



## Evaluating Influencing

### Overview

Debates on partnership in domestic policy and in international development provide the main framework for narrower discussions of influencing. Partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector have been central to debates since the late 1990s on the role of government, democratic reform and devolution. Partnership was a central concept in the development of DFID policy in 1997 and after, but was closely associated with the idea of influencing.

The development of the concept of partnership in international development has focused increasingly on the need for changes in donor behaviour. This is in line with a more mutual and equitable model of partnership, which is widely accepted outside of international development.

### Experience

DFID experience of evaluating relationships and influence in the Country Programme Evaluations and the WHO Partnership Evaluation has suggested that there is a need to a much broader view of the development of relationships, with influencing being a part or a partial outcome of these wider relationships. The methodologies used in evaluation depend on how well managed and strategic the focus on relationships have been in the specific circumstances, with the most complex approaches being used where there is the least clarity on the relationships formed. Generally, there is a need for clarity on the objectives in forming a relationship from the start, clarity that is shared by both sides.

An examination of views from the two ends of the spectrum, looking at partnerships and at advocacy, produces similar conclusions, that longer-term relationships are both an important part of work to influence through advocacy and an important outcome of working in partnerships. It is generally concluded that there is a need to take a broad perspective of relationships and the objectives to be achieved through them.

There is some emerging practice from DFID's work in Brazil and Vietnam of how relationships and their impact can be monitored. Together with experience from work on partnerships and advocacy, this provides useful guidance on both assessing relationships and their outcomes, including influence. Overall it is concluded that there is a need to build in monitoring and evaluation from the start.

### What does partnership and influencing mean?

An intense debate developed in the late 1990s in Europe and the US around the role of the state. This debate was in response to the policies of the 1980s where the focus in both the developed and developing worlds was on 'rolling back' the state: reducing the functions of government as much as possible through a process of privatisation and relying increasingly on the private sector. The response in the 1990s had as a central idea the state as guarantor, but not necessarily as provider, that is: the state has the responsibility of guaranteeing access to certain goods, but accepting that the state need not directly provide those goods.

This debate was linked closely to processes of democratic reform, which looked to both encourage active citizenry and devolve policy-making and implementation to more local levels. These processes aimed to create spaces within which policy innovation could occur with communities taking responsibility for themselves. Partnerships are a key element in taking forward these principles and processes

with central and local government working increasingly closely with the private sector and particularly civil society.

The domestic policy debate in the UK had an impact on the development of new policy on international development. This is most clearly seen in the 1997 DFID White Paper, where the term partnership was first used extensively and was closely linked with the idea of influencing. The first commitment in the White Paper states that, "We shall work closely with other donors and development agencies to build partnerships with developing countries to strengthen the commitment to the elimination of poverty, and use our influence to help mobilise the political will to achieve the international development targets".

In implementing the 1997 White Paper a diverse range of partnership mechanisms were developed: with partner governments, as set out in the Country Strategy Papers; with multilateral institutions through the Institutional Strategy Papers; and with UK-based international NGOs in the Programme Partnership Agreements. The main focus within DFID has been on the 'influencing' aspects of these relationships. In discussions by the Development Committee of DFID in 2002 it was concluded that 'influencing' is an unsatisfactory term because of the lack of precision in its use and it was suggested that it be replaced with more specific terms such as advocacy, capacity building, awareness raising, lobbying and campaigning. However, in DFID in general, influencing continues to be closely associated with partnership and other forms of relationship and in many cases the two terms are used synonymously.

### Evolution of the idea of partnership in development

A development of understanding of the concept of partnership on the part of donors can be seen in the evolution of approaches to such relationships. Some of the most important stages in this evolution have been:

- The OECD-DAC paper, *Shaping the 21st Century*, published in 1996, which set out the International Development Targets for the first time and outlined the key principles of development cooperation with country-led partnership playing a central role;
- The launch of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) by the World Bank in 1999, as an approach to building country ownership and achieving the MDGs, with stronger partnerships among governments, donors, civil society, the private sector, and other development stakeholders at its heart. The rapid, parallel development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process at about the same time, using the same basic principles and in many cases led by the World Bank and other donors;
- The evaluation of CDF in 2003, which highlighted that it is the donors who have been relatively slow in making the necessary changes to bring their practices in line with the agreed CDF principles;
- The growing importance of the Harmonisation Agenda in the last few years, recognising the need to shift the focus from discussion of principles to actual implementation of harmonisation at country level, set out in the Rome Declaration in 2003. This has taken the form of commitments by individual donors to taking the agenda forward, such as the DFID Action Plan to Promote Harmonisation, and initiatives to assess the performance of donors at a country level, such as the OECD-DAC survey on harmonisation and alignment and the Country Implementation Tracking Tool of the Aid Harmonization website; and,
- The development of Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and the ACP countries, first launched in 2002. The EU has stated that the negotiations should involve a 'comprehensive, balanced and deep political dialogue leading to commitments on both sides' in order to develop a partnership 'based on dialogue and contract rather than conditionality, and the fulfilment of mutual obligations'.

To be able to evaluate effectively it is important to be clear about the objectives of an organisation or intervention from the start. Therefore

it is useful to have some overall view of what is expected from a particular relationship. An examination of wider definitions of partnership highlights three important principles:

- Mutual commitment to agreed objectives - Agreement between partners on what is to be achieved through a partnership is an important first step in forming the relationship. This is a process of coming to a consensus on the problem to be dealt with, identifying the resources that are available to deal with this problem, and agreeing on ways forward and on who has responsibility for what. Agreed objectives and the apportioning of responsibilities provide the basis for each partner organisation to agree internal objectives and strategies to achieve these.
- Mutual obligations and accountability - Mutual accountability within a partnership provides each of the partners with a clear idea about where they stand and can provide the mechanism by which they can call others to account. Statements of mutual obligations and accountability provide clear benchmarks against which each partner can assess both the performance of others and themselves.
- Shared understanding of responsibilities - Shared understanding of responsibilities is an area where International NGOs have developed a good understanding, finding ways to combine individual strengths and providing support to build capacity in areas where there are weaknesses. For donors there is a developing understanding that their role is about providing efficient and effective support, primarily helping to build country ownership.

The discussion above suggests an evolution in what is expected, moving towards a greater sense of partnership. The UK volunteering organisation Voluntary Service Overseas has developed a model for assessing the development of relationships over time in the form of the matrix below.

	EVOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIPS OVER TIME		
	Weaker		Stronger
<b>Nature of relationship</b>	Exploitative One-sided Lack of trust Lack of transparency  Only discuss own strengths	Negotiated  Able to discuss own strengths and weaknesses, and partners strengths	Empowering Reciprocal Mutual respect and trust Openness Partners willing and able to discuss both their own and their partners' strengths and weaknesses
<b>Where decision-making power lies</b>	Decision-making done just by one of the partners	Decisions checked by the powerful partner with the less powerful partner	Equal decision-making power
<b>Ending a relationship</b>	Abrupt withdrawal/end		A mutually planned and supported exit strategy

## Influencing in Evaluations

There have been a number of recent examples of evaluating influencing from the DFID programme, including: the Country Programme Evaluations and the Evaluation of the DFID-WHO Partnership. This section will examine the main elements of the methodologies used and the key conclusions drawn.

The Romania Country Study for the CPE was the most complete and the most detailed in terms of examining the various aspects of partnership and influencing. A matrix was developed to examine the four main influencing objectives and the five mechanisms for the delivery of influence:

Objectives Mechanisms	Broad advocacy of a poverty agenda	Improving the design of programmes	Enhancing the quality of delivery during implementation	Provision of complementary technical assistance
In-country dialogue				
Provision of technical assistance				
Advisory support				
Co-financing				
Collaboration between central offices				

Information for the analysis of partnerships was collected using a variety of means including:

- An analysis of DFID's partnerships including a detailed stakeholder analysis undertaken with programme staff;
- A formal partnership survey in which respondents were asked to classify their partnership relationship with DFID in a spectrum for each of 25 predefined aspects of a partnership;
- The development of in-depth case studies of three projects, focusing on collaboration with the World Bank; and.
- Systematic interviews with DFID partner organisations on a selection of projects that covered 75% of the programme.

The WHO Evaluation, carried out in 2003, used a similarly detailed methodology that followed three stages:

- An analysis of the aims, objectives, structure and outcomes of the partnership to identify the key means in which it operated,

which was used as the basis of a questionnaire for the second stage. The three main areas of partnership that were examined were the structures of the relationship, the values and goals, and trust;

- Interviews with individual members of the partnership, using a semi-structured questionnaire, either in person or by email and telephone.
- Mapping of the architecture of the partnership based on the analysis and interviews, leading to an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership.

Again a detailed approach to collecting information was used, including:

- Interviews with DFID and WHO HQ staff;
- Interviews with other WHO member states;
- Visits to three countries, Bangladesh, Ghana and Zambia; and,
- Telephone enquiries to WHO and DFID representatives in a wide selection of countries.

More recently in the Bolivia Country Study, a 'lighter' approach to CPE has been attempted, with partnership and influence as central themes. The evaluation took two main criteria, internal quality and external effectiveness, for assessing the performance of the country programme and broke these down into three areas each:

Main Criteria	Areas for Evaluation	Main Questions
Internal Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy</li> <li>▪ Relationships</li> <li>▪ Portfolio of Activities</li> </ul>	Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Was DFID a good development partner?</li> <li>▪ Did DFID pursue 'influencing' in the right way?</li> </ul>
External Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project Results</li> <li>▪ Influence on Policy Change</li> <li>▪ Contributions to Outcomes</li> </ul>	Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What influence has been achieved?</li> <li>▪ Has DFID advanced harmonization?</li> </ul>

The means of assessment against these criteria and areas were much more limited than in previous evaluations and collected information through:

- Interviews with a limited range of partners; and,
- A review of existing evaluations and other documentation, although partnerships had been a key focus in the Bolivia programme.

In terms of results and conclusions, there are a number of common themes that have emerged from the Country Programme Evaluations and the DFID-WHO Partnership Evaluation. These themes are illustrated with examples from each of the evaluations, looking at two of the main issues:

While the relationships that DFID are good, there is a need for DFID to explicitly plan, manage and monitor relationships.

*WHO* – The Institutional Strategy Paper is seen by DFID as a framework for priority setting and by WHO as providing common objectives for the partnership and general direction for financial support to WHO. The ISP does not provide a full basis for the evaluation of the relationship as it does not capture important complexities in the partnership.

*Bolivia* – While there were good working relationships with a wide and generally appropriate range of partners, it could be said that the choice of partners and the political judgements involved have not always been well informed.

*Brazil* – The work on partnerships was judged to have been innovative and relationships were improved through continuity of effort in building and maintaining them. It was recognised however that a gap exists between the principles and practice of partnership.

*Romania* – Collaboration should not be confused with influence. A comparison of relationships with the EC and the World Bank shows that influence came with small amounts of technical assistance at the design stage or in response to strategic opportunities.

There is a need for a more informed, realistic and strategic approach to partnership arrangements with multilaterals.

*WHO* - Whilst the relationship exhibits many examples of DFID and WHO working in partnership it is perhaps not a partnership per se. Indeed there are contrasts between the high degree of relevance at a global level for the partnership and a less clear picture at country level.

*Brazil* – There is a need for careful analysis of the potential and modalities of working with different multilateral agencies and a better institutional understanding of these agencies.

*Cambodia* – Relationships with multilaterals need to be monitored and managed to encourage a better reciprocal understanding of culture, policies and procedures. This understanding needs to inform the appropriate form of relationship and how to maximise its influence.

This experience of evaluating relationships and influence in the Country Programme Evaluations and the WHO Partnership Evaluation suggests that there is a need to take a much broader view of the development of relationships, with influencing being a part of or a partial outcome of these wider relationships. The methodologies used in evaluation depend on how well managed and strategic the focus on relationships have been in the specific circumstances, with the most complex approaches being used where there is the least clarity on the relationships formed.

The remainder of this paper will explore various approaches to

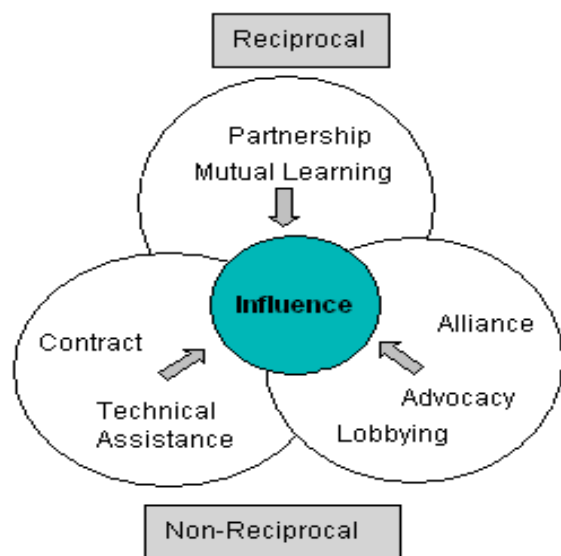
### Evaluating Advocacy and Partnerships – Other Views of Influencing

clarifying and evaluating influencing objectives, looking at:

- Two approaches to evaluating advocacy and partnerships;
- More recent DFID experience of looking at influencing from a wider view of relationships.

Can other approaches to evaluating relationships be helpful? Here recent work on advocacy, where the objectives of influencing change

are clearest, and on partnership, where building and maintaining relationships is part of the outcome, are examined.



In 2001 ActionAid began action research on assessing advocacy with a detailed literature review on the subject. This initial work has recently been followed up with work by Save the Children UK as part of a concern with finding ways to achieve more impact on both the policies and practices of decision-makers. Some of the most interesting conclusions from this work are that:

- Advocacy is increasingly collective and takes place through networks and coalitions, using a variety of strategies. In assessing advocacy there has been a shift from relationships between advocacy initiatives and outcomes and a focus on looking at contributions made by individual organisations, based

on clarity in the roles of individual organisations in coalitions and networks.

- Policy change is not the only dimension that should be evaluated as a result of advocacy. Other important areas that should be examined are strengthening civil society organisations, through improving how organisations work together for a common purpose and increasing awareness of rights, and democracy outcomes, such as improving the access and influence that groups have to debates and decision-making and the accountability of government institutions to civil society.
- Assessing advocacy impact is a long-term undertaking, where policy reform can be slow and incremental and implementation, and the associated impacts, often lags significantly behind. In evaluating work in the short and medium-term there is a need to remain focused on the long-term efforts towards broader change.

In another set of approaches by the OECD and USAID, partnership is regarded as an important end in itself. Work by the OECD emphasises that building and maintaining relationships is an important part of the outcome, while USAID has explored more holistic approaches to evaluating relationships.

OECD work on Local Governance and Partnerships looks at efforts by local government that have actively sought broad partnerships with civil society and the private sector. One of the key conclusions drawn is that the main contribution of such partnerships is in improving local governance. Working together in this way helps in developing more integrated approaches to policy development, bringing together: a range of experience of local or sectoral problems; combining and better targeting resources to tackle these problems; and co-ordinating and rationalising interventions by the three main partners. The evaluation of such partnerships needs to look beyond policy results to consider these improvements in governance. It is suggested that the benefits of working in partnership can be better evaluated by examining issues such as: the increased use and better targeting of measures; greater responsiveness to local conditions; identification of opportunities for

broader impact through joint activities; and, a higher degree of satisfaction among the population and the partners involved.

USAID has developed a range of work on Intersectoral Partnering, where government, the private and voluntary sectors work together towards common aims. Similarly to the work of OECD, the case is made that the benefits of such partnerships go beyond the development and implementation of sectoral policy. For example, it is suggested that partnership approaches can help in developing a better understanding of each sector's constraints and in the creation of bridges among different communities. This may in turn provide the basis for broader change, through the development of new structures and relationships, creating sustainable mechanisms to help address issues that go beyond the original one. In addition partnership approaches can result in the transformation of individual partner's capacities and can address large-scale issues that no one sector has the resources and ability to manage alone and in which every sector has a stake.

A more holistic approach to evaluation is suggested that looks at three domains, the values and capacity of the partnership, the process of its development and the impact of the partnership. Each of these domains is further broken down into three sets of indicators, so that in the impact of the partnership the following sets are highlighted:

- The common issue, in terms of the resolution of the issue;
- Partner members, in terms of the sustainability of partnership and the effect on individual partner members; and,
- Society more generally, in terms of the development of social capital and improvements in the enabling environment.

Each of these individual categories is further broken down into categories of indicators, developed through drawing on USAID's experience in the field.

Taking the view from both perspectives suggests that in evaluation there is a need to look more widely than immediate objectives of work to influence or to work in partnership. Both cases produce similar conclusions that longer-term relationships are:

- In the case of advocacy, an important outcome of work to influence policy development and implementation, building longer-term capacity to be able to work together; and,
- In the case of partnerships, an important outcome of working together, with wider benefits for society more generally and for democratic processes.

### **DFID Experience – Defining Terms and Building a Framework for Evaluation**

Recent changes in aid relationships mean that it will become increasingly important to set individual donor contributions, in the form of say influence, in a wider perspective of relationships. There has been recent experience in DFID country programmes of how to put some of these general principles into practice, looking at defining terms and understanding influencing in Latin America and monitoring relationships in Vietnam.

The most detailed work to date has been carried out in DFID's country programmes in Latin America. A recent publication reflecting on the experience in DFID programme in Peru explores the links between relationships and influence in more detail. In conclusion it is suggested that investing in relationships, identifying allies who share a common goal and building non-instrumental relations of trust and friendship, can be means for developing alliances for change. Such definitions set influencing within a broader context of relationships between institutions generally.

A workshop in Brazil in 2003 was organised to bring together experience from DFID country offices in Bolivia, Brazil and Peru, as well as from the Latin America region in general. One of the key conclusions from this workshop was that investing in relationships is central to all of DFID's work. In a summarising statement it is suggested that, 'Influencing for DFID is about investing in relationships for pro-poor outcomes supported by an understanding of context and effective use of human and financial resources at

DFID's disposal'. In the key conclusions from the workshop it is suggested that, there is a 'need for reflective learning, understanding the context (including its political, economic, social and historical dimensions), understanding who we should learn from, how we learn and how we manage what we learn to ensure changes in our performance to support the desired outcomes'. These conclusions are very similar to those reached in the recent evaluations discussed above.

In DFID Vietnam a recent review of the Country Strategy Paper looked particularly at the relationship with the World Bank. The aim of the relationship was to influence the World Bank's approach to give a greater focus on poverty reduction and to improve project design to better cover local needs. In response to this review DFID Vietnam has brought in support to develop a framework for monitoring the new Country Assistance Plan. One of the key elements of this framework is to look at the 'Quality of the engagement with clients in Government and the donor community'. In order to assess performance in this area a more holistic approach is borrowed from the private sector. In this approach a range of aspects of the relationship are regularly assessed, such as reliability, responsiveness, knowledge and provision of individualised attention. In this process DFID self-assessments are checked against those of the partner, thus providing a clear picture of under- or over-performance and setting out areas for future action.

## Conclusions

The above experience suggests that:

There is a need for clarity on the objectives in forming a relationship from the start, clarity that is shared by both sides, so that:

- Where there are mutually agreed objectives and where these are followed up with internal strategies to manage and monitor contributions to these objectives, evaluation has a clear baseline against which to work.

- Where the objectives are not clear or differ among partners, where there is not a clear division of responsibilities and where there are no internal strategies, evaluation becomes a more complex task, a matter of reconstructing the relationship using the perspectives of different 'partners'.

There is a need to take a broad perspective of relationships and the objectives to be achieved through them:

- Looking at the added benefits and/ or unforeseen outcomes of institutions working together;
- Taking a longer-term perspective, understanding that relationships take time to establish and take time to start to produce results.

There is a need to build in monitoring and evaluation from the start, looking at:

In the preparatory stages:

- An understanding of the context and judgements about relationships to be formed;
- Taking time to understand potential partners, their objectives in agreeing to form a relationship and the ways in which their organisation works;
- A process to agree objectives, obligations and responsibilities.

During the process of relationship forming and maintenance:

- Regular checks on how the relationships is developing, how it is affected by other relationships and changes in perspectives or objectives;
- Regular checks on an organisation's own behaviour in the relationship, how that behaviour needs to change, what effect changes have produced and areas for future action;

A framework to monitor progress in building and maintaining relationships, such as that developed by VSO.

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