

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP
PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

PAPER 5

IDEAS FOR LAUNCHING AND EVALUATING
NEW PARTNERSHIPS/ INITIATIVES AND
REINFORCING ONGOING ONES

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Introduction

This background paper offers an overview of the partnership process through the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). It identifies several issues affecting the launch of new initiatives as well as the development of ongoing ones as experienced through the first implementation cycle (CSD 12/13) and offers suggestions for strengthening future processes.

History

Since the early 1990s, partnerships have emerged within the United Nations system as an innovative and increasingly acknowledged means of realizing the sustainable development agenda. Through successive international meetings and negotiated texts the definition and diverse typologies of partnership have been developed and refined. Such that by 2002, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) broke new ground by officially recognizing “Type II Commitments” as an essential means of implementation. Partnerships for sustainable development are defined as:

“...voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives contributing to the implementation of Agenda 21, Rio+5, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the internationally agreed development goals in the Millennium Declaration.”¹

In May 2003, CSD-11 further advanced the notion that successful partnerships for sustainable development must adhere to certain guidelines and principles. The decision adopted at the time built on the work of the Bali Guiding Principles and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/76 and included several key ideas. Partnerships should:

- 1) “add value” by furthering previously negotiated international commitments
- 2) “be new – that is not merely reflect existing arrangements.”
- 3) “complement” not “replace.” Such that partnerships “are not intended to substitute commitments made by Governments but to supplement the implementation of” various international agreements.
- 4) be clearly linked to existing commitments

¹ UN/DESA website: www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/



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- 5) include sustainable development in their design and implementation
- 6) achieve thematic and geographic balance as much as possible
- 7) inform national focal points about their activities and progress
- 8) be publicly announced

Experience and study have shown that the range of partnerships is so diverse that no “one size fits all” model is applicable to describe them. This variety has also made it challenging to apply one common evaluation metric to fit partnerships that are so different in scope, structure and purpose. Still, successful partnerships do share some common elements:

- trust among the partners;
- adequate time to develop and work;
- adequate resources (financial and in-kind);
- ongoing communication;
- flexibility;
- complementary skills among partners;
- equitable decision-making processes;
- ability to tolerate risk;
- leadership

Present approach

Following CSD-11's mandate, the CSD Secretariat has undertaken several activities to support the ongoing development and launch of partnerships. These are aimed at generating visibility, networking, information exchange and capacity building.

- A publicly accessible, web-based “Partnership Database” is CSD's main information hub on registered partnerships. Summary reports, based on the data collected, are prepared annually as input to the CSD process. Partners are encouraged to provide regular updates on the progress of their work. In slightly over a year the database received slightly more than 10,000 visits.²

² “Partnership for Sustainable Development – Update.” Background Paper No. 1. UNDESA/DSD/2005/1. CSD-13th Session. 11-25 April, 2005. Figures from February 2004 – April 2005.

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As of August 2005, the “Partnerships for Sustainable Development – CSD Database” registers 308 partnerships, the majority of which (209) were recorded at the time of the WSSD.³

Currently, one-fifth of registered partnerships (63 of 308) list one or more of the 2nd Cycle issues as their primary theme. A breakdown of their scope and regional distribution as follows:

Table II.1 Scope of 2nd Cycle Partnerships

Global	Regional	Sub-regional	National
56%	16%	21%	8%

Table II.2 Regional Coverage of 2nd Cycle Partnerships⁴

Asia and Pacific	Africa	Latin America and Caribbean	Europe and North America	West Asia
31%	27%	18%	18%	6%

A snapshot of additional partnership data is presented in Annex I.

- A “Partnership Fair” is organized at each CSD for registered initiatives “to network, identify partnerships and learn from each others experience.” The showcase is attended by CSD participants, stakeholders and UN system staff at large.
- A “Learning Centre” offers small group training sessions on operational and substantive issues facing partnerships. While CSD-12’s sessions were more general in nature, CSD-13 offered a specific focus on the themes of the cycle. Workshops averaged 20-35 participants (with sessions hosted by funders being especially popular).⁵
- Summary Reports and notes draw out essential analysis and lessons learned from partnerships presented at the CSD.

³ Division for Sustainable Development. “Partnerships for Sustainable Development – Update.” Background Paper No.1. UN/DESA/DSD/2005/1. CSD-13th Session 11-22 April 2005, New York.

⁴ Partnerships are often active in more than one country/region/sub-region simultaneously

⁵ CSD 12 Learning Centre: Brief Summary



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- The CSD Secretariat supports and participates in events that further learning about partnership models and best practices. Two initiatives in particular, the Partnership Forums in Rome, Italy (2004) and Marrakech, Morocco (2005), were designed as an opportunity for partnership practitioners, scholars and policy-makers to examine the way partnerships can further implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

Challenges

Some of the main issues experienced in the first multi-year programme of work, regarding partnerships included:

a) *Priority on Partnerships*

While the general concept of partnerships has wide-spread support, CSD participants differed on the emphasis partnerships should receive relative to other means of implementation – in particular, technical assistance and ODA. Some CSD participants perceived a growing pressure to advance policy and achieve implementation through partnership models, but were concerned that the lack of adequate financial and leadership resources to carry out successful efforts.

Some participants believe partnerships offer a new means of mobilizing action and leveraging multi-sector resources (both financial and in-kind) to achieve specific outcomes – ones that cannot be achieved as effectively through governmental initiatives alone. Others believe that partnerships hold inherent risk in terms of their ability to deal with pressing and/or politically unattractive problems; their ability to mobilize resources on an ongoing basis; and their long-term impact.

b) *New vs. Ongoing Initiatives*

Several CSD participants cited the importance of strengthening CSD as a platform for launching new initiatives. This would require enhancing CSD's visibility and its reputation as a political platform. Many acknowledged the political pressure to launch new initiatives and the fact that a "new" initiative can more easily generate funding, partnership commitments and visibility.

A common concern was the state of registered, ongoing partnerships, many of which have not been able to scale up beyond the pilot phase. Several CSD participants felt more focus should be placed on evaluating existing partnerships and helping them work, rather than re-directing limited resources on launching ever-more new initiatives.

c) *Emphasis on Outcome*

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The diversity of partnership models has made it difficult to develop a single standard evaluation measure that can be used for comparative purposes. Still, it is widely believed that there should be a means of evaluating if registered partnerships are fulfilling their mandate. No such mechanism currently exists. Participants noted that despite the voluntary nature of partnerships, it was important to create metrics, beyond what is currently collected in the Partnership Database, and to implement independent monitoring and evaluation. One debate centered on the idea that while partnerships are often the result of motivated, energetic leaders and groups who are responding to a perceived “need,” the partnership may not always be “demand-driven” by a sustainable development “need.”

d) *Integration with CSD Outcomes and Other Processes*

While the CSD sessions included several events to support partnerships, several participants raised concern that the lessons of these initiatives – both in terms of policy and implementation – were not sufficiently reflected in the CSD’s final report. More importantly, there was insufficient effort to link the work of partnerships of the CSD to outcomes of other broader initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process.

e) *Financing*

A major challenge facing the successful launch and success of partnerships is the ability to secure sufficient funding beyond the “seed funding” phase. As of April 2005, 68% of all registered partnerships were still in the process of seeking additional funding for their activities ranging from \$100,000 to US\$82 million. 24% of partnerships reported they were not seeking additional funding.⁶

Participants report that stalemates over funding, lag time in realizing funding commitments, and uncertainty over future funding are the leading cause for “stalled” or “domant” partnerships. And while the political and public relations benefit of a newly launched partnership is achieved in the short run, it has been much more difficult to gain attention for re-invigorating an ongoing initiative. In developed countries many of the aid departments have not yet to seen the need for finding new and additional resources for financing WSSD partnerships old or new.

f) *Efficacy of CSD as a Learning Hub and Springboard for Partnerships*

Participants noted that events organized to support partnerships at CSD were helpful, but needed to become less descriptive and more prescriptive. Many expressed the

⁶ “Partnership for Sustainable Development – Update.” Background Paper No. 1. UNDESA/DSD/2005/1. CSD-13th Session. 11-25 April, 2005. Figures from February 2004 – April 2005.

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hope that the Learning Centre and Partnership Fair could focus on helping partnerships analyze and overcome specific problems, rather than serving as promotion and information exchange opportunities.

While database information is publicly accessible, there is relatively low usage of the resource. Partnership focal points commented that they use the database to comply with information collection requirements but not as a project resource. A main challenge was the user-friendly interface, the ease with which data can be extracted and compared, and the utility of actual data collected.

On the substantive side, the database does not seek to draw out comparisons or “lessons learned” from partnership experiences. It also is neutral about which partnerships are truly having an impact and which ones are “domant” as there is no standard evaluation measure. Several participants raised the concerns that all partnerships were represented as viable initiatives, when, in fact, behind the scenes, some were more successful than others.

Participants note that the benefits of participation in the Partnership Fair has been mostly promotion and information dissemination rather than the creation of synergies with other partnerships or the identification of new partners.

The Learning Center Sessions are regarded helpful one-on-one time to focus on specific partnership needs. The quality of participation and numbers in attendance at these workshops varies widely. While most participants remarked that this was a good chance to exchange views with peers and professionals, others were disappointed by the low turn out at some sessions.

Partnership Forums, organized by governments, have provided valuable input to supplement the learning and practice of partnership at CSD.

Discussion Points

a) *Priority on Partnerships*

- What kind of examination is helpful to review and evaluate the efficacy of partnerships as a means of implementation?
- What criteria should guide this examination?
- How can evaluating the impact of partnerships help create momentum for WSSD implementation?



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b) *New vs. Ongoing Initiatives*

- How can partnerships be encouraged to present a frank assessment of their challenges and successes?
- What support can be given through CSD to help partnerships succeed?
- Should there be a Committee established that helps monitor partnership development in various areas (financial, impact, etc) and proposes next steps?
- How can partnerships/initiatives help underscore the key substantive issues of the cycle?
- How can the CSD process encourage momentum on partnerships for 104 weeks not just 5 weeks in New York?

c) *Emphasis on Outcome*

- By what metrics should partnerships be evaluated? (Please note that recently, specific governments have noted their efforts to undertake a GAP analysis of ongoing partnerships to help clarify the modalities and functioning of various partnership models.)
- Should there be some consequence for partnerships that “are not performing”? If so, what?

d) *Integration with CSD and Other Initiatives*

- What efforts can be made to draw out the relevant lessons of partnership experiences *before* the start of the CSD negotiating sessions? (for example: Should there be a 2-day “Partners’ Conference in advance of the CSD?”)
- How can we ensure that recommendations from the partnership experience are reflected in the CSD negotiation document?
- How can we create better linkage between sustainable development partnerships and other, ongoing policy initiatives? (for example: Should there be a specific workshop on “Partnerships for MDG?”)

e) *Financing*

- How can CSD create momentum for financial commitments in support of partnership?
- Should there be an organized pledging conference during the session that would recognize progress in ongoing initiatives and create incentives for new ones?
- Should a separate “Partnership Fund” be set up within the Secretariat or through a GEF model?
- How can development ministries be drawn into the process to help identify new resources for delivering WSSD cycle partnerships?



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f) *Efficacy of CSD as a Learning Hub and Springboard for Partnerships*

- How should partnership events at CSD (Partnership Database, Partnership Fair, Learning Center) be continued or modified to help partnerships?
- How can CSD help partnerships focus on and solve operational obstacles?
- Should CSD become a stronger “political platform” that generates attention for the launch and progress of partnership activities?
- How can partnership support activities and events encourage new partnerships to surface and register?

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Annex: Snapshot of Partnership Data

**Chart A: Thematic Distribution of Currently Registered Partnerships
[August 2005. Sample = 308 Partnerships]**

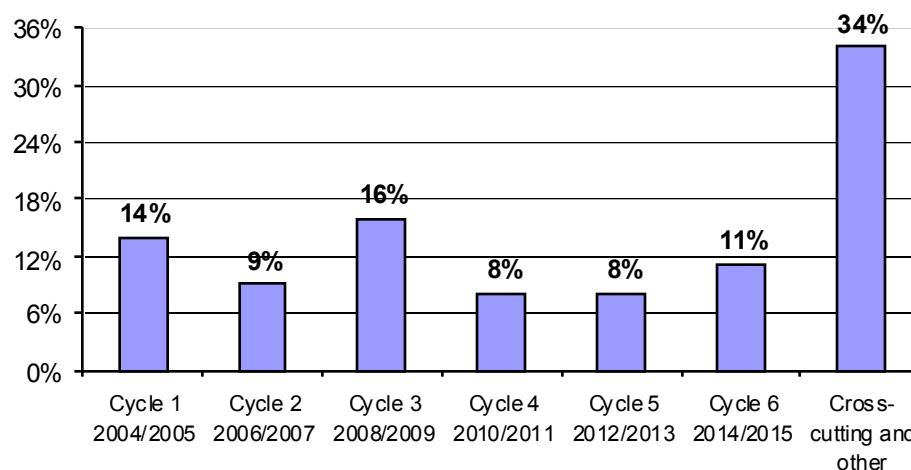


Table B: Summary of Key Data from “Partnerships for Sustainable Development – Update”⁷ [April 2005. Sample = 300 partnerships]

B.1 Scope

Global	Regional	Sub-regional	National
51%	20%	24%	5%

B.2 Regional Coverage

Asia and Pacific	Africa	Latin America and Caribbean	Europe and North America	West Asia
38%	26%	17%	15%	4%

⁷ “Partnership for Sustainable Development – Update.” Background Paper No. 1. UNDESA/DSD/2005/1. CSD-13th Session. 11-25 April, 2005. Figures from February 2004 – April 2005.

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B.3 Year Initiated

Pre-2002	2002	2003	2004	2005
9%	53%	28%	9%	1%

B.4 Partners

Major groups	Government	UN system	Intergovernmental organizations
86%	84%	64%	62%

B.5 Lead Partner

Major groups	Government	UN system	Intergovernmental organizations
47%	27%	27%	26%

B.6 Funding⁸

Have funding	Do not have funding
78%	20%

B.7 Donor Type⁹

Government	Intergovernmental and UN system	Private sector	NGOs	Foundations
72%	36%	20%	14%	9%

B.8 Means of Implementation

Education	Training	Technology transfer	Building and strengthening institutional capacity
80%	69%	46%	44%

⁸ Based on a sample of 294 partnerships reporting.

⁹ Based on a sample of 227 partnerships reporting.



B.9 Partnerships seeking additional funding (68%)
– from “US\$100,000 to US\$82 million”

B.10 Partnerships which have achieved their stated goals and objectives (1%)

