Virtual Exhibition E-Discussions: Working Together for Sustainable Development

Held on behalf of the
United Nations Development Programme and
Business Action for Sustainable Development
as a contribution to the
World Summit on Sustainable Development

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Executive Summary

In the lead up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Business Action for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme are co-sponsoring the Virtual Exhibition[1] to showcase sustainable development partnerships to the world.

From May 6 to June 11, 2002, on behalf of the Virtual Exhibition, the International Institute for Sustainable Development facilitated an electronic consultation on the nature of partnerships for sustainable development. The dialogue explored the power and potential of SD partnerships.

The WSSD Partnerships E-consultation provided opportunities to explore the following topics:

- Examples of partnerships and successful experiences
- Planning processes for partnerships
- Communication tools for partnerships
- Evaluation of partnerships and their outcomes
- Long term support for partnerships, beyond the WSSD

Over 475 people subscribed to the e-conference, with one third of the contributions coming from participants based in the south/transitional countries. A richness of observation and analysis was provided, from which can be drawn a number of useful conclusions about partnership practice.

Principal Observations

1. The success of a partnership can be determined by:

   a. the attainment of its immediate objectives;
   b. the quality of the partnership experience itself (respect and trust demonstrated among the partners, the sharing of knowledge, the leveraging of resources, the resolution of conflict); and
   c. the realization of the "multiplier effect": when the partnership results in additional (or unexpected) benefits (influencing organizations, policies and practices beyond the immediate activities of the partnership).

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[1] The Virtual Exhibition: **http://www.virtualexhibit.net**

2. There are four requirements for partnerships to be successful:

    a. There must be a compelling motive for the organizations to come together.
    b. The organizations must undertake real work together (moving beyond information sharing to action).
    c. Organizations must learn how to work with each other in the partnership.
    d. Organizations must communicate the results of their partnership to others.

3. To work together effectively, partners should share a common vision for and commitment to the partnership. Shared values are also important, including a common commitment to sustainable development.

4. Partnerships can have significant asymmetries among the partners, in terms of size, influence, and resources brought to the table. Partners do not need to have the same expectations in common, but they do need to understand each others' objectives. There must be mutual clarity and understanding among partners as to what they expect to gain or accomplish through the partnership.

5. Particular attention should be paid to the equitable treatment of southern / transitional country partners, to ensure the use of their knowledge and expertise, and to compensate them fairly for their contributions.

6. Attention to planning, structure and decision making mechanisms can help to keep partnerships on track. Partnerships can experience strong external influences on their efforts (political, religious, financial). Unless the partnership is well organized and the institutional commitments are in place, such influences can significantly derail the partnership.

7. Individual organizations are always affected by the experience of working with others. Organizations should be prepared to be flexible and adaptable in their own internal business processes in order to work more efficiently with their partners. Organizations should be prepared for and embrace the change process.

8. There is still a gap between problem solving at the local level, and the ability to influence policies that may have led to the problem in the first place. While success may lie in addressing problems at the local level, the partners should also consider how to communicate their success to decision makers nationally, and how to inform the international community of their work.

9. The communications tools for working together and exchanging knowledge range from instant messaging to theatre. Partners must agree early in their work on which tools they will use, building the capacity of those partners who are not as equally prepared in terms of familiarity and infrastructure as others.

10. There is a growing recognition that monitoring and evaluation of partnerships is necessary to ensure the work is being done, and to keep partners together.

However, there is still very limited understanding on how to do this simply and effectively, within available time, staff and financial resources.

11. Long term support for the partnership modality can be provided by the following:

    a. The donor community should move beyond "short burst project funding". Donors could benefit from more capacity building in understanding how partnerships function and how to support them financially.

    b. Private sector support has been observed to be very successful at the local level -- direct support to communities and community based organizations.

    c. Governments play several support roles:
        i. Maintaining or increasing financial and political commitments to local / national partnerships (e.g., Local Agenda 21 implementation) and to international funding mechanisms (e.g. the GEF).
        ii. Creating the enabling conditions for partnerships (policies, incentives, infrastructure needed for partnerships).

12. Partnerships can lead to improved accountability of individual sectors and organizations. The partnership modality has the potential to lead to new forms of democracy, where decision making is shared across sectors.

Introduction

What makes partnerships work? What undermines them? And what is needed to establish and sustain effective partnerships?

Decision-makers are increasingly noting the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development at the grassroots level. According to the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), partnerships are expected to be one of the Summit's major outcomes. Partnerships should be a key mechanism for translating political commitments into action.

In the lead up to the WSSD, Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are co-sponsoring the Virtual Exhibition[2] to showcase sustainable development partnerships to the world. BASD is a network of business organizations determined to contribute to the search for solutions in Johannesburg. (www.basd-action.net). UNDP assists countries to undertake poverty reduction programmes through government-led partnerships. The Virtual Exhibition has been created to provide a platform for all members of society - be they governments, NGOs, businesses or local communities - to share their sustainable development experiences and achievements. It is hoped that this exchange of expertise will provide the information and inspiration for others to follow suit.

From May 6 to June 11, 2002, participants in the Virtual Exhibition E-consultation met online to discuss five key issues in establishing and managing partnerships for sustainable development action.

- Examples of partnerships and successful experiences
- Planning processes for partnerships
- Communication tools for partnerships
- Evaluation of partnerships and their outcomes
- Long term support for partnerships, beyond the WSSD

The weekly record of the partnerships consultation follows.

Week 1: Introduction to the partnership experience

Moderator: Heather Creech, Director, Knowledge Communications, IISD

Governments, the private sector and civil society are learning to work collaboratively toward sustainable development goals. These collaborations take many forms ranging from project-based contracting to long-term strategic alliances and networks.

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[2] The Virtual Exhibition: **http://www.virtualexhibit.net**

As the Business Partners for Development note, "[P]artnerships... allow the scope of action to be expanded well beyond the limitations of individual groups. Such partnerships move beyond strict contractual relations. Consultation becomes dialogue; dialogue becomes engagement. Robust, focused multi-sector partnerships are incredibly demanding. They require significant commitment, confidence and an understanding that they are by nature a dynamic, rather than static, relationship."

The first week of the consultation provided the space for participants to introduce themselves and their experiences with partnerships. Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- What partnerships for sustainable development have you been involved with?
- What was your role within the partnership?
- When did you experience the partnership as being most alive and effective?
- What conditions made those high points of partnership experience possible?

Much of the discussion was also relevant to week two's debate on how to plan and manage partnerships. We have summarized here the points related to different types of partnerships and highlights of the partnership experience.

Findings

Background materials included overviews of typologies of partnerships, often organized around the types and numbers of actors in the partnership (NGO/Business/Government). However, participants described partnerships more by the work being undertaken and the desired outcomes of the partnership. The following synopsis provides the beginnings of a partnership typology based on the scale and nature of the work rather than by sectors and organizations. Many excellent examples were provided throughout the consultation. Only a few have been highlighted here to illustrate the range of partnership experience.

Public education and action partnerships

Example: school children planting community gardens in the U.K.
Desired outcome: Public education and outreach -- the promotion of local citizenship and sustainability.

Example: Global Education Week, in Europe, bringing together coordinators of national level initiatives to share experiences on improving public education on global issues.
Desired outcome: to create a regional (Pan European) approach, building on national experience.

Issues based partnerships

Example: International finance and sustainable development – a partnership in South America among NGOs, multilateral financial institutions, private international banks, and

experts to address the connection between international finance and sustainable development.

Desired outcome: Policy development and implementation -- the insertion of the finance and sustainability debate into financial fora in the region, influencing the bankers association, private and multilateral banks.

Community development partnerships

Example: Refuse collection projects in Kenya, involving community based organizations, World Wildlife Fund, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, and others
Desired outcome: Strengthened community empowerment, health and esteem, through locally managed waste control.

Resource management partnerships

Example: Northern Contaminants program, which looks at contaminants in traditional foods in the far north, and involves indigenous peoples, government ministries and educational institutions.
Desired outcomes: Environmental protection and sustainability of livelihoods, through improved understanding of contaminants, how they are released and how to limit their release.

Example: Biodiversity conservation project in southern Africa
Desired outcome: to inform rural communities bordering on protected areas about the need for conservation, and to reduce suspicion and conflict between communities and government officials.

Example: Promotion of clean, renewable energy sources in Turkey, through the Turkish Clean Energy Foundation (scientists and NGOs)
Desired outcomes: Awareness raising among bureaucrats and the donor community

South-North partnerships

Example: ProjectsAfrica: established by Africans to identify partnerships for conservation projects that will alleviate poverty and improve food security.
Desired outcome: International awareness raising and support for innovation in local level development projects.

Highlights of the partnership experience

A number of partnerships had one or more of the following "peak moments" in common, when the partnership felt most alive and had the most energy. In planning partnerships, organizers should keep these in mind for replication.

1. Bringing the whole group together, for face to face discussions of objectives and progress. While virtual communications supported regular interaction and

execution of specific tasks in a partnership, the real energy came from interacting in person, as a group.

2. Sharing experiences and acquiring knowledge from partners, both in person and virtually. Many participants mentioned how important the knowledge sharing within the partnership was, serving to increase understanding of different perspectives and respect for the skills and knowledge of the participants in the partnership. Partnerships bring new people to the table, and the interaction of different viewpoints can lead to the adaptation of ideas and good practices to new situations. Partnerships also leverage new ideas and approaches, stimulating the process of innovation.

3. Leveraging of resources: participants often commented on the satisfaction gained from the pooling and leveraging of resources to support their work and increase their likelihood of success. Resources ranged from shared physical facilities, shared financial and human resources, exchange of existing information, and the reduction of duplication of effort. There was, however, a major caveat raised by southern participants, that local resources in a partnership are often underutilized; that significant proportions of financial resources often remain with the northern partner; and that the growing base of southern expertise still goes unrecognized in favour of northern experts. Opportunities for partnership excellence and success appear to be undermined at times by these issues.

4. Resolving conflict: Participants involved in difficult land management and community development issues (for example, siting a hazardous waste facility) valued the forum for discussion and joint decision making in which potential areas of conflict could be identified, discussed and resolution found.

5. Completing major tasks together – fulfilling the objectives of the partnership. Sharing experiences, while important, needed to be done in the context of working together to accomplish specific tasks, projects and objectives. Partnership excellence was often determined by participants as the joint attainment of the goals of the partnership.

6. Good timing: later in the consultation, a participant reminded us that sometimes success occurs simply because, serendipitously, the right conditions are in place – other factors have led to partners being available and ready to share experience, build trust and work together.

Week 2: Planning processes for partnerships

Guest moderators: Joan Hubbard - Senior Partnership Specialist, World Bank Institute. Washington, DC, USA; **Javed Ahmad** - President, Foundation for Global Responsibility. Geneva, Switzerland

A quick glance at the business literature of the past ten years shows a rapid increase in attention paid to the importance of business alliances, networks and partnerships. These strategic models of collaboration enable organizations to adapt and to innovate in a constantly changing world.

Unfortunately, the private sector literature also indicates that over 60% of strategic alliances and networks fail outright or under perform. Common explanations for failure are varied. Trust broke down. Strategies changed. Champions moved on. Value did not materialize. Cultures did not mesh. Systems were not integrated.

However, these explanations can be more appropriately seen as symptoms of a failure to create a robust alliance management capability within an organization. Careful planning and negotiations within and between organizations are necessary to develop the governance structures and internal capacities that will enable the partnership to succeed. These tasks are even more critical when developing inter-sectoral partnerships for sustainable development given that partnering organizations often bring very distinct cultures, resources, and expertise to the initial task of establishing the partnership.

Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- How do organizations decide when to partner and when to "go it alone"?
- What is involved in establishing partnerships on the ground?
- How are partners chosen (or not) for collaborative efforts?
- How do partnerships develop governance and management structures that facilitate collaborative efforts?
- How do partnership source and allocate financial and human resources among the partners?
- How might organizational cultures need to change in order to work effectively in partnership?
- Can the use of partnership, network and alliance models streamline internal business and decision making processes in organizations, leading to more rapid and effective implementation of sustainable development at the local level?

Findings

On several occasions, participants requested definitions of terms: what is a partnership? What are the hallmarks? Does partnership automatically require a sharing of power and decision making among two or more parties? What is the difference between partnership and collaboration? Between partnership and networking? Between partnership and simply contracting another organization to undertake specific activities?

In general, most participants implicitly or explicitly acknowledged that a partnership is typically two or more organizations working jointly to accomplish specific goals and objectives (which is more than simply networking for the sake of knowledge exchange); with decision making shared among the partners (which goes beyond the contracting relationship); and with resources shared and leveraged (which goes beyond simple

collaboration on a piece of work). But key to this is the "compelling motive" – an external driver or challenge that organizations believe can only be addressed through organizations working together. Partnerships should be pursued when independent action cannot deliver the desired outcomes. Partnership for the sake of partnership will not lead to outcomes or solutions.

Some participants believed strongly that partnerships should be sought or initiated by those most affected by the problem needing addressing – and that success lies in focusing on well-being at the community level. One participant described a rural development project in western Rajasthan. When the village community itself was finally included in planning and implementing water harvesting structures, they effectively restored a highly degraded and vulnerable region and saved 33% of the development assistance funds in the process.

Related discussions were held on the issue of scale: while a partnership may be local in focus, it may also be complex, long term, requiring a wide range of stakeholders. And local level partnerships benefit from linkages to international networks, in terms of improved access to knowledge and expertise.

Information sharing, while not the ultimate goal of the partnership, is often the catalytic or starting point in organizational relationships. Organizations use the partnership to improve knowledge together. There is a highly desirable dynamic interplay between partners, enhanced when partners represent different views, sectors and interests.

An equally important driver is the desire to prevent conflict, by providing a mechanism for discussion and joint decision making – the partnership—in which potential areas of conflict can be identified, discussed and resolution found.

Participants described a number of conditions required for implementing effective partnerships.

- The need for a common vision, passion and commitment by all partners;
- The importance of shared values among the partners, including a shared commitment to sustainable development;
- Trust and respect for each other, combined with common and consistent adherence to processes for decision making and for execution of tasks;
- Commitment and credibility of the individuals from each organization who are actively involved in the work (their outlook and character, as one participant mentioned);
- Institutional support and recognition to the individuals for their work in the partnership;
- In general, "ownership" and commitment to the partnership by every organization involved.

Perhaps a key condition for success is that everyone is clear on what they hope to gain from the partnership – what their own self interest is. And when everyone sees what they can gain, they are more likely to sustain the partnership over time.

A guest moderator contributed a set of criteria for projects to be undertaken within a partnership. But in many ways, these criteria are also relevant to planning the partnership itself. They included:

- Setting clear, measurable and guaranteed results within an established timeframe and budgets;
- Expert project management by a reliable, implementing partner;
- Operational and financial sustainability.

A number of participants suggested that various stakeholders do not necessarily have to be "equal" to work together successfully. Instead they require:

- Adequate capacities to participate in the process;
- Access to information;
- Clear roles and responsibilities;
- Clear decision making protocols.

This opened up a rich vein of discussion on asymmetrical relationships. Participants questioned whether the interests of the stakeholders necessarily had to be the same. Some went so far as to suggest that stakeholders could enter a partnership with very different goals. Success at harmonizing differences in interests and goals, or at least being open and transparent about the expectations of each stakeholder, was dependent upon the maturity of the organizations involved. Robust terms for working together are required to address asymmetries in goals, in access to information, in size and power. One participant called this a partnership of symbiosis, where success is in fact dependent upon differences rather than similarities. The challenge is to pay heed to these differences.

Financial issues often throw a spotlight on asymmetries. Some participants recommended that funds and costs be equitably shared among the beneficiaries of the partnership. Others expressed strong concerns about north/south partnerships, where disbursement of funds is rarely "equitable". As mentioned earlier, southern participants expressed concern over involvement of high priced northern consultants by northern partners, at the expense of southern expertise. This leads to the appearance of "foreign intervention" in the partnership. Some went so far as to suggest that high level "debt for knowledge" partnerships be established. Many felt that the donor community needed more capacity building in understanding how partnerships work, and how to fund them adequately and appropriately, especially with regard to southern participation. As one participant suggested, "short burst project funding" practices should be changed to "more sustained transfer of knowledge, skills and assets among partners".

Some suggested that there may be times when the relationship is so unequal that partnership may not be possible, or will fail – for example, when a major or sole funder

of the work is one of the partners at the table. Another participant flagged the very real danger of undue outside political, religious, financial or other influence which can kill a budding partnership.

Several reflected on legal and governance mechanisms as the means to address asymmetries, and in general, to provide the framework for good management of the partnership. One recommended that Memoranda of Understanding "need to be drawn up and strictly adhered to by both parties … [devising] strict enforcement measures". Much later in the consultation, a participant requested samples of contracts that would address issues of liabilities and expectations in working with community based organizations. Another noted that "well thought out governance structures can … [enhance] legitimacy and effectiveness, and also help to redress some of the typical imbalances of power between partners from different sectors". That being said, such structures should remain "flexible enough to deal with an evolving and fluid situation…governance structures thus need to be rigorous but not rigid".

Participants shared the view that organizations entering partnerships need to be open to change. An important finding of the consultation was that individual organizations are always affected by the experience of working with others. As one participant stated, "Cross sector partnerships often inspire … institutions to comprehend their daily operations in a different manner". In entering a partnership, they should be prepared to commit to flexibility and adaptability in how they do business with their partners. There will be a constant tug of priorities between an organization's own work flow, and the demands of the partnership. This needs to be acknowledged and managed by each partner.

Partnerships need to be managed in such a way that they include cycles of action and reflection. Organizations are unlikely to "get it right" the first time they work together, therefore there needs to be room for reflection, learning and adapting. Expectations need to be managed, especially in the initial stages of development. One of the guest moderators discussed the importance of "relationship management": partnerships need "brokers" to ensure that partners maintain their openness and commitment to the relationships. Partnerships are not built overnight: social technologies and organizational learning techniques are needed to help the partners organize effectively.

In types of partnerships dealing with research issues, the relationship between research and communications practices was also discussed throughout the week. Partners flagged the need for local input to research and for communication of results to the local level. Communications to decision makers was also critical – one participant described the role of a partnership in promoting clean renewable energy options to Turkish government bureaucrats – and the need to reach out to and influence international institutions as well.

A significant finding was the real gap between community based initiatives and national/international policy setting. While local level partnerships are often very successful at addressing immediate problems, they often lack mechanisms to influence or change national policies that may have led to the problems in the first place. More

attention needs to be paid to learning how community based initiatives can leverage policy change. In many cases, this will require building capacity within the community organizations on communications and engagement strategies – the means to seek out and engage decision makers in their work.

A couple of special characteristics of some partnerships are worth noting:

- A number of participants described the value of involving children and youth in the work of the partnership, in reflection of the intergenerational nature of sustainable development.
- Many partnerships relied heavily, indeed almost exclusively, on volunteerism: hard work over many months from community representatives on local projects; NGOs receiving volunteer support from scientists and academics. The role of volunteers in partnerships warrants further examination.

Finally, several outcomes of the partnership process were identified.

1. Empowerment through partnerships leads to other benefits. There is a multiplier effect. For example, community governments working in partnership with NGOs and others on waste or water management challenges may turn their attention to literacy and health issues as well.

2. Partnerships can evolve into long term relationships. One participant described this as moving into second generation partnerships. Others noted the challenges of maintaining the partnership after initial objectives have been achieved, but before longer term goals are fulfilled. Trust can breakdown; groups can walk away from the partnership. On the other hand, if the partnership has achieved its purpose, it is often appropriate to wind the partnership up.

3. Partnerships can lead to improved accountability of individual sectors and organizations. The partnership modality has the potential to lead to new forms of democracy, where decision making is shared across sectors.

Week 3: Communication tools for partnerships

Guest moderators: **Sangeeta Gupta** - Area Convener, Centre for Cyber Applications, Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI). New Delhi, India; **Nick Moraitis** - Strategy and Partnership Coordinator, Taking IT Global. Melbourne, Australia.

Partnerships for sustainable development require organizations to develop capacity in the use of communication tools in order to enable effective internal collaboration as well as external transparency, accountability and impact. These tools include both old and new information and communication technologies, from print newsletters to telephone to email to web-based collaboration tools.

These communication tools enable organizations to collaborate across continents and to manage the involvement of more organizations than previously possible. To some degree, technological innovation has occurred more quickly than the ability of many organizations to adapt to the changes in how we work. Feelings of information overload and stress associated with the need to juggle the deadlines of multiple virtual project teams are becoming increasingly common.

Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- How has the Internet changed the way in which partnerships are developed and work to achieve sustainable development?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of various tools for meeting the internal and external communication needs of partnerships? How can Internet tools foster participation and ownership, improve access to information and knowledge, help foster integration (planning, organizations, etc.)?
- How do partnerships determine an appropriate suite of tools that meet their communication needs? How do they build the capacity of members to use tools they may be less familiar with?
- How do organizations negotiate the standards and protocols for using these tools within the partnership?
- How do partnerships develop and implement their external communications strategies? How do they allocate responsibility for these tasks within the partnership?

Findings

Participants were in general less interested in the discussion of ICT tools to support partnerships. Nevertheless, several important observations were contributed.

1. Participants noted that all information and communications tools have their uses, and that the emergence of electronic communications has been a real support for partnership and networking. ICTS "close the gap" by "improving the generation, flow, sharing and collaborative use of knowledge", as one noted. Others commented upon the ability to be able to stimulate dialogue, maintain contact with partners in different locations, deal with practical matters quickly and efficiently, draw others into the process of knowledge sharing, and to spin off new projects and new partnerships.

2. Of the tools mentioned, email was considered the most prevalent and most flexible, followed by joint websites and common "virtual" workspaces, and finally, online dialogues -- either through e-conferencing or in "real time" live chat sessions.

3. If electronic tools are critical to the partnership, then organizations need to address capacity building with their partners, both in terms of technical infrastructure and familiarity with the tools, in order to ensure that all partners can

work equally well in a virtual environment. If there are real barriers to access or to comfort levels with the tools, then partners need proactively to identify those barriers and find alternative or complementary means to support communications and information sharing.

4. Later during the consultation, we were reminded that the communications "toolkit" can include other forms of communications, including theatre and related artistic techniques.

5. Equally important was the recognition that communications tools are not enough for effective partnerships: other communications skills are needed -- including respect and kindness. As one commented, with the Internet, one can forget that personal contact is important to maintain trust and engagement.

6. Partners should be equally responsible for communications and information tasks: one example was given in which each organization in the partnership acts as a node to feed their information into a common website.

7. Finally, partners must agree on the communications tools to be used and activities to be carried out.

Week 4: Monitoring and evaluation of partnerships

Guest Moderators: Anne Bernard, Education & Evaluation Consultant. Ottawa, Canada; **Laurie Regelbrugge**. Manager, Unocal Foundation. Washington, DC, USA

Partnerships for sustainable development are often focused on achieving changes in policies and practices over the long-term. However, organizations need more frequent information on the degree to which particular partnerships are assisting them to achieve their objectives. This information is crucial for determining when to change the management of the partnership or even when to terminate a non-performing partnership.

Determining what constitutes a successful partnership and how to monitor its progress can be difficult, though, especially in an international multi-stakeholder context. For that reason, organizations are increasingly finding evaluation planning to be an integral tool in the formation of partnerships. When done in a participatory manner, evaluation planning can clarify the expectations of each partner.

Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- What frameworks are most useful for evaluating partnerships for sustainable development?
- How do we measure, in the short term, what in fact requires long term commitment to change?

- How do various reporting requirements and accountability mechanisms affecting business, government, and civil society influence how they approach the evaluation of partnerships in which they participate?
- How can we begin to assess the outcomes of partnerships efforts such as changes in relationships, understandings, values and actions?
- How can we simultaneously monitor the health of a partnership and its outcomes in a resource-effective manner?
- How can partnerships access the resources for pre-partnership evaluation planning as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities?

Findings

The conversation ranged from a very practical request for samples of contracts to the compelling need for frontline efforts to address issues of poverty and environmental degradation hand in hand with those most affected. The concept of "rights" was introduced into the debate for the first time – shifting the focus from ad hoc demand-driven approaches (locally generated demand for partnership assistance) to the rights of the poor and marginalized to request and participate in partnerships.

Participants revisited issues discussed in weeks one and two: that, at a very basic level, partners need to do real work together ("task related" obligations) and partners need to get along ("organic" obligations). Participants reiterated:

- The need to pursue partnerships when independent action cannot deliver the desired outcomes;
- The need for mutual clarity and understanding among partners as to what they expect to gain or accomplish through the partnership;
- The recognition that partners do not need to have the same expectations in common, but that they do need to understand each others' objectives;
- The benefit at times of contracts, legal and governance frameworks to provide a measure of legitimacy and to ensure that the work is not subsequently derailed either internally or by external factors and influences.

Participants provided a number of reasons for monitoring and evaluating partnerships:

- To keep partners' eyes on the ball: i.e., maintain relevance and objectives as partnerships evolve over time (including the determination of what is working and what isn't in the partnership, and making adjustments);
- To keep partners at the table: i.e., maximize and maintain buy-in from both the individuals and the organizations involved in the partnership;
- To learn whether the partners are making a difference in their work together: focusing not only on the products of joint activities, but on changes in behaviours and actions of the partners themselves as they seek to have influence and achieve results.

In order to do this, it was clear from most contributions that evaluation should not be left to be dealt with solely at the end of the partnership activity. Monitoring and evaluation play important roles from the very beginning of planning the partnership. The process of developing the indicators of success together helps partners to think about their own expectations. If they develop the framework for their own process of ongoing self assessment, it will be more meaningful and relevant. A "package" of a small number of meaningful indicators should be developed by the partners from the outset; followed by regular progress monitoring.

Nevertheless, there were a number of suggestions made for more generic indicators that could be used in assessing partnership. These included:

"Process type indicators"
> Reflecting arrangements within the partnership for capacity building, work planning, conflict resolution and the securing of external political commitment to the partnership.

"Outcome based indicators"
> Reflecting the attainment of the specific objectives of the partnership, and more broadly, the promotion of policy changes and increased levels of public awareness and understanding.

However, participants were left with a number of unanswered questions on partnership evaluation:

- How does this type of ongoing self assessment actually get done – especially when most organizations already feel constrained by limitations on human and financial resources?
- Who is the audience for this exercise (from whom does the impetus for evaluation come? From donors? From the beneficiaries of the partnership work? From the partners themselves?)
- How is feedback going to be incorporated?
- What are the needs for building capacity within existing or developing partnerships to do monitoring and evaluation?
- Given the available body of knowledge and expertise, how does the theory get moved into practice?

Clearly there is more work that needs to done to implement monitoring and evaluation process within partnerships. This is not only to improve the effectiveness and success of individual partnerships, but to promote the concepts and practice of partnership in general. We need to be able to demonstrate that it is in fact "a valuable way of working". As one participant further noted, "Persuading one's colleagues of the merits of partnership is equally important -- clear indicators will make it easier to do this than mere 'gut-instinct' will."

Week 5: Long term support for partnerships, beyond the WSSD

Guest moderator: Jan Martin Witte - Research Associate, UN Vision Project on Global Public Policy Networks. Washington, DC.

Respect, clear communications, accountability and transparency are critical to achieving successful partnerships. However, these factors seem to be easier to articulate than to put into practice.

In our increasingly integrated and rapidly changing world, individuals and organizations are being stretched to the limit as they work towards sustainable development. Many large organizations are struggling to adapt their hierarchies to the management challenges brought on by new cross-functional, inter-organizational, multi-sectoral partnerships. Many small organizations are struggling to meet the time demands of consultation and accountability mechanisms.

While organizations participating in partnerships may have good intentions and desire to practice respect and transparency, staff may find it difficult to juggle competing responsibilities, timelines, and visions of a desirable future. In addition to maintaining their expertise in particular fields of sustainable development, practitioners and policy-makers are finding that they must learn new ways of working in an interdependent world.

In the final week, we opened the floor up to suggestions on how partnerships should be supported in the future, in order to fulfill their potential to move sustainability from concept to implementation.

Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- How can we more effectively draw together and learn from the lessons emerging from the management of partnerships in diverse areas of sustainable development (e.g. youth, water and sanitation)?
- What programs currently exist to train or to coach multi-sectoral partnership managers and participants? What would it take to replicate and/or to scale up these programs?
- What communities of practice exist at levels (e.g. within particular organizations or sectors) to support improved management of and participation in partnerships for sustainable development?
- What, if any, additional research and case studies are needed on the management of partnerships for sustainable development?

Findings

The field of partnerships for sustainable development is still fairly new. Research and case studies exist only for the last decade or so, making it difficult to assess and draw conclusions with some measure of rigor and validity. This is an experimental field, full of opportunities for innovation. But if we believe that we must work together to move

towards sustainability, it becomes all the more imperative that we learn how to work together. We need to compile and analyze the lessons learned on good partnership practice. Our guest moderator emphasized the key issues of efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy: "The challenge is to make [partnerships] work, and to give all who participate an equal stake".

We were reminded that it is next to impossible to set "blue prints" for partnerships. Partners need to adopt the most appropriate tools for working together and communicating with each other – this can even include the use of theatre and other artistic means to convey fears and expectations. Equally important is timing: sometimes partnerships are effective just because the right circumstances arise for sharing experience.

The role of governments in supporting partnerships was highlighted in the discussion. As one participant noted, "moneys need to be committed and mechanisms put in place to support civil society's leadership in developing and participating in Partnership Initiatives". Financial mechanisms might include:

- Replenishing the Global Environment Facility; and its successful Small Grants Fund;
- Making specific commitments to the UNDP Trust Funds;
- Supporting and expanding the training and capacity development activities of agencies like UNITAR and UNDP's Capacity 21 in the area of partnerships
- Supporting, both financially and in terms of political commitment, Local Agenda 21 planning and implementation.

The effectiveness of small grants for local initiatives was mentioned more than once. As another participant put it, "I think it is the small initiatives that will begin to fit in the puzzle." ICLEI's experience in community level partnerships was highlighted, together with the Global EcoVillage Network and a biodiversity conservation partnership project in southern Africa. The private sector can play an important role in funding rural activities and partnerships with specific communities. Another then brought us full circle by discussing an evolution taking place in some European locations, from local Agenda 21 planning to local strategies directly connected to national strategies, and their relation to global issues such as poverty, climate change and so forth.

Early in the consultation, participants discussed whether the donor community needed more capacity building in understanding how partnerships work, and how to fund them adequately and appropriately, especially with regard to southern participation. As one participant suggested, "short burst project funding" practices should be changed to "more sustained transfer of knowledge, skills and assets among partners".

While funding partnership initiatives is crucial, however, it was further noted that there are equally important requirements for creating enabling conditions that allow partnerships to develop. While monitoring the e-consultation, Our UNDP Capacity 21

participant commented separately that governments can play an important role in supporting partnerships by:

- Developing policies and laws that promote public participation in sustainability planning, implementation and reporting;
- Creating incentives for partnerships through subsidies;
- Improving the physical and regulatory infrastructure for communication technologies as important enabling tools for partnerships;
- Creating platforms to help people network to exchange knowledge and ideas that also feed back to national level policy making;
- Leading by example (i.e. public-private partnerships; sharing information).

Concluding remarks

The results of this e-consultation provided significant input to the submission of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD) to PrepCom IV. A copy of the presentation is posted on the Virtual Exhibition website http://www.virtualexhibit.net/. This consultation will also serve as the basis for discussions at the UNDP Roundtable on networking partners for sustainable development July 22-23 in Cairo, Egypt.

While this consultation is now closed, we will maintain the archive of postings at http://www.iisd.org/scripts/lyris.pl?visit=wssd-partnerships.
This report is also posted at www.virtualexhibit.net.

Appendix 1: Acknowledgments

Consultation planning and moderation
      Terri Willard, Project Manager, IISD
      Erik Davies, UNDP Capacity 21

Summary findings and final report
      Heather Creech, Director, Knowledge Communications, IISD

Guest moderators

Week 1: Introduction	**Heather Creech**, Director, Knowledge Communications, IISD
Week 2: Planning processes	**Joan Hubbard** - Senior Partnership Specialist, World Bank Institute. Washington, DC, USA **Javed Ahmad** - President, Foundation for Global Responsibility. Geneva, Switzerland
Week 3: Information and communications technologies	**Sangeeta Gupta** - Area Convener, Centre for Cyber Applications, Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI). New Delhi, India. **Nick Moraitis** - Strategy and Partnership Coordinator, Taking IT Global. Melbourne, Australia.
Week 4: Monitoring and evaluation	**Anne Bernard**, Education & Evaluation Consultant. Ottawa, Canada. **Laurie Regelbrugge**. Manager, Unocal Foundation. Washington, DC, USA
Week 5: Support for partnerships	**Jan Martin Witte** - Research Associate, UN Vision Project on Global Public Policy Networks. Washington, DC.

Appendix 2: Resources

This list is compiled from the readings recommended by the consultation planners, and supplemented by suggestions from participants.

Planning Partnerships

"**Strategic Intentions: Managing Knowledge Networks for Sustainable Development**", Heather Creech, IISD.
http://www.iisd.org/networks/research.asp

Results of workshops on multi-sectoral partnerships, Business Partners for Development. **http://www.bpd-waterandsanitation.org/english/app_sector.htm**

Global Public Policy Website. http://www.globalpublicpolicy.net/

Private-Public Partnerships for the Urban Environment, UNDP.
http://www.undp.org/ppp/

Partnering with Civil Society Discussion Archive, World Bank Development Forum. **http://www2.worldbank.org/hm/participate/**

What Works in Public/Private Partnering: Building Alliances for Youth Development, International Youth Foundation.
http://www.iyfnet.org/pdf/Private.pdf

Communications Tools

Association for Progressive Communications. http://www.apc.org/

Bellanet. http://www.bellanet.org/

Helping Knowledge Networks Work, IISD.
www.iisd.org/pdf/2001/networks_teamwork.pdf

Capacity for Development: New Solutions to Old Problems: Executive Summary. UNDP. http://capacity.undp.org/books/Summary_en.pdf

The Network Age: Creating New Models of Technical Cooperation, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Ruth Hill.
http://nt.oneworld.nl/oneworld/undp/books/fukuda-hill.pdf

Technical Cooperation and Knowledge Networks, Stephen Denning.
http://nt.oneworld.nl/oneworld/undp/books/denning.pdf

Monitoring and Evaluation

National Study of Partnership Functioning, Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health. http://www.cacsh.org/nspf.html

Outcome mapping methodology. Evaluation Unit, International Development Research Centre. http://www.idrc.ca/evaluation/outcome.html

Horizontal Results Seminar Series, Government of Canada.
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/collective/crss/crs_e.html

Results Based Management Handbook on Developing Results Chain. Canadian International Development Agency. http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/vLUallDocByIDEn/98D3AA0A746EECF0852569840046FA4D?OpenDocument

[Outline on measurement and evaluation]. Business Partners for Development. www.bdp-waterandsanitation.org/english/docs/M&E.pdf

Putting Partnering to Work: Tri-sector Partnership Results and Recommendations, 2002. Knowledge Resource Group of BPD in Consultation and Conjunction with the Four BPD Clusters. www.bpdweb.org

Endearing Myth, Enduring Truths: Enabling Partnerships between Business, Civil Society, and the Public Sector, 2001. Knowledge Resource Group of BPD in Consultation and Conjunction with the Four BPD Clusters. www.bpdweb.org

Promoting Corporate Citizenship: Opportunities for Business and Civil Society Engagement. 1999. CIVICUS (www.civicus.org)

Global Corporate Citizenship: Rationale and Strategies, 1997. The Hitachi Foundation.

Support for Partnerships

Post-graduate Certificate in Cross-Sector Partnership, Cambridge University. **http://www.cpi.cam.ac.uk/pccp/**

National Centre for Partnership and Performance. http://www.ncpp.ie/

Developing Strategic Business Partnerships, 1000 Ventures (example of e-coaching for partnerships). http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/mbs_mini_spartnerships.html

Global Public Policy Networks. www.globalpublicpolicy.net

Partnerships training provided through the **International Business Leaders Forum** and the **UN International Training Center** in Turin.