How to Strengthen Collaboration

A toolkit for civil society organisations

ECID
Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development

tpi
THE PARTNERING INITIATIVE

GNDR
Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction

UKaid
from the British people

Acknowledgements

This guidebook was developed by **The Partnering Initiative (TPI)** and **The Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)** as a result of the project "Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development" (ECID). The project sought to connect civil society actors across various sectors to better understand and address the barriers faced by marginalised groups in a coordinated and collaborative way. By working together, civil society organisations (CSOs) were able to connect marginalised people with civil society organisations and other private and government stakeholders. The aim was for marginalised groups to identify their priorities and for their voices to be heard.

GNDR was one of the ECID consortium partners and its role was specifically to support partners strengthen their collaborative and advocacy actions within the project. Partnering with TPI, a collaboration assessment of 20 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Nigeria and Zimbabwe was completed. The organisational and staff partnering capacity findings led to one-to-one and small group coaching sessions with individual organisations and a series of 4 panel discussions to explore partnering topics with the CSOs.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed with their thoughts and ideas to the collaboration events and this guidebook. We would especially like to recognise the staff of Ntengwe for Community Development (Zimbabwe), Development Advocacy and Education Resources for Africa (Nigeria), Children and Young People Living in Peace (Nigeria) and Christian Aid for their support in making it possible.

The Partnering Initiative (TPI) is a leading international NGO, dedicated to unleashing the power of partnership for a prosperous and sustainable future. TPI has been a pioneer in the development of the theory and practice of multi-stakeholder collaboration since it was founded in 2003, when it published its first, seminal partnering toolkit, translated into eleven languages and republished three times. TPI continues to drive and codify the state-of-the-art of effective partnership practice while building up the partnership-enabling eco-system through: training individuals; supporting organisations to become institutionally fit for partnering; supporting the strategy, development, evaluation and best practice guidance for partnerships; building in-country platforms to catalyse partnership and inputting into international policy development.

GNDR is the largest international network of CSOs working to strengthen resilience and reduce risk in communities. We connect frontline CSOs with national and international policymaking institutions and governments. We influence policies and practices by amplifying the voices of people most at risk. We exchange knowledge and capacities and trial new approaches together. We are a network of over 1,500 CSOs in 126 countries.

Accessibility options: This document can be made available in more accessible formats on request to **info@tpiglobal.org** or by visiting **www.gndr.org**

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Introduction

What is this toolkit and who is it designed for?

There is a lot of good practice available to help build, strengthen and manage partnerships effectively. This toolkit reflects some of the good practice identified among ECID partners in order to help organisations adopt a more structured and professional approach in their partnership activities.

A successful partnering approach includes how you think as an individual as well as how your organisation approaches partnering as a core activity. Effective partnerships do not appear from nowhere, they require substantial effort through all stages of the partnering cycle and amongst partners (page 7). **ECID members share a common desire to bring this discipline, attention and professionalism to partnerships. This approach increases the chance of building, managing and maintaining successful and effective partnerships.**

These tools can be used to revise thinking on existing partnerships or develop an approach for new partnerships; they can be adapted to particular contexts, especially given the dynamic and changing nature of partnerships. **The 'How to Use this Toolkit' section provides some easy guidance on which tools you should be using at which stage of your partnerships.** Whilst we have continued to look at partnerships through an advocacy 'lens' in the course of this project, this toolkit is equally applicable to any future partnership work both within and outside of advocacy activities.

> *Effective partnerships do not appear from nowhere, they require substantial effort through all stages of the partnering cycle and amongst partners*

What is partnership?

As a starting point, it is useful to ensure we are using a common definition of 'partnership'. TPI has built on the UN language around multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) as follows, **"An ongoing collaborative** relationship between or among organisations from different stakeholder types aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximise value creation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver benefit to each of the partners."

"Ongoing collaborative relationship between or among organisations ..."

Partnerships are more than a quick one-off project. They usually require considerable time and effort to develop commitment from all partners to work together.

"...from different stakeholder types, aligning their interests around a common vision..."

MSPs can only happen where there is a clear alignment of interests.

"...combining their complementary resources and competencies..."

MSPs are able to deliver more, including greater innovation, through the complementarity and diversity of resources the different sectors are able to bring to the table.

"...and sharing risk..."

Sharing risk within MSPs helps to ensure engagement and build equity and trust among partners.

"...to maximise value creation towards the SDGs..."

MSPs are all about value creation – being able to deliver benefit and impact far greater than the sum of the parts.

"...and deliver organisational benefit to each of the partners."

For partners to remain engaged, all partners must gain value from their involvement.

Within this definition, there is a myriad of different forms of partnership working at different scales, geographic levels, levels of formality etc.

See SDG Partnership Guidebook by The Partnering Initiative for further material on categorising and defining partnerships - https://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/toolbook-series/the-sdg-partnerships-guidebook/

Partnering as Civil Society Organisations

Why partner?

Collaboration at regional, national and global level can boost transformative actions or create a powerful call for change. Forming working groups, coalitions, alliances and partnerships with peers around common causes, and agreeing on joint strategies and advocacy positions, creates compelling messages, movements for transformative change and increases positive impact.

Who to partner with?

A stakeholder analysis will help you to identify potential allies at all levels. These may include local groups and organisations, the private sector, NGOs and INGOs, government (local and national) and UN agencies. They may be organisations you have worked with before, or others whose mission aligns with yours.

Collaborating with local groups can enable participative (or stakeholder) action and advocacy – where people articulate their critical knowledge, make decisions on activities and amplify their voices to influence change.

For example, local advocacy initiatives may include communities, CSOs, Faith Based Agencies and others around areas of mutual concern. This approach brings additional weight to a local campaign. Including the private sector, if possible at every level, not only adds weight and a different perspective to the advocacy, but also provides opportunities to influence their own practices and improve the lives of their workforce and customers.

NGOs and INGOs

Coalition groups

Government

Local groups and organisations

CSOs

Faith Based Agencies

Business / Private Sector

Communities

Roles within the partnership

Collaboration enables partners to pool their resources, expertise and credibility. Moreover, for local community groups, for example, who are working on issues which may not align with government priorities, working as part of a wider network can offer some protection against political pressure.

It can also be an opportunity for different partners to take on different roles – for example, in an advocacy partnership, one partner might coordinate logistics, another takes on public engagement, while another works quietly to promote rights or share information confidentially. It is important to identify the strengths and mandates of each partner, what they bring to the table and what they hope to gain from their participation. It is important to agree together on what role within the partnership would make best use of each partner's strengths, as well as allocate tasks in a way that leverages their comparative advantage.

Working together

Participative processes and co-creative, equitable approaches will help to ensure buy-in to the partnership's activities and ensure that the individual aims and underlying interests of the partners are aligned. Reviewing roles and tasks on a regular basis will also help to keep everyone involved and committed and make best use of their strengths.

❝

It is important to identify the strengths and mandates of each partner, what they bring to the table and what they hope to gain from their participation.

Things to consider, to help to you work effectively together:

• Ensure that everyone is clear about the issue or goal around which you are coming together to work on;

• Agree on the aims and parameters of the partnership – what will it do, and what will it not do?

• If the group is large, consider if it may be helpful to have a small steering committee to oversee the work;

• Ensure that everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities (see above) and what to expect from each other;

• Develop a light-touch "code of conduct" around how you will work together;

• Agree on both internal and (most importantly) external communication protocols. Internally, these may include knowledge sharing, input and dialogue within the partnership as well as how, and how often, leadership communicates with project staff. Externally, examples of protocols could include branding and design guidelines and agreement on who has input and sign off on external communications. It will also be important to reach an early agreement on how you want to present your activities externally – e.g., what kind of tone or image do you want to convey, who is your target audience, what communication methods will you use? Each organisation and partnership will have its own views and processes around communications, and agreement in advance on when and how you will communicate, both internally and externally, will help to avoid misunderstandings or complications in the future.

"

Exposing individuals belonging to particular minority groups and raising their profile might be counterproductive if not carefully planned.

Risk mitigation

When partnering with vulnerable groups for any partnership activity it is important to ensure that they will not be put at risk by being involved. General risks could involve reputational risk if working with an organization that has, what the general public or stakeholders perceive as, negative values, approaches or results in their work. If the organization you would like to partner is facing their own risks, such as financial or safeguarding concerns, partnering with them may affect your own due diligence as an organization. **Tool 3: Prospective partner/ partnership assessment** will help you consider this.

Significantly, partnership for advocacy needs careful consideration. Exposing individuals belonging to particular minority groups and raising their profile might be counterproductive if not carefully planned. You may want to consider setting up a safe space for a thorough and open conversation with vulnerable groups to ensure that all potential consequences of their engagement are considered. Accountability to the people or groups of concern should always be a priority and it is important to ensure that they are on board with the main goal and messages of the advocacy activity being pursued, especially in the case of public advocacy campaigns.

Joining an existing multi-stakeholder partnership

An alternative (or in addition) to setting up a new coalition, is to join an existing multi-stakeholder partnership which aligns with your organisation's aims and the objectives of your work. Joining an existing partnership, especially if high-profile, can offer:

- Greater progress towards goals

- Amplification of your message

- Extended reach through speaking opportunities, media impressions and access to key influencers

- Raising awareness of the issue with the private sector

- An opportunity to increase other organisations' knowledge of the issue

- Additional expertise and resources to further your objectives

- An opportunity to learn from other organisations' experiences and expertise

However, involvement in a complex, high-level partnership has high transaction costs, particularly in terms of time. It is important to ensure that the benefits will be greater than the costs and that the partnership's aims and activities align well with your own strategic aims.

How to use this toolkit
The Partnering Cycle

Entry point (imperitive to partner)

Scoping and Building

Managing & Maintaining

Exit point

Moving on, Renegotiating, Sustaining

Reviewing & Revising
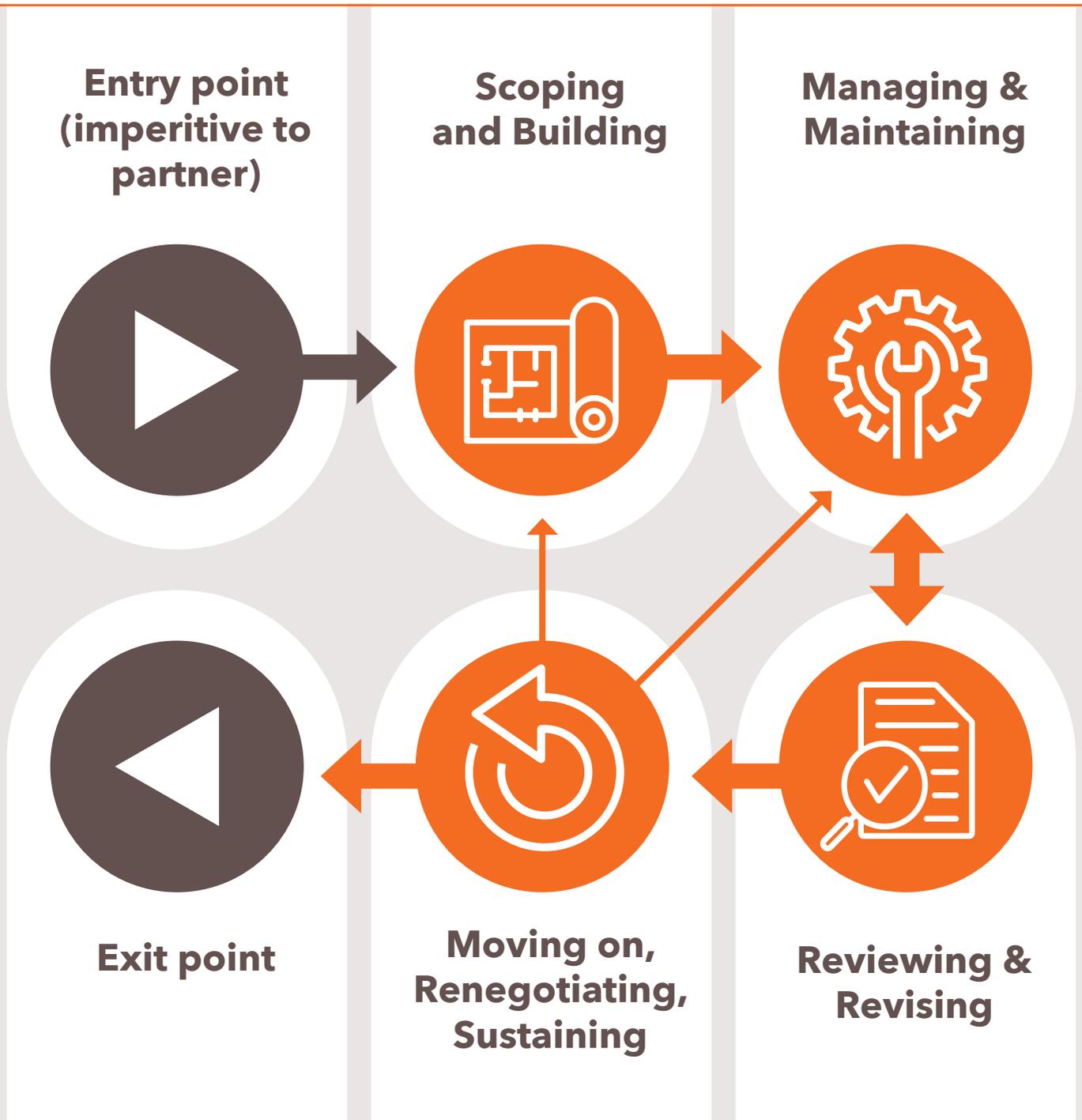
The **"partnering cycle"** (previous page) sets out the stages that a typical partnership goes through. Of course, most of the time will be spent in stages 2 and 3 (which run in parallel, as reviewing and revising should take place throughout partnership implementation, not just at the end). However, focusing on stage 1 is very important, as a partnership which has been set up well will have a much higher chance of success. Although the "Moving On" stage comes at the end of the partnership, it is good to plan for this well ahead – even during the Scoping and Building stage. This will ensure a smooth wind-up of the partnership itself and that the outcomes and achievements can be sustained after the partnership is wound up.

The set of tools and guidelines in this pack is designed to help you with the key stages of this partnering process. They are not intended to replace tools you already have, but to help you fill in any gaps and to support your partnering work.

The table below will help you to identify which tools to use and when.

Stage	Tool	Use
Setting up the foundations for partnership	**Tool 1:** Writing a partnering policy	A checklist for writing a policy that will determine the guiding principles, values and 'rules' of an organisation's partnering approach.
	Tool 6: Partnering with the private sector	Guidance for non-profit organisations entering into, and managing, partnerships with profit-making entities; especially companies looking to address social or environmental concerns. To be used in parallel with Tool 1 (Partnering Policy).
Phase 1: Scoping and Building	**Tool 2:** Identifying the added value of partnerships	To support a co-creative process of maximum value between the partners, in the early stages of partnership design and objective setting. Enables clarity on specific types of value to be created by the partnership, as well as defining an action plan. to ensure value is achieved. Creates a vision of success and indicators for later assessment.
	Tool 3: Prospective partner/ partnership assessment	To assess the value, risks and implications of partnering with a specific organisation and to assist partner selection. Sets out the steps you can follow to ensure a transparent and rigorous partnership assessment and approval process.
	Tool 4: Partnership agreement template	To capture mutual expectations for working together that complements, but is not in itself, a legally enforceable agreement.
Phase 2/3: Managing & Maintaining/ Reviewing & Revising	**Tool 5:** Partnership health check	To conduct regular reviews of the partnership to evaluate health and to address issues before they become problems.
Phase 4: Moving on, Renegotiating, Sustaining	**Tool 7:** Transitioning guidance	To plan sustainable outcomes for the partnership from the outset, review the plans on a regular basis and check that everything is in place when you come to the final phase of the partnership.

Tool 1
Partnering Policy

Use: A checklist for writing a policy that will determine the guiding principles, values and 'rules' of an organisation's partnering approach.

Partnering phase: Setting up the foundations for partnership – guides the way in which the organisation enters into and manages partnerships.

Characteristics of a strong policy document:

- Provides an organisation with guiding principles, values and 'rules' that help its staff or members to make logical operational decisions now and in the future; to ensure consistency and efficiency in these decisions, as well as to reduce organisational risk.
- Be fixed over a long duration, but reviewed at periodic intervals and/or as circumstances significantly change.
- Apply to decision-making which is expected to take place regularly or on a repetitive basis. In the case of a partnering policy, it should apply to the process of assessing and approving new partners and partnerships.
- Have a clearly defined audience, which will vary depending on the nature of the organisation and policy, but would generally include higher levels of management, who are responsible for ensuring that decisions are made in line with organisational policies.
- You may want to include key members of the intended audience in the design of the policy to ensure complete agreement on its implementation. Ensure that anyone invited to comment fully understands the purpose of partnering to your organisation as well as the purpose of the policy.

A policy does not:

- Determine the content of a strategy. Instead, it is subordinate to strategy in that it helps in the *implementation* of an organisational strategy.
- Provide detailed guidance for implementation of activities – its focus instead is on the principles and rules for decision-making.

Top Tip: In the case of a partnering policy, it can be useful to have an 'external' version of the policy so that potential partners know what to expect if they are entering into a partnership with this organisation. Alternatively, if the policy is kept short and simple, then it can be shared as it is.

What to include in your Partnering Policy

Purpose / background / context / rationale

- Purpose of the document
- Mandate/purpose of the organisation
- Why partnerships are important to the organisation (1 sentence only – since this is expanded upon later)
- The 'unique selling point' of the organisation as a partner

Applicability / scope

- Setting out to whom the policy/ document applies (the 'audience') and in what circumstances (see Top Tips)
- Definitions of 'partner', 'partnership', and different types of entities with which the organisation in question may partner – such as private sector, business, civil society, NGO, etc.

Partnership Vision

- Describe the types of issues the organisation wants to address, or activities it wants to undertake, through partnership
- Describe the expected/hoped for added value of partnerships for both the organisation itself and the achievement of its goals (see Tool 2 – Value Assessment Framework)
- Describe the expected added value to the organisation's partners (see Tool 2 – Value Assessment Framework)
- Describe the different kinds of resources that might be exchanged and combined through partnership (financial, technical, human, etc.)

Values and Principles

- Outline the values of the organisation
- If applicable, mention any standards that guide the work of the organisation
- Set-out the principles the organisation expects all partnerships to follow. **Partnership principles typically include:**
- ☑ Transparency
- ☑ Equity
- ☑ Mutual benefit
- ☑ Mutual accountability
- ☑ Results orientation
- Reference to other relevant policies or standards that partners would need to respect (if applicable)

Potential Partners

- What characteristics would the ideal partner organisation have? (in terms of sector, goals, ethics, reputation, etc.)
- List the characteristics of organisations that would be subject to higher scrutiny prior to be taken on as partners
- List the characteristics of organisations that would always be excluded from partnering
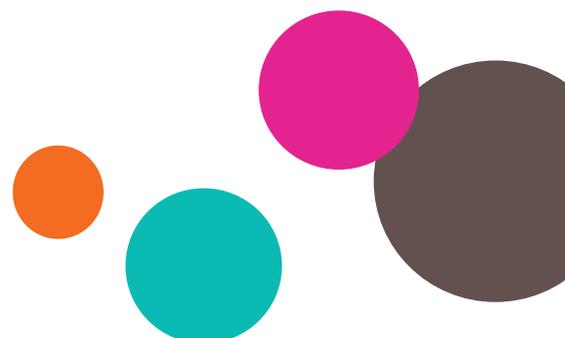
Partnership Selection

• Provide a brief summary of the process through which partners are vetted and partnerships approved – this is likely to be complemented by a Due Diligence and Approvals process – see Tool 3 Partnership Approval Process.

• List the key factors that should be taken into account when deciding whether or not to pursue a partnership, namely:

☑ Added value that the partnership will bring to achievement of the organisation's mission ('mission value')

☑ Sufficient resources to enter into the partnership, and balance between costs and benefits

☑ Interest/motivation of the partner

☑ Reputation, capacity, values, and mission of the partner

☑ Level of risk associated with the partner/partnership

☑ Other benefits the partnership will bring to the organisation ('organisational value')
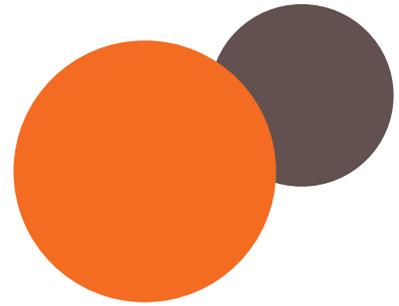
Tool 2
Identifying the added value of partnerships

Use: This tool should be used to structure discussions about the added value of partnerships and can be used as follows:

(a) By an individual organisation to determine what they expect/hope to achieve from partnerships (e.g. as part of the partnering policy formation process)

(b) Between potential partners at the scoping and building stage, in order to identify the value each partner is bringing to the table and how this combines to address a certain issue/achieve impact. This can also promote transparency about expected individual organisational benefits from the partnership

(c) Between existing partners to review and revise their partnership, in terms of the value and benefits it is creating – seeing if anything needs to change to maximise value

Partnering phase: Phase 1: Scoping & Building
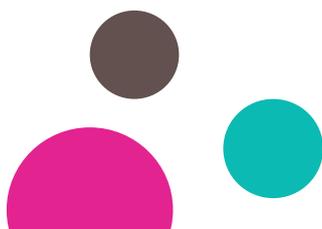
Collaborative advantage to achieve shared impact	Individual organisational benefits
The ways in which partnership between different organisations helps to achieve shared goals for impact in the world.	The ways in which partnership benefits individual partners are (often) intrinsically linked to the collaborative advantage mechanisms.
Complementarity: Bringing together different kinds of resources (e.g. expertise) to provide a complete solution that could not be achieved without all those resources.	**Accessing in-kind physical resources:** E.g. materials/supplies, staff, workspaces, vehicles, IT equipment.
Critical mass: Creating collective legitimacy and knowledge to enable the development and promotion of new norms and policies, which raise standards or create a level playing field in a given sector.	**Accessing in-kind non-physical resources:** Technical knowledge and expertise, publicity, capacity building/training, data and information.
Innovation for effectiveness: Combining different expertise and experience together to develop new, innovative solutions/interventions/services/advocacy (etc.)	**Accessing additional funding/financial resources:** E.g. for a specific program/initiative, for capacity development/training of staff, for the publication of reports or guidelines, for staff salaries.
Holistic response: Bringing together actors from across societal sectors to address multiple inter-connected issues	**Enhanced credibility, legitimacy, and influence:** By association with well-known or well-regarded entities or initiatives and/or as a result of extra impact achieved through the partnership.
Shared learning: Raising the level of knowledge, expertise and capacity to raise the quality, and therefore impact, of interventions/advocacy.	**Access to new connections and peer-to-peer learning:** Partners give access to networks and contacts not previously accessed.
Scale: Ability to reach more people or wider areas through coordinated or combined delivery.	**Improved staff performance and morale:** Through working with counterparts from other organisations and achieving impact together.
Higher quality, faster emergency response: Leveraging and combining resources that allow a timely, more effective response to emergencies.	
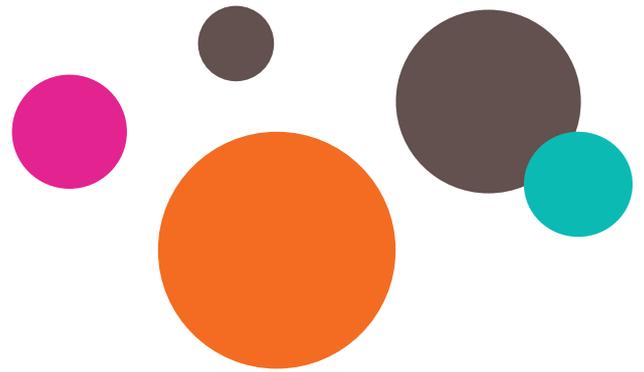
Tool 3
Prospective partner / partnership assessment

Use:
- To ensure a transparent and rigorous partnership assessment and approval process
- To assess the value, risks and implications of a partnership opportunity and inform a go/no-go decision
- To assess the value, risks and implications of partnering with a specific organisation and to assist partner selection.

Partnering phase: Scoping and building

This tool is in two parts:
Part 1 looks at the prospective partnership as a whole, to help you gauge whether partnering is the right approach to tackle this issue or opportunity and whether this particular partnership is right for the organisation. **Part 2** looks at a specific individual partner (or partners), to assess whether this is the right organisation to collaborate with.

Note: Many of the criteria for assessment used here are not quantifiable or comparable (eg assessing levels of risk vs potential value is often a subjective exercise). The results are therefore intended to assist in decision-making, not as a set of absolute calculations.

Part 1: Prospective Partnership Assessment

Partnerships should not be entered lightly. They are an important commitment with the potential to bring in significant value but they are not without risks and often suffer high transaction costs. This section of the tool is used to help organisations assess the value, risks and implications of a partnership in order that they can confidently go ahead, know that more information is required or decide not to proceed.

Partnership Assessment is in two sections:

Section 1 is a high-level checklist designed to give you an 'at a glance overview' of the key considerations and your assessment of them. This can either be completed with information from **Section 2** (Partnership information and a more in-depth checklist) or as a stand-alone prompt for discussion when considering the prospective partnership.

Final decision (to be completed after completing this form)

✓ ✓ ✓ Decline | Continue to investigate | Go ahead

Completed by:

Name & role:

Date:

Step 1: High level checklist

Decline | Continue to investigate | Go ahead | More information needed

CONSIDERATION	INFORMATION	ASSESSMENT			
Clear imperative for a partnership approach		○	○	○	○
The partner(s) is / are acceptable (see part 2 below)		○	○	○	○
Partnership is strategic and fits with organisational mandate		○	○	○	○

Partnership provides significant value / impact		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Costs acceptable in relation to value gained		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Risks are sufficiently low or well mitigated		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Sufficient financial resources to implement		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Sufficient internal resources / capacities available		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Implications are acceptable		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Sufficient buy-in from relevant board / staff / divisions / country offices		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫

Step 2: Partnership information

PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Context		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Summary vision, mission & objectives		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫
Reasons for partnering to achieve objectives		🔴	🟠	🟢	⚫

Non-partnership alternative approach (if applicable)		○ ○ ○ ○
What do we bring to the partnership?		○ ○ ○ ○
What does/do the partner(s) bring to the partnership?		○ ○ ○ ○

CHECKLIST

Decline | Continue to investigate | Go ahead | More information needed

CONSIDERATION	INFORMATION	ASSESSMENT			
How does the partnership fit with our organisational mandate?		○	○	○	○
How does the partnership fit with our organisational strategy?		○	○	○	○
How does the partnership fit with current programmes / obligations / other partnerships?		○	○	○	○

EXPECTED BENEFITS / VALUE
(see Tool 2: Assessing the added value of partnerships)

| What is the contribution to our mission/ impact for ultimate target groups (including clear measures of success)? | | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

What are the expected benefits to our organisation?		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
COSTS TO OUR ORGANISATION					
Staff time (full economic cost)		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Consultants		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Travel / venue / other costs		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
RISKS					
Going beyond mandate; loss of programmatic focus		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Duplication of efforts		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Overlong time investment		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Financial implications		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Lack of sufficient capacity to deliver		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Interference with natural systems / distorting the market		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Compromise neutrality or independence / reputational issues		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫

		red	amber	green	grey
Loss of autonomy on key issues		○	○	○	○
Risk to existing relationships		○	○	○	○
IMPLICATIONS					
What precedent (if any) does it set?		○	○	○	○
What obligations / commitments are being made – is there a plan in place for the end of the partnership? (See Tool 7 – Transitioning)		○	○	○	○
Accountability concerns		○	○	○	○
PRACTICALITY					
Are funding sources available for implementation?		○	○	○	○
Is there Internal buy-in from relevant management/staff/offices?		○	○	○	○
Are there sufficient internal resources that can be committed?		○	○	○	○
Are there sufficient internal skills and competencies to deliver?		○	○	○	○

Part 2: Individual Partner Assessment

This section of the toolkit is used to help in assessing the value, risks and implications of working with a specific partner in order that you can confidently go ahead, decide not to proceed or gather more information before reaching a decision.

Taking time to understand what a prospective partner will bring to a partnership will help in assessing the benefits and risks involved in the partnership. It will also help to define what resources our organisation contributes and how the partners are likely to work together in the most productive way. This tool can be updated and adjusted as additional details become available, to assist in managing and documenting the partnership.

Note: This can be copied and completed for as many prospective partners as required.

Final decision (to be completed after completing this form)

✓ ✓ ✓   Decline | Continue to investigate | Go ahead

Completed by:

Name & role:

Date:

Step 2: Partner assessment

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Partner information		⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕
Name and type of organisation (government, private sector, UN, national or international NGO, civil society, academia, International Financial Institution)		⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕

|					
Location		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Name, email & telephone number of focal point for the organisation		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Partner activities		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Prior experience of working with this partner (if any, note if past partnership was satisfactory)		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫

CHECKLIST

Decline | Continue to investigate | Go ahead | More information needed

CONSIDERATION	NARRATIVE (for each section, provide concrete examples, highlight issues and state whether further information is required)	ASSESSMENT			
Alignment of corporate values with our organisation's objectives and priorities		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Alignment with our partnering principles		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Recognised strengths from prior partnership experience (provide specific examples)		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Overall assessment of compatibility		🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫

ADDED VALUE

		Red	Amber	Green	
Resource partners: financial and in-kind (human and technical) resource contribution		○	○	○	○
Knowledge partners: Enhanced capacity through information, evaluation and analysis		○	○	○	○
Policy and governance partners: Enhanced capacity through policy and governance support at country/regional level		○	○	○	○
Advocacy partners: Enhanced outreach and impact through support for advocacy work		○	○	○	○
Capability partners: Support through design and implementation of programmes and operations		○	○	○	○
Overall assessment of additional resources		○	○	○	○

COSTS TO OUR ORGANISATION

		Red	Amber	Green	
Direct costs (value of our organisation's contribution)		○	○	○	○
Indirect costs (transaction costs, staff time, etc.)		○	○	○	○
Training/support from our organisation needed to build partner's capacity		○	○	○	○

		Red	Amber	Green	
Overall assessment of costs to our organisation		○	○	○	○

RISKS

Note: Refer to existing organisational due diligence processes to assess risk as well as this checklist

		Red	Amber	Green	
Has a due diligence process been completed (if applicable)?		○	○	○	○
Conflict of interest?		○	○	○	○
Risk of negative impact on other existing relationships?		○	○	○	○
Reputational risk to our organization?		○	○	○	○
Issues of IP or confidentiality?		○	○	○	○
Appropriate sanctions lists checked?		○	○	○	○
Weak management structure and systems?		○	○	○	○
Inadequate staffing levels?		○	○	○	○
Lack of appropriate staff skills?		○	○	○	○
Overall assessment of risk		○	○	○	○
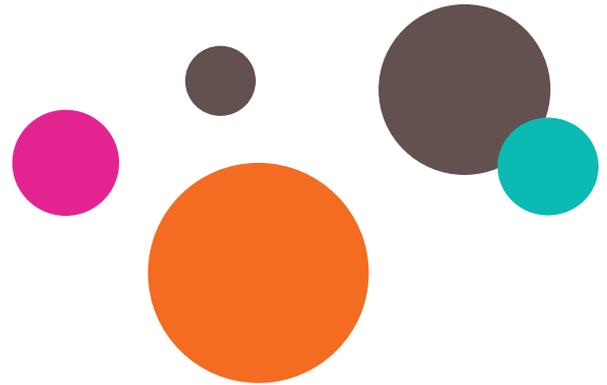
Tool 4
Partnering Agreement template

Use: A template including the essential defining elements of the partnership to be agreed by partners.

Partnering phase: Before partnering; Scoping and building

Forms of agreement

There will be different forms of agreement related to a partnership:

Partnering agreement: non-legally binding agreement of intent to capture the value, vision and spirit of a collaboration and enshrine the principles of partnership

Contracts: legally-binding agreements, sometimes bi-lateral and usually including financial flows and accountabilities required by funding rules (may be similar to service contracts)

Workplan: constantly iterating project plan with activities, timelines, clear and measurable outputs / outcomes and performance indicators

Partnering agreements will likely be iterative documents and will be added to and adapted as understanding of the partners and partnership is built up.

What to include in your Partnering Agreement

Who?
- Short description of partners (including legal status, overall mission), identification of representatives of each partner organisation

Why?
- Vision statement
- Overarching drivers / reasons for involvement of each of the partners
- Objectives of the partnership
- Demonstrable VALUE created through partnering

What?
- Mission statement
- Context and target of the partnership activities
- Initial high-level theory of change and expected activities
- What each partner brings to the table
- Roles and responsibilities of each of the partners
- External resources
- Overall measures of success

How?
- Governance / accountability structure including decision-making principles
- Operational structure (coordination / management arrangements / secretariat) and internal communications
- Financial arrangements [details may be in a separate contract]
- Measures to strengthen partner capacity to implement commitments where necessary
- Timeframe and procedure for ongoing partnership review and revision

- Metrics for tracking and measuring partnership performance against partnership and each individual partners' objectives
- Sustainability strategy for sustaining partnership 'outcomes'

What if?
- Risks / threats and mitigation
- Grievance mechanism to resolve differences
- Rules for individual partners to leave or join
- Exit ('moving on') strategy for partnership as a whole

External communications and IP
- Rules for branding (using own or each others) and other rules for the public profile of the partnership;
- Intellectual property and confidentiality rules
- Protocols for communicating externally

Charter
- Agreed underlying principles / values of the partnership and partners
- Code of conduct / expected behaviours in the partnership
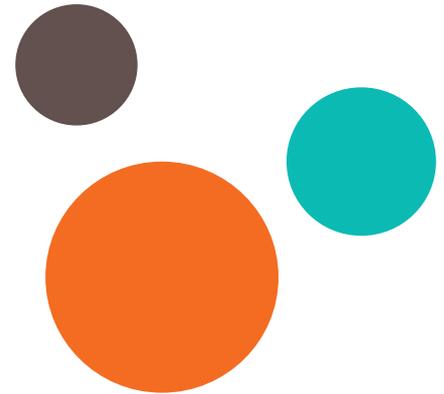
Tool 5
Partnership Healthcheck

Use: To review the 'health' of the partnership, determining areas for discussion and improvement

Partnering phase: Implementation

Monitoring the health and efficiency of the partnership's setup, operation and processes is essential to ensure maximum partnership impact. This tool sets out a set of indicators of partnership "good health" that should be discussed and agreed early on in the partnership lifecycle.

The framework can be used informally and regularly – for example every 2 months – as a prompt for discussion in partner meetings to help keep the partnership on track.

Below is the description for a more formal review workshop, that could be held every 6 months to a year. Where there are many partners, or where there are significant issues raised, an external facilitator might be appropriate.

Review workshop: preparation

Ask all partners to complete the checklist below, providing their opinion on where the partnership sits relative to each aspect of good practice in partnering: **Green – no concerns; Amber – some concerns; Red – serious concern.**

Analyse the results to prioritise the areas for discussion at the workshop.

At the review workshop

Agree 'ground rules' to encourage openness and participation, making it clear that the review is not about judgment or blame, but a positive opportunity to bring up issues, learn together and improve the partnership;

Present the checklist analysis. Jointly talk through each partnering aspect and the positive experiences or the challenges partners may have around it;

Aim to fully understand and appreciate your cross-organisational perspectives or other sources of diversity;

Talk through how each aspect of partnering could be either further enhanced or meaningfully improved to the satisfaction of all partners and prioritize;

Determine what actions should be undertaken, by whom (wherever possible by more than one partner) and by when.

Post review workshop

Undertake the agreed actions, conferring with partners, keeping all informed on progress;

Confirm with partners that the aspects have improved.

Partnership health indicators

FUNDAMENTALS				
There is a compelling shared vision, mission and objectives fully bought-into by all partners	○	○	○	○
Partnership has clearly identified collaborative advantages, is able to create added value and deliver more than the sum of its parts	○	○	○	○
The partnership has been set up to, and is delivering, net value to all partners	○	○	○	○
Partners are sufficiently empowered and enabled to be able to contribute to the partnership	○	○	○	○
The partnership includes all key stakeholders holding essential resources	○	○	○	○
PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP				
Partners are demonstrating collective leadership of the partnership	○	○	○	○

Partners are transparent about their assumptions, goals, needs, drivers and constraints	○	○	○	○
There is a high level of trust among the partners	○	○	○	○
There is clear equity and balance among the partners in decision- making	○	○	○	○
Partners are accountable to each other for delivering on their commitments	○	○	○	○
Challenges, problems and tensions are openly brought up and dealt with respectfully and collectively	○	○	○	○
Partners are jointly accountable for partnership delivery and will help out other partners to deliver	○	○	○	○

STRUCTURING AND SET-UP

The partnering agreement clearly sets out the fundamentals of the partnership (including the vision and objectives, why each partner is involved, the intended value creation, overall approach, commitments, resources, roles and responsibilities of each partner)	○	○	○	○
There is a clear theory of change (or theory of transformation) for the partnership, along with a measurement framework, to be able to demonstrate progress and success	○	○	○	○
The fiduciary / legal structure for the partnership is fit for purpose	○	○	○	○
The governance structure for the partnership is fit for purpose	○	○	○	○
The management structure for the partnership is fit for purpose	○	○	○	○

RESOURCES

	Red	Amber	Green	Grey
External (non-partner) individuals are supporting / championing the partnership	○	○	○	○
Personnel are available	○	○	○	○
Finance is available	○	○	○	○
Knowledge and data are available	○	○	○	○
Important networks or spheres of influence are leveraged	○	○	○	○
Partnership facilitation / troubleshooting / brokering is available	○	○	○	○
Other necessary resources are available	○	○	○	○

MANAGEMENT

	Red	Amber	Green	Grey
Iterative approach to project management, focused on value creation	○	○	○	○
All relevant partner resources are being applied	○	○	○	○
Context analysis for partnering	○	○	○	○
Roles and responsibilities are always clear	○	○	○	○
Deliverables and timeframes are always clear	○	○	○	○
Financial management, including process for receiving/distributing funding, is effective	○	○	○	○
Information sharing is effective	○	○	○	○

The partnership iterates and adjusts its approach based on experiences to date	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Cultural differences between organisations are well managed and clashes avoided where possible	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Partners remain fully committed to the partnership	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
The partnership has been institutionalized into each partner organisation (e.g. engaged key staff, built into organisational planning and budgets etc.)	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫

IMPACT AND VALUE CREATION

The partnership vision remains compelling and relevant to the context	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
The partnership has delivered / is on course to deliver its objectives	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
The partnership has delivered / is on course to deliver significant net value to all partners	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫

MEETINGS AND WORK PROCESSES

Meetings happen with appropriate frequency	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Setting of agendas and arrangement of meeting logistics ensures inclusivity of all partners	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Meetings are documented appropriately and minutes circulated	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Conflicts of interest are effectively managed	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Partners are consistently present at meetings and represented by appropriately senior level	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
Decisions are made in a timely and efficient way	🔴	🟡	🟢	⚫
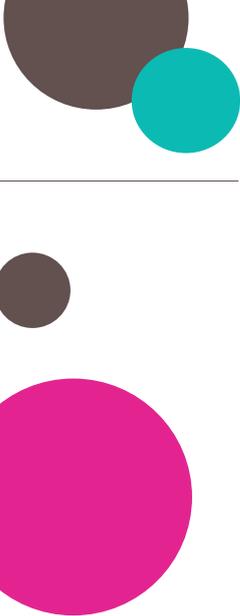
Tool 6
Partnering with the Private Sector

Use: Guidance for non-profit organisations entering into, and managing, partnerships with profit-making entities, especially companies looking to address social or environmental concerns. To be used in parallel with Tool 1 (Partnering Policy).

Partnering phase: As part of research and preparation for establishing private sector partnerships and then initially how to get the best out of these partnerships

Framing the Opportunities of partnering with profit-making entities:

• Significant market opportunities can be available for companies who choose to take new approaches to how their businesses operate in new and emerging markets. For example, reaching new markets and engaging with new producer and consumer groups in developing economies can be essential to remaining competitive.

• Not-for-profit organisations seeking to partner with the private sector can capitalize on business' search for new market opportunities by designing and implementing programmes that bring both business and social gains.

• Examples of this include programmes which help companies responsibly generate efficiencies in supply chains, or else create dignified employment opportunities for underserved population groups. This can, and should, include how the private sector can play more of a role enabling people with disabilities to economically thrive and operate within society equally with others.

What Non-Profits bring to the table

- Technical skills, resources and relationships to tackle the social, economic and environmental issues that impact on business activities.

- The ability to co-create initiatives with the private sector, from research and design phases to implementing pragmatic, outcome-based solutions to challenges on the ground.

- Able to work across multiple industry groups, with every partnership tailored to individual circumstances and needs.

- Strong relationships with their partners' in-house teams, as well as with peers in the CSO community, in order to deliver optimal solutions.

Top Tip:

- Ensure clearly defined roles and responsibilities and establish mutual trust and understanding between partners.

- Create spaces for learning and evaluation.

- Consider how private sector and public sector can come together in support of social purpose outcomes.

How to pitch your organisation's partnering offer to a company

Clearly communicate your value-add

- Can you help them secure future supplies in a world where there is much greater competition for resource?

- Can you help them meet the needs of consumers in rapidly growing, developing markets?

- Can you help them reduce costs by improving resource usage and reducing waste?

- Can you help them improve credibility with the growing number of consumers who expect companies to behave responsibly?

- Can you help them motivate their staff, who expect employers to meet their responsibilities to a wider society?

Be strategic with different partnerships (see diagram below)

Philanthropy/ reputation/ employee benefits	Strategic social or environmental investment/ social license to operate	Compliance/ direct business risk / supply chain sustainability	New market business opportunity

Non-core business ←————————————————————————→ **Core business**

Top tips for preparing for a meeting with a potential private sector partner

Making the first connection

Wherever possible, try to find a personal introduction. These may be professional or through friends, but the personal connection ('so-and-so suggested you may be interested in…') creates some immediate social capital and helps to open the door.

If this is not possible, you will need to research the best contact for you to talk with. Many companies have specific Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Public Affairs departments.

Understand the company

Before your meeting you need to do your homework to understand the company better. A great deal of information can be gleaned from web research, and from companies' CSR reports.

• What does the company do and where does it operate? What sort of reputation do they have?

• Who are its major clients and other stakeholders? Does it have operations geographically relevant to your programme?

• What are its CSR policies and main areas of focus?

Use: To be used in parallel with Tool 2 which focusses on the shared value aspect of a potential partnership. These top tips will help you present your organisation in the best light.

• What sort of partnerships and philanthropy is the company involved in?

• Does the company have a separate foundation?

Prepare your material

You should have as much clarity in advance over how you will present your programme and the opportunity or, preferably, range of opportunities. Remember that the printed material you provide to your contact is what they will pass around the company and hence, it must try to make as a good an impression as you in person.

Your material might include:

• **Introduction** to your organisation;

• The **overall vision**, context and need for your programme;

• The **beneficiaries** of your programme including some sense of scale / numbers and real, personal stories;

• Your activities and outcomes or **results** of your programme's activities;

• What makes your programme different – what is its '**unique selling point**'?;

• **Testimonials** from your stakeholders to demonstrate track record and reliability;

• Information on **existing partnerships** with businesses and the benefits they are getting from them (preferably in their own words);

• The **future** for your programme, including plans for expansion;

• **Opportunities** for new partnerships.

With additional information from: Engaging Business Partners in Education Programs (NCCEP) and School-Business Toolkit (Leadership Fresno 2005)

During your meeting

- **Be professional** (which includes arriving on time!);

- **Approach it as a two-way conversation** – finding out about the company, as well as talking about your programme – not as a one-way sales pitch. Do not assume you know what the company wants/needs;

- **Ask sensible questions** to understand the company better and demonstrate you have made an effort to research them (e.g. 'what did you gain most out of the xxx project you were involved in?');

- **Avoid being apologetic** or defensive – you are offering an opportunity, not begging;

- **Highlight the positive** benefits of your project, rather than the (often negative) situation that the project is addressing;

- **Do not try to guilt trip** someone into supporting you!

- **Listen to what the company is saying** – they will have their own thoughts and suggestions;

- **Use interest-based negotiation** technique to understand the company's interests and be flexible yourself to widen the scope for possible solutions.

Leaving the meeting

- **Ensure you have clear next steps** (e.g. a visit, a further meeting, coming back in a year) and **leave material with them**;

- Always close on a **positive note** whatever the result. Things could change further down the line and you may be back or the individual may change companies.

- Whatever their answer, try to **expand your network** by asking for any suggestions of people / companies they think might be interested. Always send a thank you email detailing next steps if appropriate.

> *Finding out about the company, as well as talking about your programme – not as a one-way sales pitch. Do not assume you know what the company wants/needs*
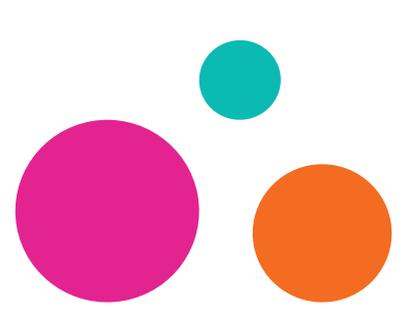
Tool 7
Partnership Transitioning guidelines

Use: This tool aims to help you plan sustainable outcomes for the partnership from the outset. Review the plans on a regular basis and check that everything is in place when you come to the final phase of the partnership.

How to use it: The first section of the tool should be referred to regularly through each phase of the partnering lifecycle, from Scoping onwards. The second part should be used as the partnership draws towards the final phase.

All partnerships eventually arrive at a point where they either need to take on a new form or draw to a close. Putting in place plans for the full lifecycle of the partnership is an important part of planning, to ensure that the partnership outcomes are sustained and relationships remain good.

These plans should be reviewed on a regular basis throughout the life of the partnership, to ensure that they are still fit-for-purpose, and that the necessary steps are being put in place at each stage to ensure sustainability. In some cases, partnerships really will be time-bound from the outset, and it is best to make sure that expectations are clearly set from the beginning.

At the end of the lifecycle, as **Figure 1** shows, there are a number of trajectories that the partnership can take.

Whichever trajectory the partnership takes at the end of its lifecycle, the most important thing, alongside maintaining good relationships between partners, is likely to be the sustainability of its outcomes. The next section of this tool focuses on ways to help you ensure that partnership outcomes can be sustained and that this is planned – as far as possible – from the outset.

Figure 1
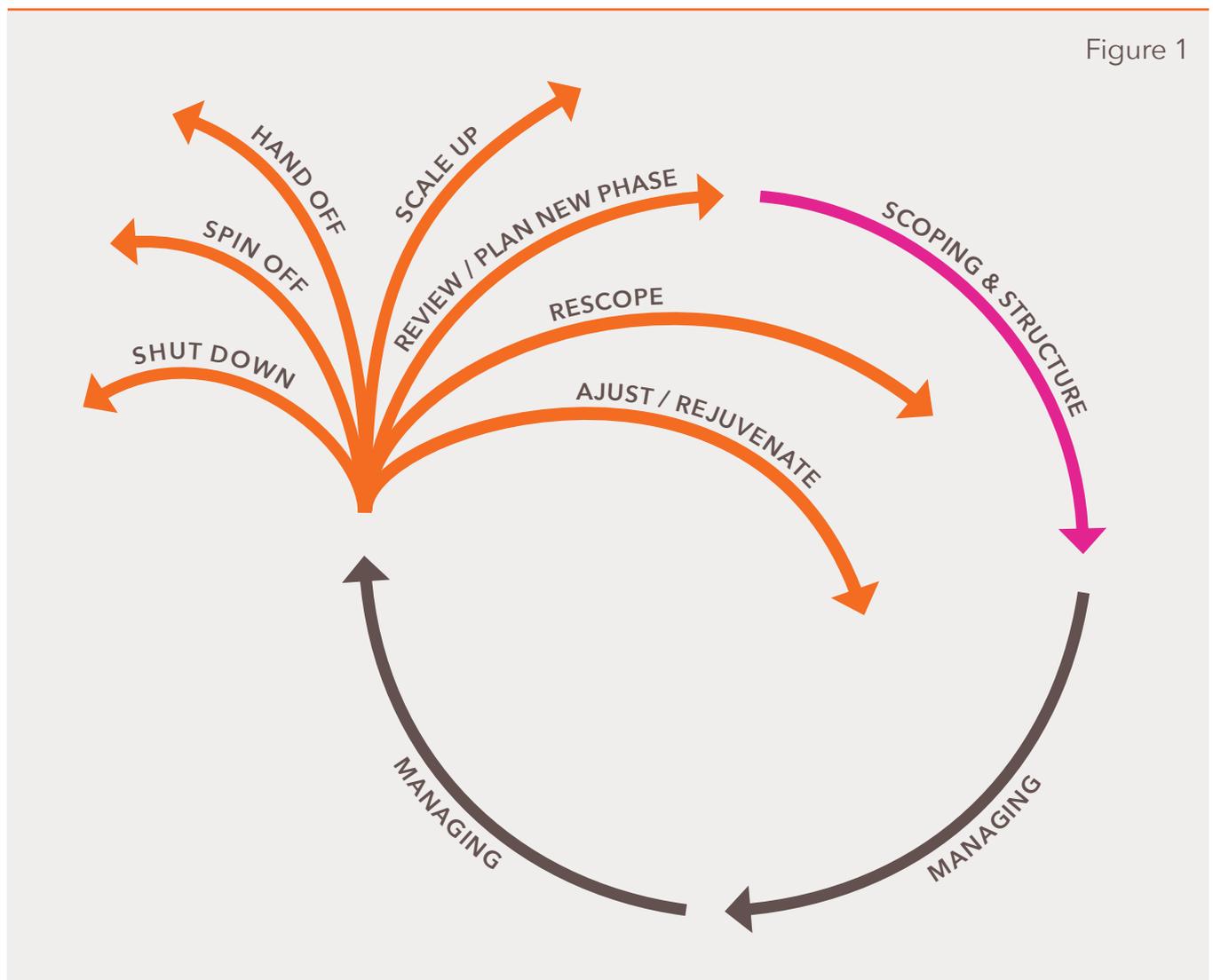
Planning in sustainable[2] outcomes throughout the partnership lifecycle

Most practitioners have far more experience with starting and managing partnerships than with transitioning or closing them. Exit strategies should be embedded in the partnership from the outset and agreed with all partners, otherwise partnerships can end "messily" compromising the outcomes or relationships - or partners can get "locked in" well beyond the point when the partnership should have ended.

In the table below, you will find a list of questions to consider at each stage of the partnering life-cycle to ensure that you are thinking about sustainability throughout the life of the partnership.

Phase	Sustainable outcomes questions
SCOPING AND BUILDING	• What will have to change in the enabling environment to ensure sustainability of your vision/potential programmes and projects? • Will a partnership approach help bring about such changes? What will you need to put in place to enable these changes? • How do each of the potential partners understand/interpret the concept of sustainability? Do they consider it to be important? • How can partners embed the principle of sustainable outcomes into the partnership and partner relationships? • Are there examples of partnerships that have been successful in achieving sustainable outcomes that provide good learning? • Can others who are believed to be crucial to sustaining outcomes be involved from the beginning and in what capacity (as advisory partners, observers, non-partner allies?) • Can sustainability be woven into all aspects of the outline plan? • How can partners incorporate a capacity-building aspect to the partnership's activities where it is needed to ensure sustainability? • How will partners recognise or measure sustainability? • How will you record the commitment to sustainable outcomes?
MANAGING AND MAINTAINING	• How can the partnership be structured to promote greater local self-reliance and build capacity to sustain programmes medium to long term? • To what extent can the partnership's resources be drawn from local sources and / or how can the partnership develop other self-sufficient approaches as part of its activities? • How can the partnership best engage with/help to improve the local/mainstream systems to ensure long- term delivery and sustainability of outcomes? • To what degree are the partnership/project outcomes sustainable? What are the indicators for this? • What needs to be built into the partnership's review procedures to ensure sustainability remains at the forefront of the partnership's work and the partners' priorities?

[2] "Sustainable" in this context means that the project/partnership outcomes can continue beyond the life of the partnership.
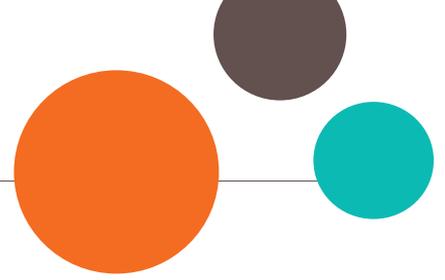
Moving on or revising

If plans have been put in place from the start of the partnership, as set out above, then the final phase should be a relatively smooth one.

Here are some guidelines and tips to help you manage it successfully:

Be inclusive

• Involve as many key stakeholders in the process as possible

• Engage support of top management of the partner organisations and those to whom the work is being handed over)

• Share responsibility for managing the winding-up or handing over process as widely with partners as possible

• Allow people to express emotions (including anger)

Be transparent

• Discuss the handing over process openly and avoid 'secret' conversations

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• Discuss the handing over process openly and avoid 'secret' conversations

• Remember to record the moving on decisions and handover processes

• Be honest about difficulties or bad newsRemember to record the moving on decisions and handover processes

• Be honest about difficulties or bad newsRemember to record the moving on decisions and handover processes

• Be honest about difficulties or bad news

Be clear

• Clarify what is happening to those who need to know

• Be sure that decisions are based on accurate and verifiable information

• Articulate and address any risks involved in the process

Be patient

• Allow enough time for the moving on process – if you rush, important things may be neglected

• Expect that some will take more time than others – don't expect everyone to adopt the proposed changes at the same pace

• Take 'time-out' with those inolved to explore views and manage conflicts if necessary
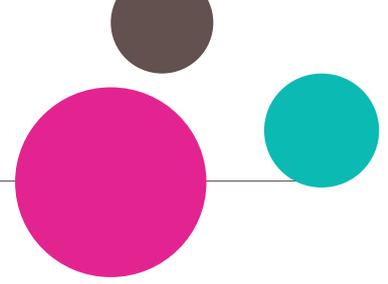
Communications

This guidance will help you to manage the communications process in the final stage of the partnership cycle.

Which person or partner is best placed to handle the communications process?

This is an important issue. Communication responsibilities should ideally be shared between the partners as appropriate.

In allocating specific communications tasks, an assessment should be made about whether the selected individual:

• will be perceived as speaking on behalf of the partnership (as opposed to their own partner organisation)

• will be able to give the time and attention the task needs

• has the pre-requisite communication skills to transmit the information effectively? A communication plan should consider adapting messages to the different target audiences.

What communications options are there?

There are many communication options available. The important thing is to match the option as well as possible to the communication preferences and needs of the target audience.

Check out what is wanted before making too many assumptions and always err on a preference for the face-to-face and personal rather than the written and impersonal.

What should a good communications strategy entail?

A detailed communications strategy should be built into the partnership from the beginning – included in the initial Partnering Agreement and refined throughout the partnership's life cycle.

Issues to consider include:

• Agreement on what should be in the public domain and at what stage

• Respect that some partners need some information to remain confidential

• Awareness of who might need or want to know what, and why

• Understanding the value to the partnership and/or the projects of communicating to the right people

Is there a wider audience for the lessons from your partnership?

All moving on situations provide learning opportunities: partners will have invested time and resources into the partnership and their experience (good or bad) will be valuable for others. Think about how you might be able to share these learning points more widely - without breaching trust or confidentiality.

The important thing is to match the option as well as possible to the communication preferences and needs of the target audience

How to Strengthen Collaboration

A toolkit for civil society organisations

Accessibility options:
This document can be made available in more accessible formats on request to **info@tpiglobal.org** or by visiting **www.gndr.org**

ECID
Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development

tpi
THE PARTNERING INITIATIVE

GNDR
Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction

UKaid
from the British people