



Observations on evaluating partnerships

Introduction

The PARC has been involved in supporting the monitoring and evaluation of a number of different aid interventions that are loosely classified as partnerships:

- Country Programmes (Between donors and country governments)
- Global Knowledge Sharing Networks (PIARC, Global Water Partnership, Cities Alliance)
- Partnership Programme Agreements (Between DFID and INGOs and volunteer sending organisations)
- Planning monitoring arrangements for Strategic Partnership Agreements (between DFID-TUC, BMA etc)
- Discussions about monitoring Institutional Strategies (DFID and Multilateral partners)
- Lesson learning from experiments in partnership , such as the Brazil, Russia, DFID collaboration on combating HIV/AIDS

Others have written extensively on different definitions of partnership. DFID has produced a range of papers on the nature of partnerships and influencing. The latest summary of these is the Partnerships Literature Review (Watkins and Csaky, October 2003) and Influencing in DFID (Watkins September 2003)

These observations are intended to highlight some of the issues in the monitoring and evaluation of partnership arrangements.

A useful classification of partnerships developed in Brazil categorises the different forms of partnership as follows:

- Passive/declaratory - supportive statements only
- Collaborative but unbalanced - where one party is stronger
- Co-operative and balanced - where both parties work together and aim to balance any inherent power imbalances in order to make the partnership work
- Mutually transformative - where both parties expect to learn from each other

In DFID's PPA arrangements, INGOs or volunteer sending agencies may not have the achievement of MDGs as their central mission. The PSA targets which are central for DFID may not be so for the partners DFID funds, although the partner activities may contribute to some aspect of the PSA. Since the PPA arrangements have been designed to improve the outcome focus of the old block funding systems they are still in the process of development. There has been some confusion with PPA holders as to how far the monitoring framework for the PPA needs to monitor organisational activities against the PSA outcomes or MDGs.

In some of the ISP arrangements, DFID seems to have used the mechanism to encourage institutional change, in return for additional off-budget funding. Here the problem lies in where the partner agency feels most accountable. Global institutions are rightly constrained by being accountable to a Board or Council of Members, rather than a single partner. Even the requirements of the funding partners and members who are beneficiaries of the global services may be pulling in different directions, although all are members.

Basic dilemmas for evaluators

Evaluating partnership poses the same dilemmas as all other mechanisms for aid interventions:

- a) What was the intention - what did the partnership set out to achieve in terms of development outcomes?
- b) What was the understanding and real expectations of each partner and were these openly expressed?
- c) How was this partnership agreement expressed:
 - in a formal agreement such as an MoU with risks and undertakings clearly spelt out for each partner?
 - in a logical framework developed by both partners?
 - in another form, such as Partnership Programme Agreement or an ISP?
- d) What were the institutional arrangements by which the partnership will work:
 - funding arrangements?
 - staff from the different partner agencies working together?
 - mutual consultative, decision-making and reporting mechanisms?
 - a common monitoring framework and system?
- e) What will be monitored:
 - outcomes?
 - Inputs?
 - the partnership itself?
- f) What were the wider contextual factors that were likely to affect the intended outcomes or the working of the partnership? Were these risks and assumptions understood at the start and were any mitigating measures introduced to manage these risks?

Monitoring and evaluating considerations for the partners

Data for the evaluators

Are the documents available that express the nature of the original partnership and have these been updated over time as the partnership has developed?

It is likely that the original parties to the agreement will still be around when an evaluation takes place. In order to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership, the evaluators will need to uncover the original intentions and the way these have changed over the years. Without documentary evidence, it will be difficult for any valid long-term evaluation to take place.

Data on inputs and outcomes

Joint monitoring meetings should be designed to make sure this data is collected and recorded in a systematic way. The usual problem is the transaction time required for these meetings and for the data collection. If the monitoring system is not embedded early it is unlikely to survive staff changes.

The most common problem for evaluators is the lack of baseline information. DFID's ISPs are often drawn up to encourage institutional change and as such the baseline and intended outcomes should be agreed from the start by both parties.

Monitoring frameworks and systems

The PPA system has encouraged organisations to set up their own monitoring frameworks and systems. DFID has allowed a high degree of institutional

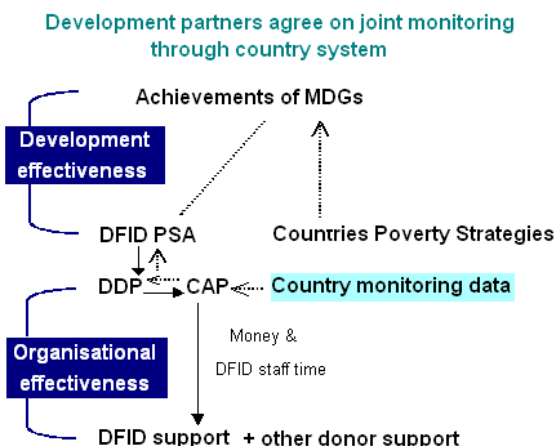


autonomy in doing this. The aim is that each organisation should have its own M & E system in place, which should permit reporting against any joint partner agreement such as the PPA.

Partners need to agree how progress will be monitored

Where collaborative arrangements are in place to meet jointly agreed development outcomes such as in CAP support for country led poverty reduction strategies, DFID is encouraging partners to join together to consolidate a single monitoring effort. In this case the diagrammatic portrayal of the partnership may be as shown below.

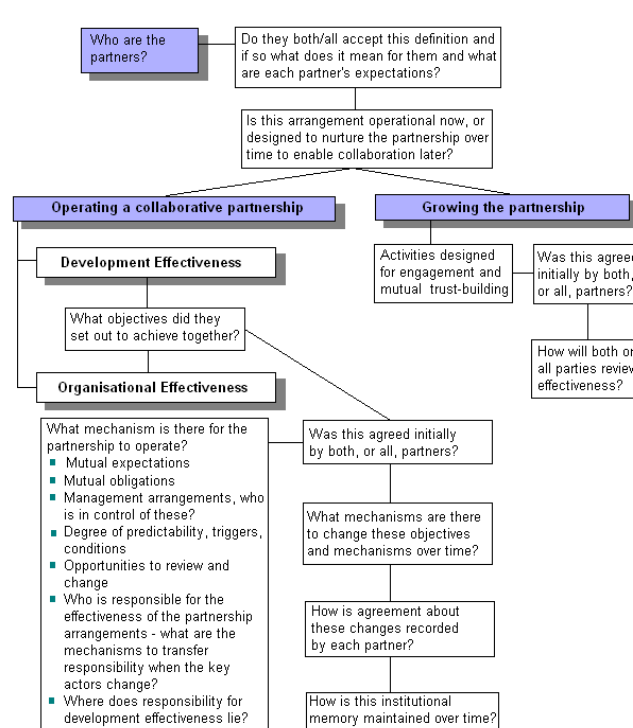
In this model partners have agreed to jointly monitor progress towards the agreed outcomes. Will both partners also agree to jointly monitor each other's commitment to the partnership?



Summarising the monitoring and evaluation issues in partnership arrangements

The diagram on the following page attempts to give an overview of the monitoring and evaluation issues by differentiating arrangements for partnerships at different stages of development.

Flow chart to analyse partnership processes



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