority over the two parties. Even the international confederations rarely intervene in such bilateral relationships, when conflicts arise.

Most frequently, partnerships are ended in cases of fraud or when conflicts remain unsolved.

- **How contractualised should partnerships be?**

There are different levels of contractualisation that formalise the objectives as well as the resources and means to be used for the implementation in more or less detail. It is key to strike the right balance between an agreement with too narrowly defined terms and conditions that risk to prevent any adaptation to changes in the context to take place, and too much flexibility which will make it difficult to use the agreement as a reference document for the collaboration between the partners. Therefore, it is important to define the objectives of the convention or contract and the roles and responsibilities of each partner from the outset.

- **The monitoring of a partnership based on a framework convention**

The framework convention may constitute a reference document for the monitoring of the relationship between the partners. The partnership is a dynamic processus and the conventions that describe its goals should evolve with it. In order to turn the convention into "a living document" and avoid that it becomes irrelevant too quickly, it is recommended to limit the contractual period of the convention to 3 - 5 years with regular revisions. In order to allow for in-depth revision, a specific time and space ought to be planned and allocated in advance.

- **Validation of the Agreement**

In order for the agreement to be validated, it should be dated and signed at the bottom of each page by each of the parties. This includes all annexes and amendments to the contracts and conventions.

Contract Template

This is a contract template which you can adapt to each individual partnership situation by keeping the articles that appear important to you.

Name and address of each organisation *"represented by…".*

Introduction:

Partnership history

Reference to the general convention (if such a document has been written)

Article 1: Partnership Project

The title of the project and a descriptive synthesis (objectives, activities and expected outcomes) and/or reference to the project document which may be enclosed in the annexes.

Example: "A complete description and budget are enclosed in the annexes to the present contract and may only be modifed following consent by both/all partners".

Article 2: Duration of the Contract

Dates for the beginning and the end of the contract.

Article 3 and 4 : Conditions for Implementation

Case 1: Project Promoting the Exchange of Practices Between the Partners

Article 3: Description of the commitments made by organisation A

Description of the technical, financial and human resources (implementation and follow-up/monitoring) which organisation A commits to investing in the project.

Article 4: Description of the commitments made by organisation B

Description of the technical, financial and human resources (implementation and follow-up/monitoring) which organisation B commits to investing in the project.

Case 2: Significant Funding Provided by Organisation A or Transfer of Activities

Article 3: Operational terms and conditions for project implementation

1. Contribution of technical resources by each partner organisation
2. Contribution of human resources by each organisation (implementation and follow-up)
3. Description of the activities to be implemented as part of the project (calendar enclosed in the annexes)

Article 4: Project funding and project management

1. Budget (indicate whether the budget is contractual or not)
2. Financial commitments (explain the conditions for the payments, dates, and amounts).

It should be specified in the contract whether the conditions are tied to the termination of the contract, that is, if the agreement is to be terminated, if one of the partners is unable to respect its commitments regarding these conditions, or if, on the contrary, these conditions are not directly tied to the contract.

Example: "Organisation A only commits to contributing financial resources, if it obtains funding from donor X, and if the project receives the other amounts of funding which have been included in the budget".

Article 5: Reports and Documents

Specify the frequency of the reporting and the required information (outline/grid enclosed in the annexes if necessary). *Examples:*

"Organisation B will submit a complete narrative and financial annual report to organisation A concerning the project every year before (specify the date)".

"The narrative and financial reports as well as the original documents concerning the accountability of

organisation B will be made available to organisation A until (specify the date)".

Article 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

Plan how the monitoring of the programme should take place (responsibilities, internal missions, tools etc.). Plan the period during which the evaluation of the programme should take place, the type of evaluation (internal or external), the guidelines for the terms of reference and the monitoring and evaluation.

Article 7: Audit/ External Evaluation (if organisation B is funded by organisation A)

The donor organisation may need to undertake a complete audit of its partner organisation's financial activities or all the activities which it has implemented. The advantage of this type of practice is that the organisation avoids the obligation to present all original documentation for expenses to a donor such as the European Community. If the partner organisation is subject to this type of audit, it will be expected to provide all original documents. This will be impossible, if it has several partners and has to keep its accounting records. The only solution is then to carry out a complete audit of the entire organisation.

The terms of reference and the conditions of the tender have been explained in detail (or enclosed in the annexes).

Example: "If a donor demands an external audit, organisation B will be expected to co-operate".

Article 8: Amendments to the Contract

Example: "The present agreement and its annexes may be amended, if both parties agree. Such amendments will be enclosed as annexes to the initial agreement".

Article 9: Termination of the Contract

Example: "The present contract may be terminated at any time by each of the two parties, with two months' notice. If the present contract is violated, this time limit will be reduced X months".

Article 10: Conditions Tied to the End of the Contract

Determine the conditions for the transfer of resources (material and financial) and the conditions concerning employment or dismissal of employees.

Example: "If a contract is terminated before the end of the programme, organisation A will take responsibility for the programme implementation and organisation B commits to returning all the materials and equipment invested as resources for the implementation of the programme to organisation A, on the condition that these will be used for the programme on a regular basis (apart from the assets which are the property of organisation B)".

Article 11: Arbitration and Settlement of Disagreements

The procedures to be followed in the case of conflict should be specified in the contract: amicable settlement, mediation, or arbitration by a third party chosen by the two parties.

Example: "In cases of conflict caused by the interpretation or application of this contract, the disagreeing party should inform the other party in writing. The latter should respond within X weeks. If the answer is not provided, or if no agreement can be reached within X weeks, each party commits to designating two representatives for a conciliation mission. If the two parties are unable to reach an agreement within X weeks, the present contract will be terminated".

Article 12: General Provisions

Terms and conditions for the presentation and external dissemination of information concerning the programme (including possible reservation of rights).

Article 13: Annexes

Specify if the annexes are part of the contract or simply reference documents, and if they can be amended following agreement by all parties without terminating the contract.

Examples of annexes: project documents; budget; implementation calendar; impact indicators; terms of reference for external audits, etc.

Signatories:

Name, title, and signature.

Framework Convention Template

This is a framework convention template which you can adapt to each individual partnership situation by keeping the articles that appear important to you.

Introduction:

Partnership history

Article 1: Presentation of Each Partner

Name and address of each organisation *"represented by…"*.
Presentation of the mission, the target group, the fields of activity, information about the organisation's legal status (example: public declaration of the registration date), etc.

Article 2: General Objectives of the Convention

Describe the challenges to the partners posed by the convention.
"The purpose of the present convention is to ….".
Examples: Define the terms and conditions of the partnership and the principal areas of co-operation; express the shared values; provide a frame of reference for the exchange between the organisations ; define the partnership principles and rules etc.

Article 3: Confirmation of the Shared Values and Partnership Vision[1]

"Organisation A and organisation B confirm sharing the following values and commit to respecting these: …".
Examples: build a world of justice; respect human dignity; respect the environment; work against discrimination (religious, gender); encourage democratic governance in organisations; participate actively in building and strengthening civil society etc.

[1] Reference to the shared values and visions identified during the partnership strategy formulation

Article 4: The Scope of the Partnership and the Resources for the Implementation

Description of the areas in which the partners plan to co-operate:

"The principal areas of collaboration between the partners are: ….".

Article 5: Mutual Commitments

"In order for each partner organisation to achieve its mission,

Organisation A commits to:

-

-

Organisation B commits to:

-

-

Examples: technical, human, and financial support; shared information; the exchange of practices; crossed missions; representation of the partner; etc.

Article 6: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Convention

Explain what the procedures should be for monitoring and modifying the convention. This makes it possible to create a living convention.

Example: "An annual review of the convention should be carried out during a review mission. The present convention and the enclosed annexes may be amended, if both parties agree. Such amendments will be enclosed as annexes to the initial convention".

Article 7: Duration and End of Convention

Determine the length of the contractual period and plan an evaluation, when the convention expires, to avoid that it remains a charter or a declaration of intent only. The convention can be renewed as many times, as the partners wish. Example of duration: 3 to 5 years.

Example: "The present convention is concluded for a duration of X years and will take effect at the signature date). When the present convention expires, it will be evaluated by the partners and may be renewed, if both parties agree".

Article 8: Termination

It is preferable to develop those criteria from the outset which will lead to disengagement from the partnership[2] and specify these in the convention.

Examples of situations where it is critical to disengage: the partner has become autonomous; the initial objectives of the partnership have been obtained; problem with the resources available or the relevance of the partnership in relation to the objectives of the organisations; violation of one or more clauses in the convention by one of the partners. See the partnership strategy chapter.

Example: "If a partner wishes to disengage from the partnership, the present convention may be terminated at any time by each of the parties by giving X months' notice".

Article 9: Conflict Resolution

The procedures to be followed in the case of conflict should be determined in the convention: amicable settlement, mediation, or arbitration by a third party chosen by the two parties.
Example: "In cases of conflict caused by the interpretation or application of this contract, the disagreeing party should inform the other party in writing. The latter should respond within X weeks. If the answer is not provided, or if no agreement can be reached within X weeks, each party commits to designating two representatives for a conciliation mission. If the two parties are unable to reach an agreement within X weeks, the present convention will be terminated".

Article 10: The Operational Agreements Will be Formalised in Specific Contracts

Example: "The present convention can be complemented by specific contracts with descriptions of the practical details".
If they already exist, they can be mentioned here.

Article 11: Annexes

Specify if the annexes are part of the convention or simply reference documents, and if they can be amended following agreement by all parties without terminating the convention.
Examples of annexes: presentations of organisations; contracts etc.

Signatories:

Name, title, and signature.

[2] Reflections concerning the exit strategy should take place during the partnership strategy formulation phase (see p. 15).

Annexes

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The majority of these documents can be downloaded from our website: www.coordinationsud.org

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Websites About Capacity Building

www.ngoconnect.net : This website constitutes a forum for discussion and exchange. It treats current issues and trends, and makes online resources available on the theme capacity building of local NGOs, in particular organisational development and organisational capacity building of NGOs and NGO networks (administration, management, advocacy, communication, knowledge management, leadership development, human resource development, public and private partnerships, public relations/media, strategic planning, etc...). In addition, there are resources concerning specific issues: advocacy, democracy, and governance, HIV/Aids, human rights. The website is in English and Spanish.

www.capacity.org: From this website, you can download general capacity building publications. It also provides access to other related websites and makes available a searchable database covering capacity building issues in different fields. This website is in French and English.

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca: This is the website of the Canadian Development Agency, CIDA. It publishes capacity building documents online.

www.auf.org: Using new IT- and network technologies, The Francophone University Agency (Agence universitaire de la francophonie) works to facilitate shared access to university resources in French, in order to promote solidarity and co-development.

www.isnar.cgiar.org: This website is dedicated to improving organisational capacity building through evaluation and focuses on issues concerning the evaluation of organisational capacity building. It provides access to project documents, a number of contacts and contact information, intermediary reports, and a diary. It contains definitions of the key concepts and terminology and provides links to related websites. In English.

www.idrc.ca: The International Development Research Centre is an research institution funded by the Canadian government which helps developing countries develop sustainable solutions to their social, economic, and environmental problems. It provides access to a resource tool with a large database. This website exists in French and English.

www.inter-reseaux.org: Inter-Réseaux is specialised in international development and rural development in the South, in particular development experiences at the grassroots. It provides access to various francophone capacity building websites.

www.unrisd.org: UNRISD (research on social development). The research institute is organised around five topics: civil society and social movements; democracy and human rights; identities, conflict, and cohesion; social policy and development; technology and society. This website exists in French, English, and Spanish versions.

Lexicon

Assessment. Analytical method used to examine and understand a situation or a state by identifying and assessing the symptoms or signs.

Capacity. The ability to develop or carry out a project or activity. There are three types of capacities: the technical capacities, i.e. the abilities required for an organisation to implement an activity (design, monitoring and evaluation of a development or advocacy project, technical competencies, ability to use and maintain equipment etc.); the organisational capacities that makes it possible for an organisation to operate (administrative practices, human resource management, financial management etc.); the political capacities which an organisation uses to interact strategically with its environment (the state, the media, society etc.).

Capacity Building (CB). This term refers to the process of facilitating the development of existing capacities or the creation of new capacities in order to enable an organisation to function and fulfil its organisational development objectives.

Civil Society Organisation (CSO). "An organisation which defends or promotes collective interests and/or provides services of collective or general interest". *Philippe Lavigne Delville*

DAP ("Dotation au partenariat"). Partnership subvention instrument created by the French State. In connection with the establishment of contractual procedures between the French NGOs and the French Foreign Ministry in 1995, the DAP tool was created to make it possible for eligible French NGOs to develop partnerships with and build the capacity of the southern organisations with which they work.

European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). This institution constitutes the EU's financial emergency aid instrument, from which numerous humanitarian organisations have received financial support.

Empowerment. The human development process which enables a person to develop his/her own capacities and resources in order to contribute actively to organising his/her own economic, social, and political life as well as that of the community.

Gender. Gender refers to the construction and distribution of women's and men's social roles in human societies that are characterised by inequality. The notion of gender concerns the social relations between men and women and at the same time constitutes un analytical approach to counteracting gender inquality more effectively.

Governance. "Governance refers to the strategic decision-making, control and evaluation mechanisms in an NGO or humanitarian organisation. Governance is above all the responsibility of the Board and the Chairman of the Board". *Bioforce*

Management. Management refers to all activities carried out by a socio-economic agent in order to attain his/her objectives, including resource management, executive functions, supervision, organisation…whatever might be his/her status (legal, private, associative, public, mixed public/private…).

Multi-Stakeholder Programme. A coherent group of development activities in a specific geographical area which involves the participation of different types of stakeholders: NGOs, local and regional government institutions, trade unions, institutional stakeholders etc...).

Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Programme (Programme concerté pluri-acteurs - PCPA). Coherent set of development activities originating from a concerted initiative by the French Foreign Ministry which gathers institutional stakeholders and NGOs in a specific geographical area around a strong collective strategy. The programme is established for a period of 3 to 4 years and implemented by French non-governmental actors and their local southern or eastern partners (as well as European NGOs, in some cases).

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Long-term strategic framework for poverty reduction. Since 2002, the World Bank has based its aid strategies for low-income countries on the PRSPs which, in principle, are developed by the countries themselves with civil society participation. It encourages the coordinated participation by NGOs as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies in the poverty reduction programmes in each country.

Supported Partner Organisation (SPO). Refers to an organisation that receives support from another organisation.

Support Organisation (SO). Refers to an organisation that provides support to another organisation.

Coordination: Clémence Pajot (Coordination SUD)

A special thanks to the editing committee: Nicole Dagnino (ERM), Sandrine Auneau Berret (Coordination SUD) and Luca Secci (Consultants sans frontières), as well as the facilitators, group leaders, and all the participants that shared experiences during the workshops which took place from October to December 2005 .

Translation: Mia Sorgenfrei, OD consultant and translator mia.sorgenfrei@gmail.com

Layout: Louma productions, 34000 Montpellier www.louma.fr

ISBN: 2-9524132-2-3

The Coordination SUD Guides

Partnership Guide

A Practical Guide to be Used by Partners from the North and the South

Coordinated by Clémence Pajot

Today, partnership constitutes a central value to numerous French NGOs whose mission is to promote, accompany and support the local dynamics and activities in the South and the East. However, there is a continous discrepancy between the frequently idealised partnership concept, on the one hand, and a reality with complex relationships which are sometimes difficult to manage.

This guide was created to accompany French NGOs and their partners in the South and the East in their partnership practices and reflections. It is based on the lessons learnt from NGO experiences and provides reflective comments and useful methodological tools that may help improve partnership practices in three areas : partnership strategy development, capacity building in partnerships and the partnership contractualisation process.

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Founded in 1994, Coordination SUD ("SUD" for *"Solidarité Urgence Développement"* or "Solidarity, Relief, Development") brings together six NGO coalitions (CLONG-Volontariat, CNAJEP, Coordination d'Agen, CRID, FORIM, Groupe Initiatives) and more than 130 French international solidarity NGOs.

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Coordination SUD – Solidarité Urgence Développement
14, passage Dubail – 75010 Paris – France – Tel. : 01 44 72 93 72 – Fax : 01 44 72 93 73
sud@coordinationsud.org – www.coordinationsud.org

ISBN: 2-9524132-2-3