



An introduction to Multi Stakeholder Processes



Introduction

Since 2012 NSA International and its partners – within the Sport For Development 2012-2015 Programme – are active in eight countries. In all eight countries NSA International, Right to Play and KNVB do not aim for sustainable development single-handedly. Instead, they work together with different partner organisations with whom they share a common objective. The International Expert Meeting in itself already shows that the organisations included in the Sport For Development 2012-2015 Programme value the exchange of knowledge and working together.

The construction of – sport for development – networks is a key element of NSA International’s programmatic approach. This has resulted in different national networks in the countries where NSA International is active. Networks in which a variety of organisations participate. Organisations that each have their own objectives, but that all benefit from a network in which knowledge and experiences are shared, ideas and projects can be developed, and lobby and advocacy processes are shaped. Working with different actors in a multi-stakeholder setting can be challenging. For NSA International this process is characterized by ‘learning by doing’. Mistakes can be made and experiences should be shared. During the workshop *Multi Stakeholders Approach* participants of the International Expert Meeting can discuss their cases and reflect on the multi-stakeholder processes wherein they participate.

This document – that will be provided to all participants in the International Expert Meeting – serves a hand-out that will be used during the workshop *Multi Stakeholders Approach* and on which can be reflected later on. This document should not be seen as a guide that shows how to implement a multi-stakeholder process step-by-step. Already multiple manual’s and toolboxes exist. You will receive a selection of these on a flash drive. The purpose of this hand-out is mainly to inspire people and to provide them with key ingredients of multi-stakeholder processes. In case you want to know more about a particular topic, please find the further readings below each chapter. The different documents referred to will also be available on the flash drive that you will receive at the end of the International Expert Meeting.

NSA International



Chapter 1: Why building partnerships and starting multi-stakeholder processes?

Wicked problems and multi-actor domains

The nature of problems that confront both public and private sector organizations has been undergoing fundamental change. Many problems exceed the capability of any single actor to control, and are dubbed "messes" or "inherently wicked problems". The open-ended, unstable nature of such problems has been causing external pressures on organizations, which constrain their decision-making. In a globalized and interconnected world, organizations find their strategies increasingly dependent on decisions taken by other organizations. Attempts by individual organizations to intervene are often unsuccessful because they are uncoordinated and create unanticipated problems for other actors. Additionally, the competition for resources allows some stakeholders to promote their values at the expense of others, which is seldom optimal for creating sustainable solutions on an overarching level. It is argued that the inability of individual organizations to adapt is due in large part to a failure to conceptualize problems and organize solutions at an overarching level.

Further reading: Dewulf, A. (2007). An introduction to multi-actor processes.

The Benefits of partnering

*Having the right people at the right time
doing the right things together
is what we strive for when creating partnerships.
Partnerships are about people working together.*

The benefits of partnering include the opportunity to:

- access certain resources, share resources or make better use of limited resources (space, staff, funding, equipment or in kind);
- carry out an initiative that would be difficult or could not be done alone;
- promote exchange of information;
- may be the only way for new, small volunteer-based organizations to access funding;
- enable more effective exchange, sharing or referral of clients or customers;

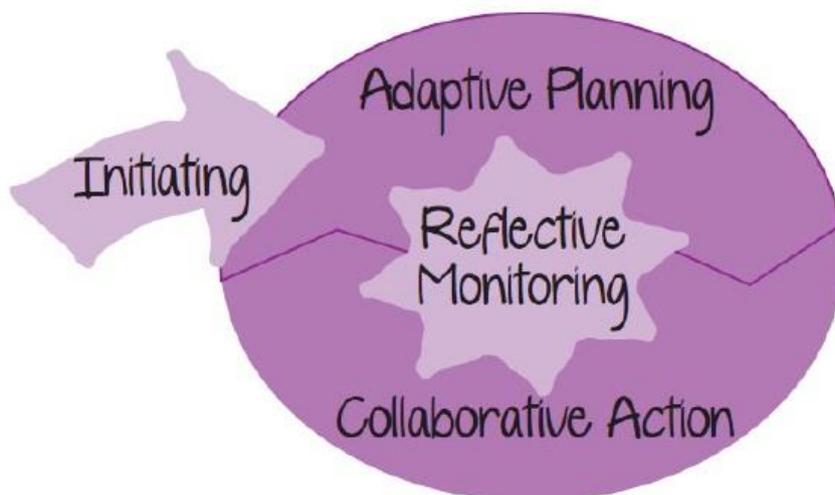
- be more efficient by avoiding duplication or overlap;
- act as a more forceful lobby or advocate;
- develop creative solutions emerging from the partner's differing perspectives;
- share knowledge, know-how and ideas;
- deliver a more comprehensive program or service than could be done alone - a more holistic approach to services and programs;
- increase capacity and strengthen the organization;
- ensure greater accountability, responsiveness and transparency;
- enhance community participation - increased involvement in decision-making;
- facilitate the sustainability/survival of an organization or initiative.

Often the overall benefit is not only of concern to the partners but also to the community.

Further reading: Collaboration roundtable (2001). The Partnership Toolkit: Tools for Building and Sustaining Partnerships.

A related model provides an overview of the main phases and processes common to most MSPs. The model is based on the common-sense action learning cycle of planning, acting and reflecting, and has four phases:

1. Initiation – establishing the reasons for an MSP initiative, mobilising community interest, and deciding what organizational and institutional arrangements are needed;
2. Adaptive Planning – undertaking the detailed planning and strategy development needed for an MSP to be successful;
3. Collaborative Action – managing the implementation and ongoing resourcing of the initiative and ensuring continued community input and support, and;
4. Reflective Monitoring – monitoring the impact, the successes and failures, learning from these, and continually improving what is being done already from the setting up phase onwards.



Besides these two main models, many more tools and methods are important and useful in order to gain insight into MSP processes and to get a better idea how to react, implement and learn from these complex processes in order to really achieve the desired change opted for.

Further reading: Woodhill, J. (2008). A Guide to Facilitate Complex Multi-Stakeholder Processes from a Societal Learning Perspective.

Chapter 3: challenges in multi-stakeholder processes

Obstacles to partnering

Even if there are many good reasons for creating partnerships to tackle major development issues, it is not always obvious to all that this is the best way forward. It is also not always easy to promote collaboration in particularly unsympathetic cultural, political or economic contexts.

Obstacles to partnering can, therefore, take many forms:

| SOURCE OF 'OBSTACLE' | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|
| GENERAL PUBLIC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevailing attitude of scepticism • Rigid / preconceived attitudes about specific sectors / partners • Inflated expectations of what is possible |
| NEGATIVE SECTORAL CHARACTERISTICS (ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector: bureaucratic and intransigent • Business sector: single-minded and competitive • Civil society: combative and territorial |
| PERSONAL LIMITATIONS (OF INDIVIDUALS LEADING THE PARTNERSHIP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate partnering skills • Restricted internal / external authority • Too narrowly focussed role / job • Lack of belief in the effectiveness of partnering |
| ORGANISATIONAL LIMITATIONS (OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting priorities • Competitiveness (within sector) • Intolerance (of other sectors) |
| WIDER EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local social / political / economic climate • Scale of challenge(s) / speed of change • Inability to access external resources |

When too many obstacles are stacked against a partnership it may be best to abandon the idea and wait for better times. But most obstacles are surmountable with enough patience, commitment and effort. And even those that challenge the partnership to the point of break-down can be used to transform it into something better and stronger.

Some argue (and many partnerships have experienced this as a reality) that a break-down or crisis can generate an unexpected and original response because it forces those involved to pay renewed attention and to see things more imaginatively. From this perspective an obstacle can, in fact, provide the partnership with an invaluable turning point.

Further reading: Tennyson, R. (2003). the Partnering toolbox.

Challenges for partnerships and alliances

- **Requires time and skill:** The team must include at least one to three members who have the skill and time to initiate and build the alliance.
- **Results are not always readily apparent:** The process can appear to be time consuming, especially in the beginning, because often the results of the alliance's efforts will not be apparent until program or project implementation occurs.
- **May require special training:** The alliance will need at least one individual to be trained in group dynamics to facilitate compromises and negotiations among alliance team members.
- **Motivation and enthusiasm may be difficult to maintain:** It may be difficult to keep team members interested if program or project planning takes an excessive amount of time.

Further reading: National Association of Conservation Districts (1994). Building Alliances Guidebook.

Chapter 4: Key partnering principles

As well as a commonly agreed goal, all partnerships will need some guiding principles to hold them together. These principles should be worked out as part of the partnership-building process and agreed by all partners. If they provide the foundation upon which the partnership is built, then as things progress they continue to provide the cement that holds the partnership together over time.

Three core principles that have recurred time and again in partnerships in many different parts of the world are the principles of Equity, Transparency and Mutual Benefit. These are characterised below:



EQUITY?

What does 'equity' mean in a relationship where there are wide divergences in power, resources and influence? Equity is not the same as 'equality'. Equity implies an equal right to be at the table and a validation of those contributions that are not measurable simply in terms of cash value or public profile.

TRANSPARENCY?
Openness and honesty in working relationships are pre-conditions of trust - seen by many as an important ingredient of successful partnership. Only with transparent working will a partnership be truly accountable to its partner donors and other stakeholders.



MUTUAL BENEFIT?

If all partners are expected to contribute to the partnership they should also be entitled to benefit from the partnership. A healthy partnership will work towards achieving specific benefits for each partner over and above the common benefits to all partners. Only in this way will the partnership ensure the continuing commitment of partners and therefore be sustainable.

These three key principles can be a useful starting point for discussion between potential partners prior to formalising the partnership, even if they are subsequently replaced by different principles developed by the group. What is important is that all partners accept and agree to abide by whatever the group decides is appropriate.

Further reading: Tennyson, R. (2003). the Partnering toolbox.

Chapter 5: Multi Stakeholder Partnerships and Multi Sector Partnerships

Thus far NSA International and its partners have mainly been active in relatively homogeneous Multi Stakeholder Partnerships within the sport for development domain. Recently, more attention is being paid to Multi Sector Partnerships, that include collaborations between civil society partners with businesses and government actors.

Multi Sector Partnerships provide an opportunity for further development – by recognising the qualities and competencies of each sector and finding new ways of harnessing these for the common good. What does each sector – whether the public sector, business sector or civil society – bring? The core business of each sector leads to quite different priorities, values and attributes. These can be summarised as follows:

| SECTOR | CORE BUSINESS | MAIN ATTRIBUTES |
|-----------------|--|---|
| PUBLIC SECTOR | <p><i>The rule of law by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating frameworks for economic, political and social rights and generating political commitment to development • Developing regulations and standard - setting mechanisms as well as adherence to international obligations • Providing public services to ensure basic needs and rights are met | 'Rights' driven, the public sector provides access, information, stability and legitimacy |
| BUSINESS SECTOR | <p><i>Investment and trade by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating goods and services • Providing employment opportunities, innovation and economic growth • Maximising profits for investors to ensure further investment that will allow the business to continue to innovate | 'Profits' driven, the business sector is inventive, productive, highly focussed and fast |
| CIVIL SOCIETY | <p><i>Social development by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating opportunities for individual growth and creativity • Providing support and services for those in need or excluded from mainstream society • Acting as guardians of the public good | 'Values' driven, civil society is responsive, vocal, inclusive and imaginative |

In addition to these general attributes, each sector has different competencies, aspirations and styles of operation that can - through successful partnering - be brought together to achieve a common vision.

By working together, Multi Sector Partnerships for sustainable development can provide:

- Innovative approaches to the challenges of sustainable development and the hopes of ending global poverty;
- A range of mechanisms enabling each sector to share their own specific competencies and capacities in order to achieve both common and complementary goals more effectively, legitimately and sustainably than when each sector operates separately;
- Access to more resources by drawing on the full range of technical, human, knowledge, physical and financial resources found within all sectors;
- Dynamic new networks offering each sector better channels of engagement with the wider community and greater capacity to influence the policy agenda;
- Greater understanding of the value, values and attributes of each sector thereby building a more integrated and a more stable society.

While partnerships can exist at many levels - from national or international strategic alliances at a policy level at one end of the partnering continuum, to locally based practical initiatives at the other - it is a common experience that the building and maintenance processes involved, apply to virtually all types of partnership.

Further reading: Tennyson, R. (2003). The Partnering toolbox.

