# An academic review of the evaluation of partnerships in development

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# Contents

# Acronyms

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|---|---|
| AI | Appreciative Inquiry |
| ALPS | Accountability, Learning and Planning System |
| BPDa | Building Partnerships for Development |
| BPDb | Business Partners for Development |
| CGIAR | Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CIDT | Centre for International Development and Training |
| CIHR | Canadian Institutes of Health Research |
| CRE | Christian Religious Entity |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DPD | Donor Partnerships Division |
| EFA | Education For All |
| GAIN | Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition |
| GEI | Global Education Indicators |
| HCS | Hierarchical Card Sorting |
| IAEA | International Atomic Energy Agency |
| IBLF | Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum |
| ICAI | Independent Commission for Aid Impact |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| ICT4D | Information Communication Technologies for Development |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IEG | Independent Evaluation Group |
| IEO | Independent Evaluation Office |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| IOM | International Organisation for Migration |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LSE | London School of Economics |
| MSC | Most Significant Change |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PAT | Partnership Assessment Tool |
| PBDD | Partnership and Business Development Division |
| PPP | Public Private Partnership |
| PVO | Present Value Objective |
| RCT | Randomised Controlled Trial |
| ROI | Return on Investment |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation |

| SIDA | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|
| SWOT | Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats |
| TPI | The Partnering Initiative |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

## Interviews

Katherine Hay, Senior Regional Program Specialist, Evaluation, IDRC Regional Office for South Asia and China.

Sue Godt, Program Officer, Governance for Equity in Health Systems, IDRC.

## Acknowledgements

# Executive Summary

Partnership is increasingly interwoven into the fabric of development work. Across all sectors, attention is paid to the potential of partnerships to enhance development outputs and outcomes. Within this context IDRC is positioned as a thought leader, with a significant body of knowledge and experience regarding what makes partnerships work and how to operationalize them effectively.

The strong narrative around partnerships means that it is often considered self-evident that they are the most appropriate way to address development objectives. However, despite the widespread assumption that partnerships are effective, there is limited systematic evidence of a link between partnership and improved development outcomes. Alongside this, there is a widespread lack of clarity regarding how best to practically ascertain the effectiveness of partnerships. In light of this, the rigorous evaluation of partnerships is an important emerging field of study. The number of different contributors and approaches mean that it is a complicated and contested space, ideologically, conceptually and practically, with multiple and varied approaches promoted.

The review engages with the relevant literatures and provides an initial foundation of analysis. It is intended as an internal document, a platform from which DPD can continue to contribute to the field of partnership evaluation. This fits with the fourth objective of the IDRC Donor Partnership Framework 2010/2015: to learn and contribute to good practice in the field of partnering for development.

To begin, the review outlines different definitions of partnership and evaluation, both those used within IDRC and externally, and then provides overall context by introducing the various academic perspectives on partnership. Following this it identifies the way in which prioritising evaluative thinking could bring positive development to the emerging field of partnership evaluation. In recognition of the complexity and ambiguity surrounding partnership evaluation, three sets of initial framing questions are then outlined in order to provide a clear platform from which to operate.

Building on this, five foundational issues are then analysed in turn. This begins with the difference between evaluating project outcomes and partnership outcomes, followed by the place of motivation, power dynamics and participation within partnership evaluation, the complexity of attribution analysis within partnership evaluation, making partnership evaluation findings accessible, and the importance of having clarity regarding evaluation at the outset of any partnership. The review then outlines the dominant role of evaluation frameworks, as the primary means by which partnership evaluation is currently conceptualised. It identifies the challenge and opportunity that such approaches provide, and then focuses on a range of different innovative methods that may provide a useful contribution.

The desire for evidence-based approaches and ensuring value for money in development means that partnership evaluation is a field of study likely to grow in significance over the next few years. In recognition of this, the review closes by offering recommendations for IDRC regarding future engagement with the field.

# 1. Introduction and context

Partnership evaluation is an emerging field of study situated across various communities of practice. The objective of this study is to produce an academic review that engages with the relevant literatures and provides an initial foundation of analysis from which DPD can continue to contribute to the field of partnership evaluation.

The review collates research from different sectors that are grappling with the questions of how to make partnerships work better, and how to evaluate their effectiveness. This is particularly pertinent to IDRC as an organisation with a long term commitment to operating in effective partnership. For close to 40 years, IDRC has 'established partnerships with close to 150 donors, foundations, and international development organisations' (St-Pierre and Burley 2010 p.1). The review builds on the article 'Factors influencing Donor Partnership Effectiveness' (St-Pierre and Burley 2010) for IDRC, which in turn was produced in order to build upon 'Partnering By Design' (IDRC, PBDD 2007). It also builds upon the recent five year evaluation strategy from IDRC (2011). These documents each provide response to the identified need to more rigorously examine of how to assess the actual workings of partnerships.

> *'Partnerships are essential to IDRC's granting and business model … as they build upon IDRC's key strengths and are an external validation of the quality of the research support provided by the centre' (IDRC 2009 p.12 and p.45).*

> *'Put very simply, partnerships with other donors are intended to support achievement of the Centre's mission of promoting the generation of knowledge and supporting research for development.' (IDRC 2007 p.5)*

Specifically, the review fits within the fourth objective of the IDRC Donor Partnership Framework 2010/2015 to learn and contribute to good practice in the field of partnering for development (IDRC 2010 p.1). IDRC seeks to undertake partnership in a manner that is characterised by refinement and adjustment (IDRC 2007), as documented in Annexes 9 and 12.

**The prominence of partnerships**

The notion of partnership is becoming increasingly centralised across all sectors of development work as a means by which to effectively enhance development outputs and outcomes. As noted by Rochlin *et al.* (2008 p.5), partnerships are considered by thought leaders at institutes, forums and think tanks across the world to be 'the last great hope to revitalize a workable approach to global, multi-lateral problem-solving.'

The increasingly dominant role of partnerships in global development forums can be traced back to its inclusion as the 8th Millennium Development Goal to 'develop a global partnership for development' (UN 2000). Following this, the steady progression of partnerships in development narrative can be seen through each of the High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness in Rome (2002), Paris (2005), Accra (2008), and finally Busan (2011). The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (29 Nov – 1 Dec 2011), in Busan, focused on reviewing the progress made in implementing the principles of the Paris Declaration and culminated in signing the 'Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation'. This was the first time that there has been a globally agreed 'framework for development cooperation that embraces traditional donors, South-

South co-operators, the BRICS, civil society organisations and private funders' (OECD 2011 p.1). Likewise, the Africa Progress Report, an annual report monitoring development in Africa, decided in 2011 to focus on the transformative power of cross-sector partnership (Africa Progress Report 2011).

**The need for partnership evaluation**

IDRC have a significant body of knowledge and experience regarding what makes partnerships work and how to operationalize them, with much of this work able to directly inform discussion of partnership evaluation (see Annex 4). Focusing on the explicit evaluation of partnerships therefore constitutes a logical next step. There is currently limited analysis regarding the correlation between partnership and development outcomes (Caplan *et al.* 2007). As noted to Horten *et al.* (2009 p.4) although there is a widespread assumption that partnership provides an effective way to address sustainable development goals, 'there is little systematic evidence to support this claim'. Indeed, as Bezanson *et al.* (2004 p.1) note, it is often considered self-evident that partnerships are the best way to work:

> *'Given the dominance of this [pro-partnership] narrative, it is unsurprising that partnership arrangements are often sought as ends in themselves and with little testing as to whether they actually improve cost-effectiveness.'*

The ideological reluctance to engage in evaluation due to the pro-partnership narrative is combined with the practical challenge of actually undertaking it effectively. Indeed, 'measuring the effectiveness of partnerships, as distinct from project impacts, is not an easy task' (Caplan and Jones 2002 p.2) and is a 'slippery concept (Audit Commission 19998 p.16) akin to 'measuring a moving target' (El-Ansari *et al.* 2002 p.220). These things serve to perpetuate the lack of knowledge regarding how partnerships for development can be effectively evaluated.

> *'Because partnerships are increasingly being promoted as vehicles for addressing development challenges, our understanding about how they function and what works and what does not must be enhanced and the findings shared' (Caplan et al. 2007 p.7).*

Despite the lack of knowledge, many organisations are interested in this field of research and are wrestling with the question of whether partnerships actually work as effectively as they are assumed to. As Rochlin *et al.* (2008 p.23) note, 'without the benefit of an in-depth, third-party evaluation, it is difficult for an outsider to judge to what extent partnerships are meeting expectations for outcomes and impacts.' This has led to the development of an extensive literature regarding the importance of partnership evaluation (Patrinos *et al.* 2009, Rochlin *et al.* 2008, Findlay-Brooks *et al.* 2007, Catley-Carlson 2004, Spevacek 2001, USAID 2001). In particular, this emphasises the need for different forms of partnership evaluation (Klitgaard 2004, DFID 2003) and the importance of building in evaluation throughout the partnership process (Serafin *et al.* 2008). In addition is the sector-specific work being done on partnership evaluation (UNICEF 2010): Annex 7 provides a review within the context of water and sanitation, Annex 8 within the context of partnership evaluation for education, and Annex 11 within the context of sustainable development.

> *One benefit of evaluation is that it can enable you to can take things that you intuitively suspect and give you the evidence required to assess if your suspicions were true or not. It gives a foundation for what could previously be only 'a sense' within the partnership.*
>
> *(Interview with Katherine Hay, 9.11.11)*

**Objectives of the study**

In light of the issues laid out above, the objectives of the study are to provide:

- A preliminary review of the key issues in partnership evaluation
- A summary of the main toolkits and frameworks relevant to partnership evaluation
- A platform of study that allows the DPD team to identify areas within IDRC's partnering practice that could benefit from further inquiry

In addition, it is hoped that the review will help IDRC practitioners with concerns about the interrelationship between evaluation and partnership and how the two work together in practice. It is also hoped that the review forms a helpful tool in integrating the efforts of DPD and the Evaluation Unit.

# 2. Outline of structure

Having introduced the study, the review now continues by engaging with different definitions of partnership and evaluation, both IDRC internal definitions and significant external definitions. It then engages with the theme of evaluative thinking within IDRC and explains the main theoretical perspectives on partnership and its evaluation. The review then identifies three sets of framing questions that help to clarify the confusion regarding partnership evaluation. Having provided this overall context, the focus then turns to five foundational issues for analysis. Following this, the main frameworks used in evaluating partnerships are outlined, noting the challenge and opportunity that such approaches provide. The different types of organisations involved in partnership evaluation are then reviewed, and this is built upon by considering the different methods that may be useful when engaging with the issue. The review concludes with recommendations for IDRC regarding appropriate next steps.

# 3. Definitions

## 3.1 IDRC definitions

IDRC understand partnership to be the formal arrangement between a minimum of two organizations to work collaboratively to achieve mutually beneficial objectives (Partnering by Design 2008). It is considered more than simply sharing finances, normally involving some form of joint operations and skills sharing at a more formal level than simply collaboration (St-Pierre and Burley 2010). IDRC view partnerships as opportunities for funders to create innovative ways of working together, addressing development problems through a means significantly different from unilateral funding mechanisms, and providing an opportunity to increase the depth and breadth of programming.

## 3.2 Wider definitions

There are numerous other working definitions of partnership and an awareness of these helps to position IDRC within the broader context. This is important because significant confusion stems from the contextual dimensions of partnership and of evaluation, and how both terms are currently defined to mean 8notably different things depending on the context.

> **Sample definitions of partnership:**
>
> *'An alliance between organisations from two or more formal sectors that commit themselves to working together to undertake a sustainable development project. Such a partnership undertakes to share risks and benefits, review the partnership regularly, and revise the partnership as necessary'* (Tennyson and Wilde 2000 p.12)
>
> *'Partnerships are an inherently challenging way of getting things done – by definition they require at least two actors, presumably with different interests and strengths, to cooperate in order to identify ways to use the unique strengths of each to accomplish a goal that is compatible with the objectives of both organisations'* (United Nations 2007 p.5)
>
> *'Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner.'* (Brinkerhoff 2002 p.21)

Addressing effective partnership evaluation needs to begin with recognition of the range of different definitions of partnership that co-exist and the degree of conceptual slippage between terms. This situation can lead partners in different directions and to different conclusions, all whilst using the same vocabulary (Tennyson 2004). Whilst it is not realistic to expect uniform usage between the diverse range of actors engaged in partnership evaluation, or the development of an exhaustive typology (George Brown College 2011), there remains value in articulating the differences in terminology and thereby minimising ambiguity and confusion (Caplan *et al.* 2001).

Mattessich *et al.* (2001) distinguish between three different forms of partnership. The first level is cooperation, characterised by informal relationships that do not have a defined mission or structure. The second level is coordination, characterised by more formality and compatibility of mission. The third level is collaboration, characterised by a more durable and pervasive relationship, new structures, full commitment and common mission. Bezanson *et al.* (2004) promote a similar distinction between five types of increasing interconnection: consultative, coordinative, complementary, collaborative, and critical partnership.

Whilst useful, linear categorisations of partnership definitions have been critiqued for masking complexity. Horton *et al.* (2009) argue against the precise categorisation of different types of partnership, preferring partnership continuums as a more useful way to conceptualise them than as rigid categories. Similarly, Caplan (2006 p.1) identifies the way that rigid categories may overlook the various obligations to participate in partnership, the critical non-financial contributions to partnership, and the distinct differences between organisations and individuals that make the partnership process so challenging.

**Understanding evaluation**

The varied and contested definitions regarding the term 'evaluation' also affect the way partnership evaluation is understood. There is considerable challenge in applying evaluation terminology across very different sectors each with their own well-established definitions, practices and norms (UNICEF 2010). In the context of cross-sector partnerships, those between the different sectors of business, government and civil society (Tennyson with Harrison 2008), it becomes apparent how different organisations have very different approaches to evaluation and performance management systems. Integrating processes and institutional arrangements in this context constitutes a significant challenge (Brinkerhoff 2002b). This is an exacerbating factor in regard to the general challenge of managing to make cross-sector partnership actually work (Stott 2007).

> *In partnership evaluation one of the challenges is that you may have partners from different sectors with each one having a different idea about how evaluation should be undertaken, stemming from different understandings of what evaluation is. Multiple paradigms could be promoted from within one partnership; for example, one partner may be wedded to Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) as the ideal 'objective' methodology whilst others may consider it most important to apply approaches that are specifically contextualised.*
>
> *(Interview with Susan Godt, 7.12.11)*

Serafin *et al.* (2008 p.4) found that there was no consensus on the terminology relating to evaluating cross-sector partnerships:

> *'There is no consensus both within and across the civil society, business and public sectors as to definitions of what constitutes "evaluation" and what does not. A variety of terms are used including evaluation, tracking, assessing, monitoring, reviewing with no consistency over the terminology used.'*

The ambiguity surrounding evaluation language is part of a bigger challenge concerning communication that is returned through throughout the review. This can be exemplified by the way in which management studies often talk about inter-organisational relations and collaborations rather than partnerships (Horton *et al.* 2009) and foundations talk about funder collaboratives (Kania and Kramer 2011). In the business environment, when considering how to undertake evaluation, the preference is often for tools that are already familiar and widely used in the sector, such as Return on Investment (ROI), SWOT analysis and Present Value Objective (PVO). The main point to emphasise is that organisations often default into developing customized frameworks, using internally familiar terminology and adopting approaches consistent with their pre-existing organizational culture.

**Evaluative thinking**

Within this context of contested terminology regarding partnership evaluation there is much to gain from incorporating holistic understandings of evaluative thinking. This is a more nuanced, progressive approach that views evaluation as a thread running through partnership, promoting a culture of reflection and shifting the mentality around partnership evaluation so that it is conceived as a core component of successful implementation rather than viewed as a necessary distraction.

This resonates with progressive understandings of evaluation across different sectors (James and Miller 2005, Wagner *et al.* 2004, Cabrera 2006, Chapman *et al.* 2004, Dart and Davies 2003, Watson 2006).

Evaluative thinking approaches evaluation as a constant mentality, an integrated activity, with practitioners constantly reflecting on the work that they are doing in order to learn lessons and modify their activities accordingly.

> *'Evaluative thinking … is a means of thinking, of viewing the world, an on-going process of questioning, reflecting, learning and modifying. What are we learning and how can we use those lessons to improve our performance? Both the lesson and the act of learning are at the heart of evaluative thinking … evaluative thinking is an inherently reflective process, a means of resolving the "creative tension" between our current and desired levels of performance. It allows us to define the lessons we want to learn, to determine the means for capturing those lessons, and to design systems to apply them in improving our performance. By going beyond the more time- and activity-bound processes of monitoring and evaluation, evaluative thinking is learning for change. It is learning to inform and shape action.' (Research Matters 2008 p.1)*

Adopting effective feedback loops to make use of lessons is vital to ensure that the findings and analysis gathered in relation to the partnership evaluation can be utilised and incorporated. As noted by Caplan and Jones (2002) there is little purpose in evaluating partnerships unless there is a good means by which the feedback can be used and the knowledge utilised by completing the feedback loop. A variety of methodological tools that are useful for promoting evaluative thinking in partnership evaluation are included in section 5.2.

There is a well-established tradition of prioritising and utilising evaluation throughout IDRC. Indeed, IDRC may be unique regarding the extent to which evaluative thinking exists as a core aspect of organisational culture:

> *'In order to be effective at supporting development research, IDRC must ensure its own staff is knowledgeable and innovative, continuously learning and improving. As a result, IDRC strives to be a learning organisation embedded with a culture of evaluative thinking. Evaluative thinking involves being results-orientated, reflective, questioning, and using evidence to test assumptions.' (IDRC 2007 p.28)*

Despite this, it still remains a challenge to incorporate evaluative thinking into the way that partnerships themselves are evaluated, not just how projects and programmes are evaluated.

## 3.3 Theoretical context

There is no consensus within the academic community regarding the place of partnership in development, and more precisely regarding the place of evaluation within partnerships for development. It is therefore worth exploring the spectrum of perspectives in order to situate the review more fully. The ambiguity regarding partnership terminology within academia continues to fuel disagreements regarding partnership efficacy. The ubiquity of partnership terminology has led directly to a spread of 'multiple interpretations' (Crawford 2003 p.142) and a feeling that the term

partnership itself is vague and problematic, especially within certain discourses (Bezanson *et al.* 2004). This is exacerbated by the multiple forms of partnership that exist, often without terminological distinction (Unwin 2005, Klitgaard 2004). As a result, much academic debate is polarised and based on ideological differences more than evidence-based assessments of effectiveness.

## Partnership scepticism

A regular academic critique centres on the way partnerships are seen as a panacea for development within much of the NGO community, leading to a situation where 'everybody wants to be a partner with everyone else on everything, everywhere' (Fowler 2000 p.3). As noted, this enthusiasm can lead to partnerships being viewed as ends in and of themselves, thus removing the perceived need for any evaluation. Similarly, the rhetoric surrounding partnership can lead to attention being diverted away from concerns related to establishing an evidence base of their benefit through analysis and evaluation (Bezanson *et al.* 2004).

The academic community is also widely concerned with the implications of collaboration between different sectors because of the traditional ideological tensions that exist between them. The degree of scepticism regarding the suitability of pursuing partnership is emphasised by the implications of how contrasting bottom-lines between public and private sectors affect issues of motivation, aspiration and power. A classic hypothetical example would be that of academic scepticism regarding the CSR initiative of a major technology corporate working in partnership with an NGO to distribute freely its education software to students in a developing country. The assumption would be that the primary underlying motivation for the partnership is not benevolent CSR but a long term soft strategy to ensure future dependency and privileged access to an emerging market.

Linked to this, partnership sceptics also emphasise the way partnership may be part of a wider new discourse employed to facilitate the sustained imposition of power. Crawford (2003 p.157) asserts that 'the rhetoric of partnership is part of a trend by international agencies by which their intervention in political and economic reforms in sovereign states is disguised and simultaneously accorded greater legitimacy'. Similarly, partnerships have also been critiqued as causing southern partners to be ideologically cornered with little more than a re-branding of PRSP-type economic reforms (Cameron 2005). This is linked to the notion that partnership is primarily a tool of the private sector that is used to shape their agendas (Martens 2010, 2007) leading to unhealthy dependency, competition (Hansen and Tarp 2000), and a preservation of the power of elites (Loftus 2008, Lister 2000). Alongside this is the more pragmatic critique that emphasises the variety of outcomes of partnership, showing how partnerships can be cost-ineffective just as they can be cost-effective (Bezanson *et al.* 2004).

## Partnership enthusiasm

Conversely, within the academic community there are also strong partnership enthusiasts, arguing that partnership provides a framework of operating that 'enables communities to take charge of their own development needs' (Warner and Sullivan 2004 p.10) by emphasising the decision-making role of beneficiaries (Abrahamsen 2004). There is significant attention within the academic community regarding principles of how to approach successful partnership, and how to assess that effectiveness (Unwin 2009). Similarly Bratman's (1992 p.335) classic research engages with the way

in which effective partnership and evaluation is dependent on ensuring that each party has 'intentions in favour of the efficacy of the intentions of the other'.

In addition to those enthusiastic because of the participatory benefits of partnership are those who view partnership as a modality for breaking down traditional ideological tensions that no longer need to be permanently fixed. The rise of social entrepreneurship encapsulates this vision, with the idea that collaboration can lead to both social good and financial gain. Linked to this, within the specific context of the education sector, Draxler (2008) argues that partnerships provide the key means by which to achieve the Education For All (EFA) agenda. Similarly, Cassidy (2007) uses the example of the Global Education Initiative (GEI) to profile how partnerships can have a transformative impact on educational interventions.

**Summary**

Much theoretical debate surrounding partnership remains rooted in ambiguous terminology, ideological in nature, or driven by anecdotal accounts of partnership success or failure (see Annex 5). The diverse array of partnerships means that there will always be some that prove to be highly effective in reaching their objectives, and others that are abject failures. Opinion is polarised by the very real presence of both of these situations in a context of a limited evidence base. Placing a higher priority on the evaluation of partnerships helps transition debate beyond the realm of ideological preference and anecdotal account and instead provides an informative, substantive evidence base.

# 4. Dynamics of partnership evaluation

## 4.1 Framing questions

The evaluation of partnerships can be overwhelming and intimidating because of the number of different aspects it encompasses. Much of the 'fear' around engaging with partnership evaluation is rooted in uncertainty regarding how to undertake it and make sense of all the constituent parts. In light of this, three sets of questions are listed below that should be addressed when considering, designing and conducting partnership evaluation. Responses to these sets of questions will dictate the appropriate route forward for the partnership evaluation. For IDRC, the questions could also be used systematically as part of the interaction and data collection mechanism with partner organisations. It is a lack of definition regarding these scoping questions that is responsible for much of the confusion surrounding the topic. Although overlapping in scope, they should each be considered in sequence when engaging with partnership evaluation.

**Initial framing questions**

1. **What kind of partnership is this?**
   (eg research, knowledge, project specific, sector specific, hierarchical or egalitarian?)
2. **What is being evaluated?**
   (eg process or product, process and the product, defined by the initial objectives?)
3. **Why is it being evaluated?**
   (eg what is it that is being found out, what are the key learning objectives?)

4. **Who is it being evaluated for?**
   (eg internal [IDRC, and what specific audience within IDRC] or external, internal and external, funders, end-users beneficiaries, public audience?)
5. **Who should undertake the evaluation?**
   (eg who makes this decision, internal [which partner is responsible] or external [consultant, academic]?)
6. **How should the findings be disseminated and communicated?**
   (eg is there a report or other forms of communication, what form does it take, who has access to it, what use of media, social media?)

A key dimension of partnership evaluation is determining at the outset of the partnership what the evaluation criteria will be. Doing this at the outset rather than incorporated part way through promotes evaluative thinking and enables the evaluation to be 'designed according to the expected use of findings and the intended audiences' (Caplan *et al.* 2007 p.7).

**Secondary framing questions**

The second set of framing questions leads from the first, in recognition that different types of evaluation are appropriate depending on the context and stage of the partnership. Whilst evaluation should be incorporated throughout the partnership, it serves a different purpose in each stage.

1. **Are the current objectives best served by light monitoring?**
   Low intensity reflection, with clear and regular questions, can create an evaluative culture and serve as an early warning system if something is wrong. An appropriate response to identifying a major problem would be to address it by conducting a formative evaluation.
2. **Are the current objectives best served by formative stage evaluation?**
   Evaluation is often ignored when the partnership is beginning to function. However, it is a vital way to ascertain whether the partnership is meeting needs and objectives: what could be improved and how is the process working? It also provides an opportunity for partner feedback, especially with new partnerships, and can strengthen motivation and transparency.
3. **Are the current objectives best served by summative stage evaluation?**
   This occurs once the partnership is well established and functioning, or when it is moving towards the culmination of its lifecycle. A summative evaluation is much more than a procedural exercise and provides a key opportunity for learning how effective the partnership has been in meetings its objectives: what happened, how did it happen, why did it happen, and what can be learned and altered for the future?

These questions encapsulate the tension between process-based partnership evaluation and product-based partnership evaluation (Caplan and Jones 2002). If a summative evaluation concludes by demonstrating how badly a partnership has performed it raises the question of why the problems were not identified and the approach adjusted at an earlier stage through a formative evaluation, or earlier still through the reflective culture of monitoring. Process based monitoring and formative evaluation help to maximise the utility of any later summative evaluation (Patton 2008). Being solely dependent on summative evaluation, waiting until all the decisions about the partnership have

already been made, can reduce the evaluation to an exercise that documents 'lessons learned' giving it value  only for future projects, and then only if it is read by future practitioners.

**Tertiary framing questions**

The third set of framing questions are pertinent throughout a partnership but are most focused on summative stage evaluation. They focus on the fact that valuable partnership evaluations are not primarily concerned with aggregating the results of projects as this does not address the critical but often ignored question of whether it would have been possible to achieve the same result without the partnership (Serafin *et al.* 2008). As noted by Caplan *et al.* (2007 p.7), the more advanced and formal assessment should ask 'could we have achieved this result on our own?' and 'if not, could we have paid someone else to achieve this same result?' It also engages with precise questions such as whether any internal strategic advantage was lost as a result of working in partnership because of knowledge and skills being transferred to other partners (Horton *et al.* 2009).

1. **What would have happened without the project or the partnership?**
   (ie no intervention or project at all from any stakeholders)
2. **What would have happened with the project but without the partnership?**
   (ie the stakeholders engaged in the intervention or project but acting individually and not in partnership)
3. **What would have happened with the project and the partnership but with a different set of partners?**
   (eg were the right partners in place, what was lacking, what could have been more effective?)
4. **What would have happened with the project and the partnership and the same partners but undertaken in a different way?**
   (eg was the approach appropriate, what was the opportunity cost, what did it help or hinder, did partners get what they needed, wanted and expected?)

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**Sample partnership evaluation scenarios**

Engaging productively with partnership evaluation can be helped through considering simple sample scenarios that may occur within the partnership work of IDRC. This helps to conceptualise the various contexts in which the challenges and opportunities of partnership evaluation are most pertinent. It demonstrates how what constitutes an appropriate approach depends on usage and context. For example, consider the role for partnership evaluation in the context of:

- A well-functioning and innovative partnership, with effective communication between partners and strong positive impact, where the objective of the evaluation is to develop a case study to publicise, promote and spread the lessons of good partnership.

- A failing partnership, with breakdown in functioning relationship between the partners due to irreconcilable differences, where the objective of the evaluation is to provide an evidence base that can help form a rapid exit strategy from a negative situation.

- A challenging on-going partnership, where the partners recognise the difficulties and share a commitment to improve, where the objective of the evaluation is to investigate thoroughly underneath the surface of the partnership, establish what is going wrong and provide

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guidance regarding how it can be made more effective.

- A conflicted partnership where the different partners have varying levels of interest and commitment, where the objective of the evaluation is to analyse and assess the different priorities of the partners, clarify roles and responsibilities, and do all that is possible to ensure the future health of the partnership.

- A confusing partnership where the different partners have differing views regarding how effectively the partnership is functioning, where the objective of the evaluation is to clarify the position of the partnership, increase transparency and provide a rigorous assessment of its efficacy.

## 4.2 Foundational issues

These three sets of questions should be considered throughout all of the subsequent analysis. Having outlined the framing questions, the focus now moves to analysing additional foundational issues regarding partnership evaluation, split into five focal areas. Although categorised in this way, each is overlapping and should be viewed as part of an interconnected whole:

- The difference between evaluating project outcomes and partnership outcomes.
- The place of motivation, power dynamics and participation within partnership evaluation
- The complexity of attribution analysis within partnership evaluation
- Making partnership evaluation findings accessible
- The importance of having clarity regarding the partnership evaluation at the outset

> *There are many factors limiting holistic partnership evaluation from being incorporated more into development practice. First, is the issue of intentions not being matched. Alongside this, the emphasis, work and incentives are often on getting the partnership signed. There are fewer incentives at the operationalizing or maturity stage. The decision to evaluate may be considered a low priority if there are no incentives or opportunities for using findings.*
>
> *(Interview with Katherine Hay, 9.11.11)*

**Project outcomes and partnership evaluation:**

The tendency to focus on evaluating the outputs and outcomes of a project that was undertaken in partnership rather than evaluating the outputs and outcomes of the partnership itself is a major challenge of partnership evaluation (Boydell 2007, World Bank 2005). This is complicated because of the way evaluating partnership is dependent on the project outcomes and the interplay between the two forms an important aspect of how to manage a partnership evaluation. The iterative nature of this process means that partnership evaluation has blurred boundaries. The added complexities come from the often intangible nature of partnership outcomes, as opposed to clear, tangible project outcomes.

> *There is a huge challenge in partnership evaluation around demonstrating outcomes. There is usually a lot of pressure to meet the targets of the log frame … if the targets are not reached then this is often equated to the partnership being ineffective … There is often no mechanism or evaluation framework in place to*

The log frame approach, as mentioned in the quotation above, is effective at assessing clear, pre-determined indicators, but the nature of partnership outcomes is that they are often unpredictable and difficult to quantify so success cannot be guaranteed by adhering to them (Patton 2008). Quantifying impact in this context is complicated: the key building blocks of effective partnerships are very often qualitative such as respect, trust, responsiveness, flexibility and capacity building (Caplan and Jones 2002). How to make progress in this context through the use of innovative methods is explored more fully in section 5.2.

**Motivation, power dynamics and participation:**

Effective evaluation of partnerships requires understanding the varying driving motivations as 'different partners have strikingly different reasons for participating in the partnership and draw different benefits from it' (Horton *et al.* 2009 p.2). If there are weak relationships between partners then 'organisations may have significant reservations about revealing the factors that motivate them in any detail' (Caplan *et al.* 2007 p.10). With partnership, as much as with any evaluation, it is vital to be aware that people may have been co-opted into participating. There are often implicit hierarchies and the presence of a power imbalance, especially one that is unacknowledged, can have a corrosive effect (Marra 2004, Horton *et al.* 2009) that affects all aspects, including evaluation. This has direct implications for how partnership evaluation is undertaken, as Bradley (2007) notes that most of the evaluations of North-South research partnerships have been conducted by people or organisations from the North and as such are very likely to overly represent Northern concerns, views and priorities.

> *Those who have the most power may have more control over the partnership. It stands to reason that they have mechanisms for making partnership work for them. So perhaps one would see more interesting approaches to evaluating partnerships coming from the less powerful partners in those relationships. Those groups may have more to gain from learning from what partnerships work or do not work for them.*
>
> *(Interview with Katherine Hay, 9.11.11)*

Within this, it is helpful to consider how to incorporate different types of stakeholder within the evaluation: those that are primarily influencers of the partnership activities and those that are primarily influenced by the partnership activities (Caplan 2005). Whilst it is widely acknowledged that participatory, collaborative approaches to evaluation that engage stakeholders in the process are positive, 'there is very little guidance available as to what such inclusivity actually means in practice, which individual partners and stakeholders should participate and to what extent' (Caplan *et al.* 2007 p.17).

> *We need to try and convene a platform where the points of view about the partnership and everything related to it can be brought for general discussion. This would require having a lot of trust amongst all partners and cannot just be the conventional 'roundtable'. With a conventional roundtable, the dominant partners*

**Attribution analysis and measuring impact:**

Considering attribution analysis within partnership evaluation begins to demonstrate the complexity and limitations of only engaging in direct impact assessment. Partnership evaluation cannot simply assess what happened but should consider why it happened and the unique contribution of partnership as opposed to a singular intervention. Engaging in attribution analysis in this way quickly becomes complicated because of the number of different variables at work.

Partnership evaluation is not alone in being hampered by the challenge of the attribution gap, or the distinction between correlation and causality. However, when working in partnership, nothing happens in isolation and it is particularly difficult to determine whether or not the partnership is responsible for the outcomes seen. In light of the complexities of accurate attribution analysis, Wiesmann and Stockli (2011 p.9) suggest that a more effective approach is to consider what 'impact-contribution' the partnership has made. Similarly, Caplan *et al.* (2007 p.16) suggest that a focus on plausibility rather than on direction attribution is more appropriate, realistic and reflective of more holistic thinking.

This relates to the issue of unintended consequences. Although often talked about it remains unusual to systematise unintended consequences as a central aspect of partnership evaluation. Rather than simply being noted when observed incidentally, uncovering and interpreting unintended consequences should be incorporated throughout evaluation of partnerships. Following this is the need to also recognise 'the danger of short-lived outcomes' (Wiesmann and Stockli 2011 p.10) and the tendency to be premature in attributing success. This is well illustrated in the context of research partnerships, where Wiesmann and Stockli (2011 p.10) state that something only constitutes an outcome once it is 'knowledge that is recognised and taken up outside the research team that has generated the knowledge' (Wiesmann and Stockli 2011 p.10).

**Public access and communication of findings:**

The reluctance to publish reports that evaluate partnerships serves to 'inhibit efficient knowledge accumulation, dissemination, and utilisation' (Horton *et al.* 2009 p.4). However, there are good reasons why this is the case, with complexities regarding transparency as 'partners will always hold back some information, or strategically choose when to reveal certain information' (Caplan 2005 p.2). Making progress in this requires distinguishing 'between evaluations undertaken from the perspective of a single partner or funder from those seeking to assess the performance, benefits and impact of the cross-sector partnership as a whole' (Serafin *et al.* 2008 p.12). In addition to distinguishing between them, Klitgaard (2004) emphasises the need for different forms of partnership evaluation that relate to each: evaluation of the internal benefits and costs for a specific partner, or the partnership as a whole, or the conditions that influence the emergence and functioning of partnerships.

Deciding whether the partnership evaluation is designed for an internal or external audience will determine the appropriate approach. Specifically, it is important to establish how negative findings will be handled within the organisation, within the partnership as a whole, and to any external audience. This issue can clearly put significant pressure on the partnership relationships. It should not be underestimated how unusual it currently is for joint evaluations between partners to be made publicly available. One positive alternative to this is the independent evaluation of the partnership committees of the CGIAR (Bezanson *et al.* 2004). This provides a critical analysis of CGIAR partnerships and is a rare example of willingness to make critical findings publicly available for others to learn from. Continuing with this positive example, Annex 6 provides summary from 75 different assessments of partnerships, outlining cross-cutting success factors (Spielman *et al.* 2007) and demonstrating the way that CGIAR have prioritised knowledge sharing in the public domain.

The extent to which to make evaluation findings public is a pertinent challenge for decision makers with partnership evaluation. Also for the external evaluator, there is a trade-off between communicating with complete transparency and thereby running the risk that the evaluation will be hidden because it is too critical, and communicating so gently that the evaluation is used as public relations material. Deciding the appropriate course of action requires determining who the evaluation is for, and then deciding the appropriate style and content and appropriate level of transparency (Caplan *et al.* 2007).

**Clarity at outset**

Each of the issues and challenges discussed above related to partnership evaluation can be more effectively dealt with by understanding and clarifying the purpose of the partnership at the outset. Having properly planned objectives and allocated roles and responsibilities at the outset helps determine 'what each group contributes to the partnership, what risks they are presented with in providing those resources, and what relationship those resources have to their core business' (Caplan *et al.* 2007 p.18). Focusing on this kind of detail means that the criteria for subsequent evaluation are clear, with a shared understanding of respective comparative advantages and responsibilities of each partner (Bezanson *et al.* 2004). Applying good principles at the outset and throughout the partnership is a pre-requisite for effective evaluation. It provides a context within

which all the partners can understand the rationale, parameters and implications of the exercise taking place.

> *It was a huge challenge to create the enabling environment for an evaluation and sharing of the partnership because so many other things were not in place. Big partnerships bring together institutions that have different frameworks, pressures, histories, values – and often these elements are not really acknowledged or addressed at the beginning of the partnership. [In relation to an internal partnership review] the main issue was that there was not the trust in place for a proper evaluation. The foundational issues had not been addressed earlier in the partnership so there was a lot of resistance to open reflection and learning when it came to the later stages where we could have undertaken an evaluation. A key to success is building and applying the principles of partnership right from the beginning so that the foundation can be set for evaluation. Making the terms explicit and getting consensus on them then helps when partners consider how evaluation should be done. Evaluation should be considered explicitly, from the beginning of the partnership.*
>
> *(Interview with Susan Godt, 7.12.11)*

**A cross-sector summary of principles for effective partnership**

The extensive literature on effective partnership provides a foundation of understanding regarding how partnership evaluation can be approached. By implication, as a list of principles for effective partnership, it also provides a valuable overview of potential assessment criteria when partnership evaluation takes place.

**At the outset of the partnership:**
- Invest time to explore potential challenges of working together, examine key differences, develop shared protocols for managing these differences and establish mechanisms for day to day decision making (Hughes and Weiss 2007).
- Be explicit regarding the real nature, extent and duration of the partnership, agreement regarding decision making, communication issues, dispute resolution (Fortgang *et al.* 2003).
- Clarify expectations and purpose, commitment and capacity (Balloch *et al.* 2001, Braun 2007).
- Ensure that there is buy-in from strategic individuals (Ertel 2001).
- Recognise that partnerships between different sectors are additionally time consuming (Waddell and Brown 1997).
- Structure the partnership so that it is prepared to deal with conflict, change, and surprise (Ertel 2001).
- Understand and clarify the difference between internal organisational objectives and whole partnership objectives (Uusikyla and Valovirta 2007).
- Establish clear lines of accountability for each partner and ensure that the risks of participation are broadly spread among partners (Bloomfield 2004).
- Address soft factors such as compatibility of values, style of operating, and past partnership history (Isabella 2002).
- Define clear parameters for the partnership agreement (Fortgang *et al.* 2003).
- Ensure there is a transparent understanding of key differences between partners (Hughes and Weiss 2007).

**Throughout the partnership:**

- Prioritise teamwork and devote time to cultivating the relationship, including through social settings, to build trust and personal commitment (Isabella 2002).
- Adjust the partnership working where necessary (Ertel 2001).
- Focus on effective governance arrangements and frequent communication, alongside maintaining ambitious objectives (Dyer *et al.* 2006).
- Recognise when the partnership should be allowed to die and embrace frank discussion regarding the point at which the partnership has fulfilled the job it was established for (Caplan 2006).
- Recognise the strategic influence that effective communication has on the success of the partnership as a motivating force that requires continual effort (St-Pierre and Burley 2010, Dyer *et al.* 2006).
- Maintain clear authority channels alongside symmetry of power relationships (Marra 2004).
- Allow for the additional time and effort that inter-sectoral partnerships require compared to other forms of partnership (Waddell and Brown 1997).
- Engage with the shifting priorities within the partnership, understanding that different things will take priority at different times (St-Pierre and Burley 2010).
- Consider the different timeframes that different sectors within the partnership will work to that may result in tensions and different expectations (Jones 2001).
- Emphasise commitment, intrinsic motivation, accountability, transparency and mutual understanding (Isabella 2002, Child 2001, Brinkerhoff 2002).
- Build and maintain the commitment of the individuals involved (Jones 2001).
- Minimise staff turnover and promote a culture of empowerment to ensure that more powerful partners do not dominate the agendas and processes (Braun 2007).
- Recognise that the partnership does not exist in isolation and should be viewed as part of a broader context (Wiesmann and Stockli 2011).
- Promote teamwork and engage members in critical decision making (Garza 2005).

# 5. Evaluation frameworks and innovative methods

## 5.1 The role of frameworks

How best to actually assess and evaluate partnerships is a contested issue with many different approaches proposed (Stern 2004). When determining what to assess within the evaluation of partnership Caplan *et al.* (2007) suggest categorising it into understanding the drivers to partner, the external context, the organisational drivers, and the individual drivers. Similarly, Boydell (2007) highlights four main types of indicators: connections indicators (relationships and networks), learning indicators (personal and professional), action indicators (improvements in individual and organizational capacity), and impact indicators (short and long term achievement of goals).

A particular challenge is in distinguishing between outputs at the level of individual organisations and the more difficult to assess issues of how these contribute to broader goals or outcomes. Uusikylä and Valovirta (2007) propose a multi-level approach to partnership evaluation that clarifies these differences. Serafin *et al.* (2008 p.12) also emphasise how the evaluation of cross-sector partnerships should not just be focused on their impacts or results, 'but also on their design and operation, benefits to partners, unexpected consequences and value-added and appropriateness or relevance in a particular situation as compared to other non-partnering approaches'

**Implementation and limitations of frameworks and toolkits**

The numerous partnership evaluation frameworks provide a valuable contribution. As noted by Caplan *et al.* (2007 p.4) the wide range of different toolkits and frameworks available for assessing partnerships 'reaffirms the fact that partnerships are complex and evaluating them can potentially start from a number of angles'. A selection of these frameworks, including a brief summary of each, is included in Annex 1. Despite the number of different options, it remains complex, time consuming and expensive to actually implement and utilise these frameworks. Alongside the challenge of utilising the frameworks is the critiques regarding assumptions of universal applicability and lack of engagement with the specifics of different contexts.

> *We had a very basic framework … but there was so much resistance to using it with the partners. One of the issues is that the lack of trust makes frameworks and toolkits difficult to actually make use of. It is so easy to design a toolkit – the issue is how to implement and integrate it into the evaluation. The key is understanding the institutional cultures you are working in, and agreeing at the outset how any framework will be used. Making good use of an evaluation framework requires considerable political will within the partnership. It requires the evaluation to be fully engaged with rather than being viewed as just a formality and then requires support from relevant institutional decision-makers in order to act on the recommendations.*
>
> *(Interview with Susan Godt, 7.12.11)*

The sensitive nature of partnership assessment means that such 'evaluation reports are seldom formally published and as a result, they are rarely included in literature reviews' (Horton *et al.* 2009 p.62). Even with this recognition, it would appear that more energy is invested in developing frameworks for partnership evaluation than into using these frameworks for actual partnership evaluation. As demonstrated in Annex 1, many of the frameworks and toolkits are rigorous and comprehensive, but the lack of evidence of use remains stark. Having conducted a comprehensive review of the different frameworks available for evaluating partnerships, Horton *et al.* (2009 p.38) conclude:

> *'Most of the practical toolkits for [self] assessment of partnerships focus on partnering processes, rather than results, and evaluations of results generally focus on a single partner's objectives. Very few partnerships have been systematically evaluated from the more holistic perspective of their contributions to social, economic or environmental goals … None of the reviewed frameworks or methods for partnership evaluation appears to have been mainstreamed in evaluation practice'.' (Horton et al. 2009 p.2 and p.38)*

It is clear that the central challenge is not the lack of frameworks but the lack of understanding regarding how to operationalize and contextualise them effectively (Sanginga 2006). Without public documentation of their use it is very difficult to ascertain whether such approaches actually assist in partnership evaluation.

> *Everyone loves a good framework or matrix. But evaluation is really most useful is when it starts with use – not with an elaborate model. It is important to begin by asking who is the user of the evaluation and what do they need to know? After that you can ask, with the time and money available, what is a viable set of*

> *methods to help get there? Focus on use first, not models or matrixes.*
>
> *(Interview with Katherine Hay, 9.11.11)*

## 5.2 Innovative methods

Whilst frameworks are important tools in partnership evaluation, there is a strong argument for transitioning away from being solely dependent upon them. Indeed, it appears that the skilled use of appropriate methods is the pivotal issue in unlocking the more complex questions of partnership evaluation (Patrinos *et al.* 2009) and facilitating holistic evaluative thinking. The principles of flexibility and context-specific approaches that apply to partnerships are also relevant in regard to partnership evaluation where experience demonstrates that 'there is no 'one size fits all' model that can be neatly applied from place to place. Indicators for measuring the effectiveness of partnerships are much the same: they must be developed in situ taking into account the definitions of success of each partner' (Caplan and Jones 2002 p.6). This pertinent advice demonstrates the limitations of depending on prescriptive assessment frameworks (George Brown 2011). It helps partnership evaluation to move beyond generic, survey-based responses and assess the specific issues of what worked well or did not work well, in what ways, why, and at what stages of the partnership (St-Pierre and Burley 2010).

This should not be viewed as synonymous with discrediting all frameworks and formalised approaches. Frameworks and indicator lists are vital, their limitation lies in the fact they are often viewed as sufficient in and of themselves. Rather they should be viewed as a foundation upon which more complicated, nuanced methods can be utilised to contextualise the evaluation. Tennyson (2004) has engaged positively with this issue, focusing on how to utilise indicators as effective tools within partnership evaluation rather than as formulas to be governed by (see Annex 3). This links back to considering what the purpose of the evaluation is, who it is for and what they need to know. Once these things have been determined the most important issue to address is: with the time, human capacity, and financial resources available, what are the methods that will best help in achieving the objectives of the partnership evaluation?

> *In order to get to the core of the issues around partnership evaluation we need to engage with 360 degree evaluation approaches. We need to create learning spaces in which the partners and the key stakeholders can reflect on the issues that the partnership is facing … as part of an internally driven process rather than being externally imposed. It is not enough to just have a list of indicators, you need to engage with and understand the complexity of the system.*
>
> *(Interview with Susan Godt, 7.12.11)*

As previously mentioned, evaluating partnerships presents a specific methodological challenge in contrast to evaluating programmes. Conventional methods such as control groups, baseline studies and attribution analysis can all become more complicated due to the lack of specific project focus. However, they remain useful if used in a contextualised, innovative manner (Patton 2008). In addition to valuable foundational methods such as interviews and focus groups, there are a range of innovative methods that can be used to good effect when undertaking partnership evaluation and are valuable in leading towards more evaluative thinking (Research Matters 2008).

1. **Most Significant Change (MSC):** a method of evaluating change that uses open questions and story collection rather than prescriptive indicators (Davies *et al.* 2003, Sigsgaard 2002).
2. **Appreciative Inquiry:** an on-going and iterative process of evaluation, valued by DFID (2003) for use in a partnership context.
3. **Outcome Mapping:** a participatory process that facilitates a shift in focus and views learning about impact as a constant iterative cycle (Earl *et al.* 2001).
4. **Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS):** a methodological systems developed by ActionAid that prioritises the process-based development of a learning culture, emphasising participation and power sharing (Chapman *et al.* 2004).

In addition, a variety of other methodological tools can help promote participatory evaluation and the development of evaluative thinking in partnership such as Hierarchical Card Sorting (HCS), Evolving storylines, Network models, Weighted checklists, After Action Review, Horizontal Evaluation (Details on these and other approaches can be found by exploring the online communities listed in the box below).

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**Potential communities to engage with on more innovative methods for promoting evaluative thinking (many with pre-existing links to IDRC):**

- Monitoring and Evaluation News (mande.co.uk)
- The Pelican Initiative: Platform for Evidence-based Learning and Communication for Social Change (dgroups.org/Community.aspx?c=3c4b8b5b-d151-4c38-9e7b-7a8a1a456f20)
- The Outcome Mapping Learning Community (outcomemapping.ca)
- Reflect and Learn (reflectlearn.org)
- DAC Network on Development Evaluation (oecd.org/document/27/0,3746,en_21571361_34047972_34542235_1_1_1_1,00.html)
- AEA365 (www.aea365.org/blog/)

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The discipline of partnership evaluation as a whole would benefit from proactively learning from the more innovative evaluation networks, which appear more willing to embrace the complexity of partnership assessment. Whilst there is likely to be resonance with this within IDRC, it remains a challenge for many of the more traditional bilateral and multi-lateral organisations to incorporate more than prescriptive frameworks.

## 6. Major types of organisation

There are many different types of organisations that are involved in partnership evaluation. In order to be of most use, the review does not focus on how organisations describe their approach to evaluation but instead refers to and draws on specific evaluations that organizations have conducted in relation to partnerships, recognising that each category is not a fully coherent community of practice. This is a brief overview, with a selection of evaluations from each community listed in Annex 2.

**Multilateral and bilateral organizations**

Enhancing partnerships is a key agenda for many of the multilaterals, with lots of resources and sharing of guidelines. Various UN agencies are also actively involved in the evaluation of partnerships (UNDP 2000). The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank has published guidelines for reviewing and evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs (GRPP) (IEG 2007a) and a Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programmes (IEG 2007). Rochlin *et al.* (2008 p.17) identify the World Bank as 'one of the few institutions to invest time and effort to evaluate the performance of partnerships, setting out formal and thorough evaluation guidelines for every major global partnership it supports.' The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) also demonstrates a purposeful evaluation of their partnership based work at the IMF (Abrams 2009). USAID is widely involved in evaluating partnerships (USAID 2001, 2007) as is DFID through their Evaluation Department (DFID 2003). Likewise, CIDA conducts evaluations of its partnerships in different countries (CIDA 2007).

**Foundations**

The philanthropic sector, foundations, and associated funder collaboratives (Kania and Kramer 2011) has grown rapidly over the last two decades. There is significant analysis surrounding this community of practice but limited understanding of the impact of their partnership work. Although all the major foundations have significant attention on evaluation and have developed a range of innovative evaluation tools (Hughes 2005), there is less explicit attention on partnership evaluation, with the Gates Foundation (2002) and Aga Khan Foundation (2007) being something of an exception in this.

**Non-governmental Organizations**

Numerous International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) are engaged with the evaluation of partnerships. In many cases they rely on universities or other academic institutions to undertake evaluations and on the whole are more open to utilising evaluation approaches which incorporate innovative methods and evaluative thinking (Oxfam 2007, Tearfund 2008, Christian Aid 2010).

**Consultancies**

There are also a growing number of consultancies that specialise, in varying forms, in the evaluation of partnerships. These include International Organisation Development Limited, The Partnering Initiative, and The Groupe URD.

# 7. Recommendations and further avenues

The review concludes by offering broad recommendations for IDRC and identifying potential avenues for further exploration into partnership evaluation. It begins with generic reflections on the wider context of partnership evaluation and then closes with specific reflections for DPD. The suggestions are deliberately wide ranging and engage with a number of different potential routes forward.

**General reflections**

Partnership evaluation is by nature a complicated, challenging undertaking. Engaging with both process and outcomes is vital, and there will always be blurred boundaries between evaluating the

outcomes of a project that was undertaken in partnership and evaluating the partnership itself. Within this, effective partnership evaluation is dependent on a clear understanding of overall purpose. The three sets of framing questions articulated in section 4.1 provide a clear sequencing for engaging with this at the outset and throughout partnership evaluation. Central to the task of evaluating partnership is the challenge of evaluating communication, both internally and externally. Deliberately placing relational concerns and communication at the centre of an evaluation strategy could have a significant impact on overall understanding of partnership evaluation. This could facilitate a shift in practice whereby participants are incentivised to engage honestly in dialogue and constructive critique, ultimately leading to move effective development outcomes.

**Recommendations for DPD**

- DPD and IDRC more broadly should reflect on current priorities: is it to develop better internal mechanisms for evaluating partnerships that IDRC are a member of, or developing approaches to promoting external evaluations involving all partners, or both? Within the IDRC Donor Partnering Process Model (IDRC 2007 p.13) the evaluation of the partnership is primarily situated within the sixth and final stage called 'closure'. How could evaluative thinking be incorporated throughout in a more holistic manner?

- DPD has a potential role in proactively utilising the more innovative methodological approaches to partnership evaluation. The pre-existing commitment to evaluative thinking within IDRC makes this more viable than in most other organisational contexts.

- There are lots of partnership evaluation frameworks (Annex 1) and limited evidence of use. There would be benefit for DPD and the Evaluation Unit in conducting cross-sector research to ascertain whether the frameworks are being used in any setting. This could lead to an evaluation of the evaluation frameworks: a comparative assessment of how the partnership evaluation frameworks actually operate in practice.

- Much of the literature on partnership evaluation focuses on the outliers: the really good and really bad partnerships. DPD could document the extremes and developing a method to determine the catalysts that push them in either direction: empirical research to evaluate what it is that makes partnerships great successes or failures?

- As seen, cross partner evaluation of partnerships remains rare. It is even rarer for these evaluations to be shared publicly. DPD could consider championing an approach that allows for the development of two different types of partnership evaluation reports: one for the partners only and one for the wider audience, gradually developing a knowledge bank for the community of practice. Integrated with this is the option for approaching joint evaluations as a natural consequence of partnership. This could begin with a low-stakes, pilot initiative with a willing IDRC partner.

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# Annexes

**Annex 1: List of frameworks, toolkits and resources for partnership evaluation**

| Title, author, year and sector | Key points | Reference and access |
|---|---|---|
| **Title:**<br>The Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT).<br><br>**Author and year:**<br>UN Global Compact Office, 2007<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | An interactive tool designed to improve the impact and sustainability of UN business partnerships - formed in collaboration between different UN agencies. | UN Global Compact Office, 2007. Enhancing partnership value: A tool for assessing sustainability and impact. New York: United Nations Global Compact Office.<br>unglobalcompact.org/Issues/partnerships/pat.html |
| **Title:**<br>Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR)<br>**Author and year:**<br>Gajda, 2004<br>**Sector:**<br>Health | An assessment tool that captures central principles of collaboration. Used as part of a four-step evaluation process different stakeholders in order to quantitatively and qualitatively gauge, celebrate, and communicate the relative strength of their collaborative endeavour over time. | Gajda R. 2004. Utilising collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. American Journal of Evaluation, 25, 1, p.65-77.<br><br>theolingroup.com/pdf/Shared%20Spaces%20and%20Collaboration/Utilizing%20Collaborative%20Theory%20to%20Evaluate%20Strategic%20Alliances%20(Rebecca%20Gajda).pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT)<br>**Author and year:**<br>Hardy *et al.*, 2003<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | A partnership self-assessment scale coming out of the work of the UK Government Strategic Partnership Taskforce. | Hardy, B., Hudson, B. and Waddington, E. 2003. Assessing strategic partnership: the partnership assessment tool. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London. |
| **Title:**<br>Plotting Partnerships<br>**Author and year:**<br>Caplan, 2003<br>**Sector:**<br>Water and sanitation | A tool for ensuring increased accountability and the assessment of accountability within a partnership using innovation, task and rule oriented. | Caplan, K., 2003. Plotting Partnerships: Ensuring Accountability and Fostering Innovation. Practitioner Note Series: Building Partnerships for Development in Water and Sanitation<br>bpdws.org/web/d/doc_80.pdf?statsHandlerDone=1 |
| **Title:**<br>Framework for evaluation of cross-sector partnerships<br>**Author and year:**<br>Jorgensen, 2006 | A framework for evaluating partnerships within a development and poverty reduction context with an extensive list of parameters and measures to select from. Focus on both processes and outcomes - emphasis in | Jørgensen, M. 2006. Evaluating cross-sector partnerships. Paper presented at the conference on Public–private Partnerships In The Post-World Summit On |

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| **Sector:**<br>Sustainable development | relation to both 'developmental outcomes' (eg MDGs) and 'business outcomes' (assisting in organisational objectives). | Sustainable Development Context, Copenhagen Business School, August 14, 2006. unrisd.org/unrisd/website/events.nsf/d063b7f4013ddaeb80256b59004b47a3/bc20f4baffcff713c1257219004abb34/$FILE/Mette.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>OECD Environmental Partnerships Evaluation Survey<br>**Author and year:**<br>OECD, 2006<br>**Sector:**<br>Sustainable development | This evaluation of partnerships within OECD member country governments suggests a potential framework for evaluating governmental partnerships. Includes a survey (Appendix 1). | OECD, 2006. Evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of partnerships involving governments from OECD countries. www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf?cote=env/epoc(2006)15/final&doclanguage=en |
| **Title:**<br>Framework for assessing partnership relationships<br>**Author and year:**<br>Brinkerhoff, 2002b<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | Identifies the fact that most evaluation frameworks are targeted at partnership programme outcomes rather than partnership relationships themselves. A partnership evaluation framework (no evidence of use) that emphasizes a process oriented, participatory, developmental approach. Focuses on the need for pre-defined success criteria, performance, efficacy, outcomes. | Brinkerhoff, J. M. 2002b. Assessing and improving partnership relationships and outcomes: a proposed framework. Evaluation and Program Planning Vol. 25, No. 3, 215–231. sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718902000174 |
| **Title:**<br>Impact matrix<br><br>**Author and year:**<br>Maselli, Lys, Schmid, 2006<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector – research | Major study on the impact of North South research partnerships. The study argues that partnership evaluations should shift from an emphasis on 'proving' impacts to 'improving impacts' – recognising impacts as generating new knowledge, changing attitudes, strengthening capacities of individuals and institutions, impacting target groups/beneficiaries. | Maselli, D., Lys, J. and Schmid, J. 2006. Improving impacts of research partnerships. Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE). Berne: Geographica Bernensia. kfpe.ch/download/KFPE_ImpactStudy-final.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Three spheres of performance governance<br>**Author and year:**<br>Uusikylä and Valovirta 2007. | Proposal of a multi-level approach to partnership evaluation that clarifies the difference between outputs at the level of individual organisations and the more difficult to assess issues of how these contribute to broader goals or | Uusikylä, P. and Valovirta, V. 2007. Three spheres of performance governance: Spanning the boundaries from single-organization focus towards a partnership |

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|---|---|---|
| **Sector:**<br>Cross-sector - governance | outcomes. The first level focuses on the enabling performance factors (learning, process development and resources). The second centers on the performance targets of a single organization. The third is called 'the multi-organizational sphere of effectiveness' where positive results are dependent on multiple actors. | network. Evaluation, Vol. 13, No. 4, 399–419.<br>evi.sagepub.com/content/13/4/399.abstract |
| **Title:**<br>The Partnership Evaluation Tool (PET)<br><br>**Author and year:**<br>Boydell, L. 2007.<br><br>**Sector:**<br>Health | An online tool for partnership evaluation that is designed to be useful for both new and mature partnerships. Two surveys to find out how much partners value the partnership and how effective they have found the partnership to be. The tool is intended to be administered at regular intervals so as to track partnership progress, assess emerging benefits and identify areas that require further support and development. Developed by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland. | publichealth.ie/files/file/IPHliterature.pdf<br><br>The partnership evaluation surveys:<br>partnershiptool.ie/uploadedfiles/Q1.pdf<br>partnershiptool.ie/uploadedfiles/Q2.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>New Partnership Initiative Framework<br><br>**Author and year:**<br>Charles & McNulty, 1999.<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | A template for USAID, with set indicators. The proposed framework highlights three domains of inter-sectoral partnering: the values and capacity of the partnership, the process of partnering, and the impact of the partnership. With eight dimensions within these three domains. | Charles, C., & McNulty, S. 1999. Partnering For Results: Assessing the Impact of Inter-Sectoral Partnering.<br>portals.wdi.wur.nl/files/docs/msp/PNACG107.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>IMCISD – 10 qualities for partnership evaluation<br>**Author and year:**<br>CIELAP, 2005.<br><br>**Sector:**<br>Sustainable development | Offers the ten qualities of successful partnerships and core elements of each. The framework operates by the user assessing the partnership strengths and weaknesses on the basis of each element and then completing a ranking exercise. Demonstrated practically through the evaluation of two partnerships for sustainable development. | CIELAP, 2005. Partnerships for Sustainability: Evaluating and Improving Two Partnerships. Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy.<br>cielap.org/pdf/twopartnerships.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>The Partnership Assessment Tool<br>**Author and year:**<br>Hardy *et al.* 2003<br>**Sector:**<br>Health | The tool is developed in response to the complexities of working in effective partnership – and the need to determine what constitutes effectiveness. It provides a simple way of assessing the effectiveness of partnership working and offers a rapid appraisal or 'health check' to identify problem areas. | Hardy, B., Hudson, B. And E. Waddington. 2003. Assessing Strategic Partnership: The Partnership Assessment Tool. Strategic Partnering Task Force and the Nuffield Institute for Health. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK Government.<br>www.communities.gov.uk/doc |

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| | | uments/localgovernment/pdf/135112.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Partnership development continuum<br><br>**Author and year:**<br>Mullinix 2002<br>**Sector:** | Describes a continuum of relationship building and nine dimensions of the partnership relationship between INGOs and NGOs (focus of interaction; activities/ projects/ programs, time and orientation, benefit, trust and respect, organizational structures, organizational strategies and information access, locus of influence and written agreements or contracts. | Mullinix, B. 2002. Nurturing Partnership: A Southern African Continuum of Flexible Stages in Partnership Development. Current Issues in Comparative Education, 3, 2.<br>www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/Issues/03.02/32mullinix.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Indicative principles and standards<br>**Author and year:**<br>IEG 2007<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | The indicative principles and standards in the Sourcebook are intended to improve the quality of partnership evaluation within the World Bank. | Independent Evaluation Group/World Bank. 2007. Sourcebook for evaluating global and regional partnership programs: indicative principles and standards. Paris: OECD/DAC<br>siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGLOREGPARPROG/Resources/sourcebook.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Manual for monitoring and evaluating education partnerships<br>**Author and year:**<br>Marriot & Goyder 2009.<br>**Sector:**<br>Education | A detailed manual from UNESCO's IIEP dedicated to monitoring and evaluating education partnerships. It provides a clear and detailed approach to evaluating partnerships, working from the assumption of a conventional cyclical project cycle. There is no public evidence that the manual has been used. | Marriot, N. & Goyder, H., 2009. Manual for monitoring and evaluating education partnerships. Partnerships for Education, UNESCO Publications.<br>www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info_Services_Publications/pdf/2009/Mariott-Goyder_Partnership.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Alliance scorecards and models<br>**Author and year:**<br>Gates Foundation, 2002.<br><br>**Sector:**<br>Health | An examination of global health alliances through key informant interviews and has simple rubrics for evaluating partnership. | Gates Foundation, 2002. Developing Successful Global Health Alliances.<br>gatesfoundation.org/global-health/Documents/GlobalHealthAlliances.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>Putting Partnering to Work<br>**Author and year:**<br>BPDb, 2001 | Business Partners for Development (BPDb) was established to study, support and promote cross-sector partnerships This is a guide for the development, maintenance and | BPDb, 2001. Putting Partnering to Work – Tri-sector partnership results and recommendations<br>grsproadsafety.org/themes/de |

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| **Sector:**<br>Cross sector | evaluation of tri-sectoral partnerships. | fault/pdfs/Putting%20Partneri<br>ng%20to%20Work%20-<br>%20MAIN%20REPORT.pdf |
| **Title:**<br>The Logical Framework<br>Approach<br>**Author and year:**<br>CIDT, 2005<br>**Sector:**<br>Cross sector | Wide ranging paper advocate the use of<br>a Logical Framework for assessing<br>partnership. | CIDT, 2005. An Introduction of<br>Multi-Agency Planning Using<br>the Logical Framework<br>Approach. CIDT, University of<br>Wolverhampton.<br>wlv.ac.uk/webteam/internatio<br>nal/cidt/cidt_Multi_Agency_Pl<br>anning.pdf |

**Annex 2: Selection of examples of partnership evaluations**

A selection of partnership evaluations from across different sectors and organisations. The majority of these examples are focused on both the outcomes of the partnership and also the workings of the partnerships themselves.

An evaluation of a partnership between DFID and WHO (DFID 2004)
dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/evaluation/ev651.pdf

An evaluation of a CIDA partnership in Mali (CIDA 2007)
acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NAT-2672821-GMT#a2

An evaluation of the NEPAD eSchools demonstration project (Farrell *et al.* 2007)
www.infodev.org/en/Publication.355.html

An evaluation of a partnership from Aga Khan in Kyrgyzstan (Aga Khan 2007).
www.akdn.org/publications/civil_society_kyrgyzstan_partnership.pdf

An evaluative review of all Oxfam global partnerships (Oxfam 2007)
policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/oxfam-gb-in-partnership-a-global-strategic-evaluation-200607-135669

An evaluation of partnership between Christian Religious Entities (CREs), national governments and donors on HIV in Africa (Tearfund 2008)
tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/HIV/The%20Potentials%20and%20Perils%20of%20Partnership.pdf

An evaluation of a partnership between Christian Aid and DFID (Christian Aid 2010)
christianaid.org.uk/images/ChristianAidPPAEvaluationReport.pdf

An evaluation of a ten-year multi-stakeholder partnership for higher education in Africa (Parker 2010) foundation-partnership.org/pubs/pdf/phea_case_study.pdf

A resource of over thirty evaluations of GRPPs, organised by sector, from the IEG
web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTOED/EXTGLOREGPARPROG/0,,contentMDK:21178355~menuPK:4426469~pagePK:64829573~piPK:64829550~theSitePK:4426313,00.html

**A selection of consultancy reports on or regarding partnership evaluation:**

An IOD evaluation report commissioned by DFID: Global Water Partnership Joint Donor External Evaluation Final Report. iodparc.com/project/global_water_partnership.html

A TPI report regarding Microsoft and its success in developing and evaluating partnerships.
thepartneringinitiative.org/docs/tpi/2010TPIMicrosoftWP2June.pdf

A URD evaluation report regarding the partnership between DG Echo (the department in charge of humanitarian issues within the European Commission) and the ICRC.
ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/evaluation/2006/cicr_final_en.pdf

A URD evaluation report regarding the partnership between DG Echo and UNRWA
urd.org/IMG/pdf/unrwa.pdf

**Annex 3: Using Indicators to Measure Partnerships (Caplan and Jones 2002)**

| Expectations | Limitations/Considerations |
|---|---|
| Indicators will provide guidance on where to improve performance | Tendency to collect what is available versus what is meaningful |
| Indicators will prove the partnership's rationale (like a cost benefit analysis) | Partnerships are a constantly evolving process whereby strict cost-benefit analysis undoubtedly oversimplifies impacts, constraints and benefits |
| Project outputs will provide some analysis of partnership effectiveness | Analysis of outputs alone fails to consider the numerous contextual-institutional factors within which a partnership works and may not give many clues of how to improve the partnership itself |
| Indicators of project outputs provide some analysis of partnership success | Partnership success is usually defined quite differently by different partners |
| Indicators will provide feedback on meeting objectives | Indicators are usually subject to varying interpretations depending on the perspective of different stakeholders |
| Indicators provide a forum for dialogue | They can also provide a source of conflict |

**Annex 4: Factors affecting partnership effectiveness (St Pierre and Burley 2010, IDRC 2009)**

| Factor | Description of factor | Elements of factor |
|---|---|---|
| Partnership Roots | This refers to the context in which the partnership is situated, in terms of the partners' previous experience, reputation, collaboration history and internal and external factors. | • **External and internal environment:** These are aspects external to the scope and influence of the partnership (such as economic or political factors) and their corresponding organizations or internal aspects related to programming and policy parameters within the partner organizations.<br>• **Previous collaboration**: This refers to previous collaboration among the partner organizations, not necessarily among the same people or programs involved in the partnerships.<br>• **Experience in the relevant field:** This refers to the extent of substantive corporate knowledge in the thematic area addressed by the partnership.<br>• **Reputation:** This relates to the overall perception of the partner and the efficacy of their work within the broad international development community and more generally in the media. |
| Complementarity | This factor refers to the degree of complementarity and consistency among partners' vision, interests and implementation approaches. | • **Shared overarching vision and objectives:** including abstract goals and concrete objectives for the program.<br>• **Common interests and approaches:** Implementation approaches and processes for realization of program's goals.<br>• **Mutual respect, understanding and trust** |
| Level of Commitment | The level of motivation of partner organizations is demonstrated by the involvement of senior staff from each partner; the extent of preparation for and engagement in meetings; and the existence of champions who spearheaded the initiative. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Equal Footing | One of IDRC's principles of partnership is that the organization works on equal footing with partners and does not act as an executive agency; IDRC seeks to maintain an equal position or standing in relation to other partners and ensure that no one partner dominates. | |
| Risk Identification and Management | This refers to the four elements of the risk management process, including identification, assessment, management and monitoring. | • **Risk categories** established in the *Partnering by Design* document. |
| Terms of Engagement | This factor refers to the establishment, either formally or informally of protocol, in other words, the terms of engagement or the "rules" guiding the partnership | • **Clarity and level of detail of terms of engagement**<br>• **Relevance/ appropriateness of original terms of engagement** |
| Communication | This is defined as the 'channels used by collaborative partners to send and receive information, keep one another informed and convey opinions to influence the group's actions' (Mattessich *et al.* 2001) | • **Negotiation**: the process and effectiveness of negotiation processes<br>• **Frequency, detail, response time and general expectations around communication**<br>• **Conflict resolution mechanisms**<br>• **Communication with external audiences**<br>• **Internal communication** |
| Governance and Decision Making | Governance structures refer to bodies usually set up to provide strategic advice and program oversight. Governance is a cross-cutting factor that often has a significant influence on partnership health and effectiveness from the time of its formation, usually at the early implementation stage if not earlier, through to closure. | • **Design process, elaboration of TORs**<br>• **Composition, Responsibilities and Procedures**<br>• **Adherence to original TORs**<br>• **Feedback loops with project/program implementation**<br>• **Decision-making**: Clarity on who makes decisions and how they are made<br>• **Effectiveness of governing bodies/ structure** |

**Annex 5: Endearing myths and enduring truths of partnership (Tennyson with Harrison 2008).**

| Issue | Endearing Myths | Enduring Truth |
|---|---|---|
| **Aims** | Partnerships are shaped around a common vision | The partners see the partnership activities as delivering their individual organizational aims |
| **Drivers** | Partner organizations are drawn together by a common goal | Partner organizations are drawn together by the complementarity of what they bring to the table |
| **Context** | Partners know each other well and partnerships benefit from a stable context | Partnerships are often most effective in fractured contexts where – by their very operation – they are building bridges and filling gaps |
| **Champions** | Individual champions are key to a partnership's success | Champions have a very limited function in partnerships – systems and structures are ultimately far more valuable |
| **External inputs** | Partnerships work best when locally owned and driven | Even local partnerships can benefit hugely from external inputs and interventions – in terms of sharing knowledge and experience as well as leveraging further resources |
| **Boundaries** | Ring-fenced partnerships are likely to be most successful | Innovation in partnerships depends on a more fluid structure if new ideas are to evolve and new opportunities are to be seized |
| **Costs** | Partnering costs are so high they are likely to be unattractive to many | Managed well, and with early investment in partnership building, costs can be shared and reduced by coordinating not duplicating efforts |
| **Wider benefits…** | …occur when the partnership itself reaches scale or is replicated | …occur when all those involved take the lessons and outputs from the partnership and apply them in their own spheres of operation and influence |

**Annex 6: Success factors as a foundation for evaluation within agriculture (Spielman *et al.* 2007).**

| Key success factors that form a foundation for effective evaluation and influence the success of PPPs in CGIAR, from an assessment of 75 projects and partnerships. |
|---|
| • Clearly defined objectives, roles and responsibilities that are compatible with the incentive structures, competencies or comparative advantages of the individual partners.<br>• Bridge-building mechanisms to overcome tensions caused by cross-sectoral mistrust, misperceptions, and unclear expectations of partners.<br>• Mechanisms to ensure commitment and ownership, to ensure that all partners contribute to the innovation process, that relationships between partners are durable, and that roles, responsibilities and benefits are distrusted equitably.<br>• Organisational innovations – internal changes in structures, behaviours and practices within the partners' organisations.<br>• Availability of tools to manage and mitigate risks.<br>• Innovative mechanisms (formal and informal) to manage the exchange and use of knowledge – especially knowledge that is proprietary or subject to some form of intellectual property rights. |

**Annex 7: An overview of a new approach to partnership assessment (Caplan *et al.* 2007).**

**A New Logic for Partnership Assessment: A Quick Explanation**

Each partnership has a specific, though constantly changing, context that determines its scope and direction. This context can be framed around three interlocking layers:

1. The external environment (as reflected in financial, legal and institutional considerations) that shapes the scope and ambition of the partnership.
2. The organisational environment (as reflected in each partner's scope, mission, strategy and capacity) that dictates the resources the partners put on the table, their analysis of the opportunity presented, and the level of risk they are willing to undertake.
3. The individual partner representative's incentives and disincentives to engage (influenced by their own knowledge, beliefs, interests, position, accountabilities, etc.) that dictates the attention and value that they place on the partnership.

The context determines what drives partners to get involved in the first place.

These drivers are then negotiated between the parties into desired targets reflected by proposed outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The diversity amongst the partners (particularly if they come from different stakeholder groups) should ensure that on-going negotiations within the partnership cover a wide range of viewpoints.

Negotiated targets are then reflected in resource commitments made by each partner and contributions towards decision making.

If all partners are actively and effectively meeting their resource commitments and contributing to decision making, the partnership can thereby be deemed as effective as possible. A partnership will by definition not be successful if the drivers for partners to participate are not sufficiently met as this may result in unilateral decisions by one partner to alter its engagement.

There will always be some external stakeholders who will try to hold the partners accountable for more than what their drivers will actually allow them to contribute. However, while a partnership can be criticised for identifying the wrong problem, not being ambitious enough, or not being inclusive enough – it cannot be deemed ineffective for not delivering on targets that partners themselves have not identified, negotiated and agreed upon.

**Annex 8: Features of multi-stakeholder partnerships for education and implications for monitoring and evaluation (Marriot and Goyder 2009).**

| Features of multi-stakeholder partnerships for education | Implications for monitoring and evaluation |
|---|---|
| MSPEs are voluntary arrangements and may lack legal frameworks for regulation and enforcement of rules of engagement. | Monitoring and evaluation are probably the best tools for pinning down partners in terms of clarity and transparency. Monitoring and evaluation activities need to take into account both the performance and the outcomes achieved by the partnership, but also how well the partnership functions internally. |
| The establishment of MSPEs, and their delivery, are facilitated processes. | Monitoring and evaluation need to be part of the terms of reference of the facilitating/convening partner from the outset of the facilitation process. |
| Multi-stakeholder partnerships for education comprise groupings of organizations that straddle the public sector and private sector, including businesses and civil society organizations. | The expectations of partners from sectors with different traditions and perspectives, in terms of partnership monitoring and evaluation, need to be aligned early on in the partnering process. Capacity-building for partners with little experience of monitoring and evaluation may need to be addressed as part of the process of establishing the partnership. |
| Unlike many development partnerships, multi stakeholder partnerships for education tend not to evolve over time. Rather, they typically form around a specific educational challenge and have a fixed end point. However, there are exceptions to this rule. | Evaluations generally comprise two stages: a mid-term evaluation and, if the intention is to share learning with others, an ex-post, end-of-term evaluation. |
| Given the number and variety of partners involved, governance and management of multi-stakeholder partnerships for education are often multi-layered and complex. | Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of partnership governance and management systems should analyse the respective roles of the governing body and management in decision-making. Feedback processes and dissemination plans for monitoring and evaluation activities need to be defined early on to include all relevant stakeholders. |
| Multi-stakeholder partnerships for education take time to set up due to the need to reach consensus on key issues of mission, vision, objectives and methodology, including governance and management. | Analysis of the costs and benefits in an evaluation should factor in start-up costs prior to the formal establishment of the partnership. These should include the costs incurred by the convening partner in facilitating the exploration and building phases of the partnership. |
| Multi-stakeholder partnerships for education are diverse in size, age, educational focus and objectives, and in the type of activities supported. | While some variations in monitoring and evaluation approach and design are to be expected, certain principles and standards for the evaluation of multi-stakeholder partnerships for education are necessary and need to be agreed at the outset. |

**Annex 9: Partnership objectives and guiding principles provide a context for determining subsequent internal evaluation criteria (IDRC 2010).**

**IDRC partnership objectives and guiding principles**

Partnership objectives:
- To increase IDRC resources available to research for development through donor partnerships
- To enhance IDRC's engagement with key international organisations and networks interested in research for development
- To strengthen the capacity of research organisations and networks to form partnerships and mobilise resources
- To learn and contribute to good practice in the field of partnering for development

The guiding principles for IDRC decisions to pursue donor partnerships (IDRC 2010 p.20):
- Program fit: Initiatives must be complementary to, and consistent with Centre priorities and programming directions.
- Co-investment: IDRC leverages its own funds, which can be less than, great than, or equal to those of other funders
- Equal footing: The Centre is an equal partner in all decision-making processes
- Benefits outweigh risks: Early assessments indicate that partnership risks can be managed to capitalise on opportunities

**Annex 10: Partnership Key Performance Indicators (Zhao, 2002) (a non-development sector publication with applicable lessons)**

| Critical Success Factor | KPIs (example) |
| --- | --- |
| Commitment | Time and nature of contribution by partners |
| Communication | Frequency, mode and nature of communication between partners |
| Sharing | Frequency/amount and type of info/data exchanges between partners |
| Trust | Frequency of meeting one's expectation about another party's behavior and/or having confidence in another party |
| Profitability | Profit margins realized from collaborative projects |
| Productivity | Number/percentage of collaborative projects finished within time and budget |
| Market share | Percentage of market share obtained through partnerships |
| Corporate social responsibility | Speed and nature of responsiveness to environmental issues |
| Employee attitude | Employee turnover rate |
| Innovation and improvement | Number of new initiatives for improvement introduced |
| Customer satisfaction | Customer satisfaction rate |

**Annex 11: Summary of research findings on current practice in the evaluation of cross sector partnerships for sustainable development (Serafin *et al.* 2008).**

Research from The Partnering Initiative (TPI) canvassing views of partnership practitioners regarding current practice on partnership evaluation using desk research, a literature review, questionnaire surveys and face-to face interviews.

**1. DEFINITIONS:** Is there a consensus on the terminology related to evaluating cross-sector partnerships?
**KEY FINDING:** There is no consensus both within and across the civil society, business and public sectors as to definitions of what constitutes "evaluation" and what does not. A variety of terms are used including evaluation, tracking, assessing, monitoring, reviewing with no consistency over the terminology used.

**2. ASPECTS OF EVALUATION:** Which aspects of partnering are considered to be the most important in evaluations of cross-sector partnerships?
**KEY FINDING:** The focus on 'producing tangible results' or assessing impacts dominates current practice in evaluating cross-sector partnership performance. More intangible or unexpected outcomes resulting from cross-sector partnering are not well addressed and are often ignored altogether. Partnership performance is seldom monitored and evaluated in relation to the potential advantages or benefits, which can be achieved.

**3. PLANNING EVALUATION:** In what ways do partnership practitioners plan to evaluate their partnerships and what is the focus of such evaluations?
**KEY FINDING:** Few cross-sector partnerships are subjected to formal evaluation. Of these, only a minority are evaluated in a systematic or comprehensive way in terms of their overall performance and impact. Alternatives to partnership approaches are seldom considered in evaluations. Most partnerships are evaluated from the perspective of one of the partners in relation to financial investment and related reputation risks/benefits.

**4. TOOLS:** What tools are used for evaluating cross-sector partnerships?
**KEY FINDING:** Evaluations of cross-sector partnerships most commonly rely on the judgement of specialist consultants, who make use of a wide range of specialized tools, frameworks, techniques and approaches. There is no single most favoured or accepted tool, framework or approach. Evaluators opt for the evaluation tools, which are most appropriate or relevant to meeting the needs, circumstances, purposes and organizational culture of specific sectors. Frameworks and tools are typically selected by the agency, partner or funding commissioning the evaluation.

**5. IMPROVING EVALUATION:** What are the most important barriers to improving evaluations of cross-sector partnerships?
**KEY FINDING:** The most frequently cited barrier to undertaking evaluations of cross-sector partnerships relates to securing adequate resources. The availability of resources is closely related to the way evaluations are organized and carried out. In other words, who decides on their scope, who funds them, who carries them out and who uses and interprets the results are crucial questions that must be dealt with by the partners working together in a cross-sector partnership. A key aspiration for partnership practitioners relates to finding ways of designing evaluations of cross-partnerships as a whole in ways, which draw on or include all partners, as well as those who have been affected by the activities of the partnership. The aspiration in this regard is to ensure evaluation results contribute to improving partnership performance and impact.

**Annex 12: Core outcomes and indicators of IDRC partnership activities (IDRC 2010)**

| Outcomes | Indicators |
|---|---|
| **Objective 1:** *To increase IDRC resources available to research for development through donor partnerships* | |
| Through healthy and effective partnerships with existing and emerging donors, IDRC research programs have access to increased financial and technical resources. | There will be examples of:<br>• Partnerships with existing donors<br>• Partnerships with emerging donors located in one or more of the following countries: Brazil, India, China and South Africa<br>• Effective partnerships, which have elements such as properly identified risks, appropriate governance structures, clear terms of engagement, appropriate communication mechanism, and well-functioning internal processes and information systems<br>• Donor satisfaction with partnership activities, program delivery, and technical and financial reporting |
| **Objective 2:** *To enhance IDRC's engagement with key international organizations and networks interested in research for development* | |
| IDRC's participation in research funders' networks and international organizations influences the agendas of the research funding community, policymakers, and IDRC programming. | There will be examples of:<br>• IDRC participation in research funders' networks and organizations<br>• IDRC participation in the decision-making processes in research funders' networks and organizations |
| **Objective 3:** *To strengthen the capacity of research organizations and networks to form partnerships and mobilize resources* | |
| IDRC supported research organizations and networks have strengthened capacity to address financial sustainability issues. Locally or regionally based trainers in resource mobilization are better able to respond directly to the needs of IDRC research partners. | There will be examples of:<br><br>• Feedback from training that knowledge is applied<br>• Research organizations and networks demonstrate increased sustainability through organizational change and mobilization of resources<br>• The network of trainers available to work with IDRC research partners has increased<br>• The network of consultants and experts able to work with IDRC research partners has increased<br>• IDRC tools for resource mobilization are consolidated, accessible, and used by research partners and trainers |
| **Objective 4:** *To learn and contribute to good practice in the field of partnering for development* | |
| IDRC develops, documents, and shares its learning on partnering with internal and external audiences to build relations with organizations and institutes involved in the field of partnering. Relationship building with these types of organizations encourages IDRC to be receptive and responsive to current thinking and practice in partnering. | There will be examples of:<br>• IDRC programs are provided with analysis of trends within the research donor community<br>• Development and use of a partnership monitoring framework<br>• Partnership learning sessions for IDRC staff are held<br>• Sharing of good practice with the members of the field of partnering |