

Partnerships and Influencing: Evaluating Relationships



DFID Brazil

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About DFID

- ◆ Government Department for International Development
- ◆ Focus of all activities is to contribute to achievement of MDGs: reduction of poverty
- ◆ Working ultimately to influence at policy level in developing countries
- ◆ Influencing = influencing towards generation of pro-poor policy and outcomes

About DFID Brazil

- ◆ Middle income country – programme targeted/pitched very differently to e.g. HIPC countries
- ◆ Higher capacity and resources of stakeholders working with and targeting
- ◆ Smaller budget (& power/control) with which to effect outcomes compared to less developed countries
- ◆ More focus of working alongside others, joining resources and skills

Focus on Influencing

- ◆ Drive to 'influence' from head office
- ◆ Need to measure how effective influencing
- ◆ Often perceived initially in DFID as one-way and rather top-down process
- ◆ Importance of contextualising initiatives for various country and regional contexts

Initial Attempts to Influence in Brazil

- ◆ Language and perceived intentions not received well by stakeholders
- ◆ Needed to clarify (to ourselves and others) what we meant by influencing
- ◆ (Joint) conclusion: joining forces with others to create and maximise upon pro-poor policy outcomes
- ◆ NOT a one-way influencing of organisations/stakeholders to think like us

Key Messages

- ◆ ‘Partnerships’ central to DFID’s work, particularly in middle-income context
- ◆ Need to invest in right type of partnership/relationship to affect poverty reduction
- ◆ Influencing versus control – can only control certain inputs, create strategies to *maximise influence* over pro-poor outcomes
- ◆ Outcomes are the result of many actors
- ◆ Influencing effectively means creating effective relationships
- ◆ Poor are most important participants
- ◆ Focus on building effective relationships requires change in practice

Implications of Partnership Focus for DFID Brazil

- ◆ Changing practice: from conceptual to practical/everyday activities
- Need to define and conceptualise for Brazilian context
- Need to explore importance to and perspectives of partners
- Need to develop tools and methodologies for M & E

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Partnerships →

Declar-atory	Collab-oration	Cooper-ation	Mutual Trans-formation
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PARTICIP-ATION

Passive

Functional

Interactive

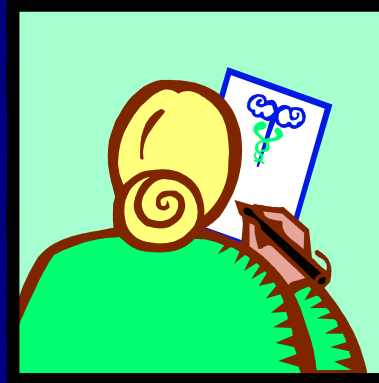
Self-mobilisation

Synonyms/Descriptors towards Partnership Definitions

Framework

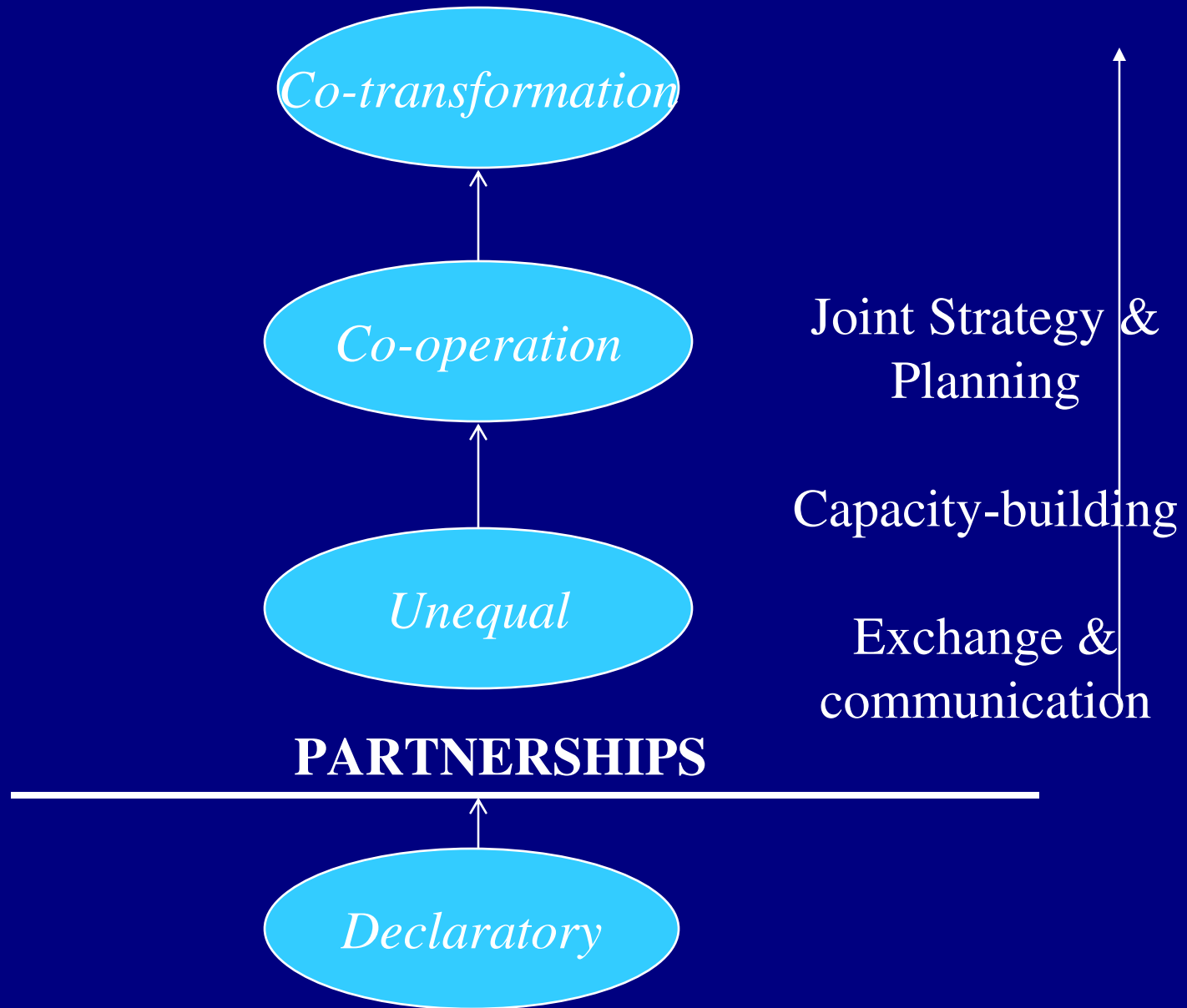


Diagram



- ◆ Attempt to map key DFID partners on conceptual framework
- ◆ Recognition of dynamic nature of a partnership and the process of 'partnership pathways'

Evaluating Partnerships (DFID Brazil)



The Sao Paulo Workshop (May 2003)

- ◆ DFID experiences from Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Bangladesh, China, EMAP, EvD and MENAD.
- ◆ Sections of DFID focussing on issues of partnership and influencing.

Workshop Challenge

- How to make DFID more effective at influencing processes to improve poor people's lives?
 - What does DFID mean by influencing?
 - How do we build relationships (including partnerships) that contribute to meaningful change?
 - What do we need to change internally to be more effective externally?
 - How do we know that we are being effective in delivering our objectives?

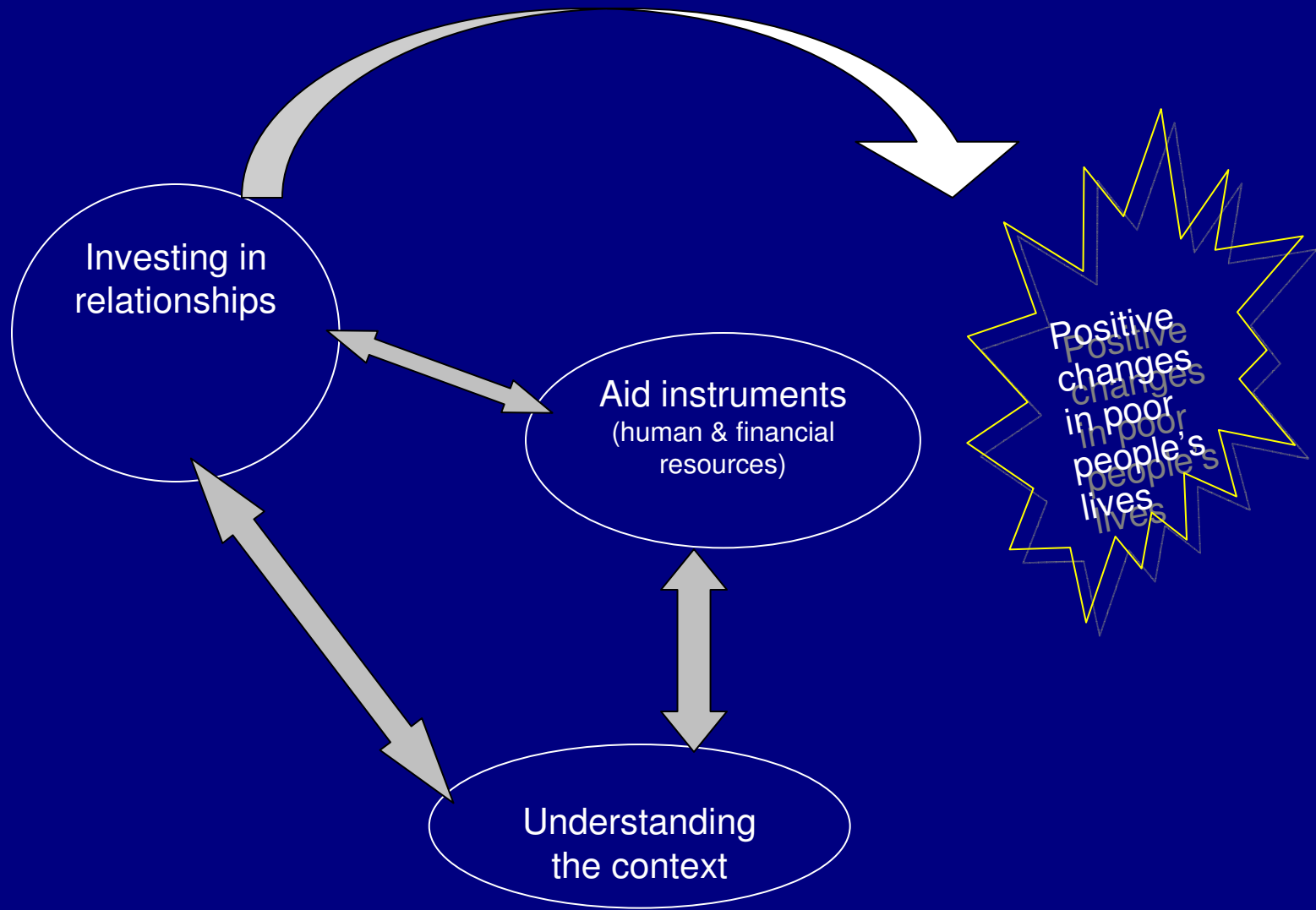
Outcomes Vs. Process?

- ◆ We assume there is a trade-off between reaching the MDGs and focussing on getting the process right.
- ◆ We want more control over outcomes, whilst at the same time wanting to increase ownership by our development partners.
 - ➔ This often results in a gap between what we say and what we do
 - ➔ Influencing intended to fill this gap

An Alternative Conceptualisation of Influencing

*“Influencing for DFID is about **investing in relationships** for pro-poor outcomes supported by a shared understanding of context and effective use of human and financial resources at DFID’s disposal”.*

Evaluating Partnerships (DFID Brazil)



Series of Contentions Tested & Validated by Workshop

- 1. Without good relations, where reciprocity is a key characteristic, we will not get effective outcomes;*
- 2. Practice improves through reflexive learning and good analysis;*
- 3. DFID is part of the context, we are not the audience but are part of the play and need to understand our role and our relationships with respect to other actors;*

Series of Contentions (2)

4. *Aid instruments should not be seen as separate to relationships and as drivers for change in their own right;*
5. *Accountability should be to the poor as well as to the UK tax-payer; and*
6. *That DFID is in control is a fallacy based on historical fiction rather than credible reality*

Words Into Action

Recognised need for change in working culture & systems to support this focus, e.g:

- ◆ Focusing on ourselves *to* working with others
- ◆ Emphasis on quick wins *to* longer term processes, fostering dialogue, giving more time for processes to mature
- ◆ Always valuing the new and reporting the good *to* lesson learning and reflection.
- ◆ Credible fiction and repackaging for internal reasons *to* honesty and reporting the truth
- ◆ Arrogant *to* modest - listening and learning from others and from our mistakes

Implications for Monitoring and Evaluation

- ◆ Relationships are not ends in themselves
- ◆ Monitoring and trying to control can undermine effective relationships
- ◆ Attribution paradox: effective relationships often mean *not* taking the credit
- ◆ Downward and horizontal accountability are key
- ◆ Reflective learning

Lessons and Key Tools From Brazil

- ◆ Peer reviews - feedback on whether working well and with the right people
- ◆ Tensiometer tool – useful tool for discussing sensitive issues around partnership (building on pathway). X axis = timeline of key events in partnership, Y axis = positive/negative aspects/feelings about these key events
- ◆ Downward accountability
- ◆ Joint reflection on failures and successes
- ◆ From control to empowerment
- ◆ Facilitation role
- ◆ Partnerships learning

In Summary

- ◆ Complex area of evaluation
- ◆ Key was found to be providing tools and forums where we were open to and encouraged frank discussion
- ◆ Crucial to then reflect on the outcomes of these discussions and feed this back into concrete changes in practice