

The Guiding Hand



Brokering partnerships for sustainable development

Ros Tennyson and **Luke Wilde**

Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information



At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1997, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, called for a new partnership between governments, the private sector and the international community to ensure that global economic growth and

opportunity would be equitable and sustainable. He argued that this was the way to ensure that peace and social justice could become more than a “distant dream”.

As we enter the 21st century, it is becoming clear that tri-sector partnership is not an easy development model. There have been some notable successes; however, too many partnerships have not lived up to their early promise and significant numbers have failed. How do such partnerships become more effective? How do good intentions and social vision transform into practical reality?

Drawing on 10 years’ experience of tri-sector partnership building, the authors of *The Guiding Hand* argue that the key to successful partnerships lies in the hands of the partnership “broker”. The book explores the scope and potential of the broker’s role, and identifies the skills and personal attributes that brokers need to be effective. It includes a step-by-step “route map” to help partnership brokers identify suitable partners and nurture the partnership to maturity, as well as advice on how to appoint and supervise a broker.

The book ends by exploring the authors’ view that the partnership broker is a new kind of leader. One who works behind the scenes – often unrecognised and unacknowledged – to bring about robust and productive partnerships that have the power to change our world for the benefit of all, particularly those most at risk.

The Guiding Hand

Brokering partnerships for sustainable development

Ros Tennyson

The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum and

Luke Wilde

United Nations Staff College

THE GUIDING HAND: Brokering partnerships for sustainable development

Copyright © 2000 by the United Nations Staff College and The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the United Nations Staff College and The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum.

Authors: Ros Tennyson and Luke Wilde

Editor: Sue McManus

Designer: Alison Beanland

Illustrations in Chapter 3: Guy Venables

Printed in the United States of America on partially recycled paper.

Paperback ISBN: 92-1-104496-0

Sales number: E.00.II.A.3

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this publication are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of either the United Nations Staff College or The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, or of any individuals or organisations associated with either organisation.

Cover illustration: The picture is one of a series in the Paint Pals Project. See the first reference on page 106 for more details.

Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| <hr/> | |
| 1. Partnership: The New Development Paradigm | 5 |
| Globalisation and sustainable development | 7 |
| The call for partnership | 8 |
| <i>Key roles of the three sectors in society</i> | 8 |
| <i>The changing role of the three sectors</i> | 10 |
| <i>A definition of partnership</i> | 12 |
| Successful partnerships | 14 |
| <i>Resources and other tangible commitments</i> | 16 |
| <i>The focus of the partnership</i> | 18 |
| <i>Uses and abuses of partnership</i> | 18 |
| <i>The appropriateness of the partnership approach</i> | 19 |
| Other stakeholders | 20 |
| <i>Beneficiaries</i> | 21 |
| <i>Initiating organisations</i> | 23 |
| <i>Champions</i> | 25 |
| <i>External donors</i> | 25 |
| <i>Project staff</i> | 27 |
| Relationship building: brokering partnerships | 28 |
| <hr/> | |
| 2. Partnership Brokers: Understanding the Role | 31 |
| What is a partnership broker? | 33 |
| The broker and the initiating organisation | 34 |
| <i>The broker as “coordinator”</i> | 35 |
| <i>The broker as “animator”</i> | 36 |
| <i>The broker as “pioneer”</i> | 37 |
| <i>The broker as “innovator”</i> | 37 |
| Finding and appointing a broker | 38 |
| Clarifying ownership and accountability | 40 |
| Establishing a partnership identity and style | 41 |
| Agreeing the brokering process | 43 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 3. The Partnership Broker’s Path | 45 |
| Mapping the route | 47 |
| <i>Stage 1. Getting started</i> | 51 |
| <i>Stage 2. Identifying partner organisations</i> | 55 |
| <i>Stage 3. Committing resources</i> | 59 |
| <i>Stage 4. Building the partnership</i> | 63 |
| <i>Stage 5. Learning the lessons</i> | 67 |
| <i>Stage 6. Assessing the value</i> | 71 |
| <i>Stage 7. Moving on</i> | 75 |
| Brokers in action | 80 |
| Recording the journey | 85 |
| <i>Developing a “logbook”</i> | 85 |
| <i>Documenting the partnership process</i> | 85 |
| <i>Disseminating the learning</i> | 86 |
| <hr/> | |
| 4. The “Good-Enough” Partnership Broker | 87 |
| Scepticism and other challenges | 89 |
| <i>Dealing with scepticism</i> | 90 |
| <i>Changing mindsets</i> | 91 |
| <i>Balancing multiple demands on partners</i> | 92 |
| <i>Managing expectations of the broker</i> | 93 |
| <i>Handling the pressure to go public</i> | 94 |
| Key skills and attributes | 95 |
| <i>The art and science of partnership brokering</i> | 95 |
| <i>Core brokering skills</i> | 96 |
| <i>Language as a partnership-building tool</i> | 97 |
| Professional development | 98 |
| <i>Seeking out training opportunities</i> | 99 |
| <i>Drawing inspiration from other sources</i> | 99 |
| <i>Learning from others</i> | 99 |
| A note of reassurance | 99 |
| <hr/> | |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Epilogue | |
| Partnership Brokers: Catalysts for Transformation | 101 |
| Leadership in the 21st century | 104 |
| Partnership brokers: new leaders | 106 |
| Re-dreaming our world | 107 |
| | |
| Endnotes | 109 |
| References | 111 |
| Resources for the reader | 112 |
| Acknowledgements | 113 |
| About the Partners in Action Programme | 115 |

List of figures on next page.

Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. The three sectors and their constituents | 8 |
| 2. Key roles of the three sectors | 9 |
| 3. Sector characteristics that inhibit collaboration | 10 |
| 4. Sector attributes | 11 |
| 5. Potential benefits to partner organisations by sector | 15 |
| 6. Potential resources from partner organisations by sector | 17 |
| 7. Traditional “beneficiaries” of each sector’s activities | 22 |
| 8. Relationship of the broker to the initiating organisation | 35 |
| 9. Summary of the seven stages of brokering a partnership | 48 |
| 10. Partnership options and the role of the broker | 76 |
| 11. Three strategies for dealing with the sceptic | 89 |
| 12. Three strategies for changing mindsets | 90 |
| 13. Three strategies for assisting partners to cope with multiple demands | 91 |
| 14. Three strategies for managing expectations of partners and other stakeholders | 92 |
| 15. Three strategies for assisting partners to handle the pressure to “go public” | 93 |
| 16. The balance of skills and attributes required by a partnership broker | 94 |
| 17. Personal qualities needed by a partnership broker | 98 |

Introduction

In the past century, we had opportunities like never before to produce and distribute food equitably, to provide access to education and healthcare for all, and to create democracies in which different voices and views could have found their place without violent conflict. But we fundamentally failed. What other word can we use to describe the squandering of the potential that globalisation offered for improving the quality of life for everyone?

Asked to describe her vision of the future, a child in Africa writes, *“In the future I see war, famine, disease, pollution, AIDS and violence”*, and she paints this picture:¹



Tri-sector collaboration, or “partnership”, for sustainable development is a response to our failure to date. If, however, our partnership solutions to development problems neglect to take account of the starkness of this child’s reality, they will simply be added sooner rather than later to the pile of discarded

development models that have proved themselves unable to solve the world's most desperate problems.

Partnerships are easy to talk about but hard to do successfully. They require courage, patience and determination over a long period. They are rarely a “quick-fix” solution to a problem, and are often a frustrating and disappointing experience, falling far short of initial expectations.

But it does not need to be this way.

Successful partnerships for sustainable development do not have to be left to chance. They can be developed, nurtured and managed systematically when a skilled individual acts as the partnership's “broker”, steering and supporting the process and leading the partnership to maturity and operational independence.

We have written *The Guiding Hand* out of our belief that a well-brokered partnership has the capacity to bring about significant change in the lives of many millions of people who are vulnerable and at risk.

Our primary aim is to support and encourage partnership brokers everywhere by helping them to analyse their task and to prepare themselves to meet the challenges they will inevitably face.

Our secondary aim is to encourage those people appointing or working with a partnership broker to understand and appreciate the challenging nature of the broker's task and to acknowledge the vital part the broker plays in making tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development a reality.

The role of a partnership broker is highly complex. In describing it we risk oversimplification, in our desire that the role not appear

too daunting. We have also done our utmost to make the book clear in content and logical in structure – not an easy undertaking.

The first chapter explores tri-sector partnerships as a new development paradigm, and considers the range of partners and other stakeholders who are linked to partnership-based initiatives. Chapter 2 defines the role of a partnership broker. It also provides advice to those appointing a broker for the first time. For the work itself, Chapter 3 gives a step-by-step approach to the broker's task of building a partnership systematically. As you will learn in Chapter 4, a broker needs a range of attributes, skills and personal qualities to do the job well. Finally, in the Epilogue, we put forward the view that partnership brokers are a new type of leader for the 21st century.

Much of our learning about brokering partnerships has come from working with colleagues worldwide who have carried this role (often unrecognised) with admirable skill and fortitude. We dedicate this book to them – in our view, they are tomorrow's leaders.

Above all, we would invite you, the reader, to ask yourself the question: "Do I have what it takes to become a partnership broker?" And if your answer is "Yes", to encourage you to get on with it. The world needs you.

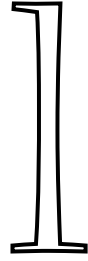
Ros Tennyson

Luke Wilde

May 2000

Ros Tennyson is Senior Development Consultant for The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum. Since 1992 she has led the Forum's tri-sector partnership-building work in countries undergoing economic or political transition, as well as with international agencies.

Luke Wilde is Project Leader of the Partners in Action programme based at the United Nations Staff College. Previously he worked as an international management consultant in both the public and private sectors, specialising in leadership and organisational development.



Partnership: The New Development Paradigm

“Effective peace building demands a broader notion of human security. We cannot be secure amidst starvation. We cannot build peace without alleviating poverty. We cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice.

“In today’s world, the private sector is the dominant engine of growth – the principal creator of value and managerial resources. If the private sector does not deliver economic growth and economic opportunity – equitably and sustainably – around the world, then peace will remain fragile and social justice a distant dream.

“That is why I call today for a new partnership amongst governments, the private sector and the international community.”

Kofi Annan
Secretary-General, United Nations²

Globalisation and sustainable development

The past 20 years have seen unprecedented economic and social upheaval, as well as increasing environmental degradation, worldwide. These changes have significantly impacted – and are likely to continue to impact – every nation and every level of society. For some, the impact is positive, but for too many the effects are negative. Alongside the benefits of modern technology and global interactions, the images beamed in by satellite to our television screens show us horrifying levels of human misery and devastation from natural and manmade disasters across the world.

The last century closed with another memorable television image. In early December 1999, representatives from environmental groups, developing countries, human rights organisations, trade unions, indigenous peoples' groups and small business associations, along with leading individuals from the international business community, protested outside the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. People traditionally in opposition to each other were united in opposition to the so-called “free market”.

Globalisation has led already to huge changes in expectations of business and governments. It has also led to the strengthening of civil society – in the form of community or issue-based organisations and pressure groups – exposing bad practice, demanding changes in national and international legislation, and protecting the interests of those living in poverty or on the margins of society.

The nature of globalisation and the issues of sustainability have been written about extensively elsewhere, and we do not intend to revisit them in detail here. They are mentioned in this introductory way because they provide both the background to and the prompting for the new development paradigm of tri-sector partnerships. A paradigm that is founded on the view that sustainable development requires all key players to work together for change.

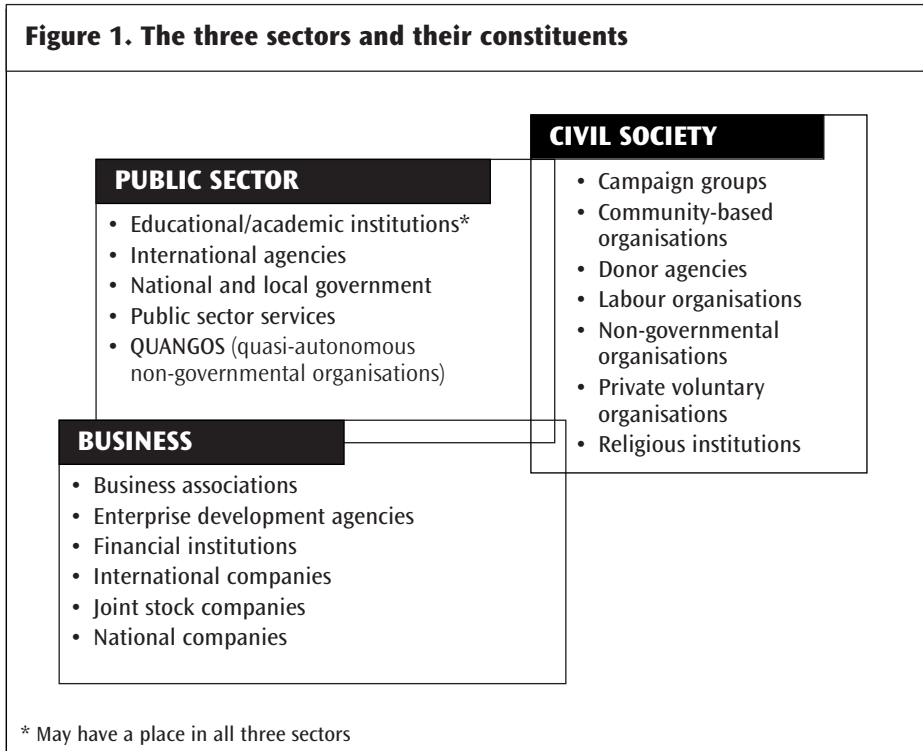
The call for partnership

The concepts of global peace and social justice that Kofi Annan outlined in his address to the World Economic Forum in 1997 will undoubtedly remain a distant dream if the different sectors in society fail to collaborate more effectively in pursuing economic and social development in equitable and sustainable ways.

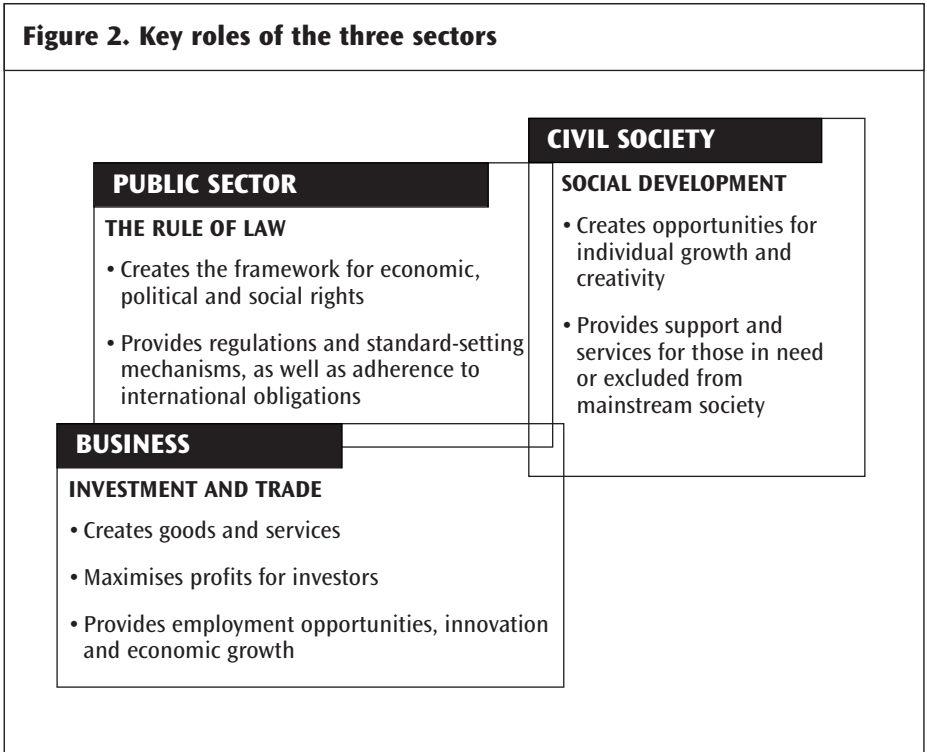
Partnership between the main sectors of society has, in the past 10 years, become the new development paradigm. Upon it, many hopes are pinned. To realise these hopes, how are we understand, interpret and develop such partnerships?

Key roles of the three sectors in society

Broadly, society has three main sectors – the public sector, business and civil society. It may be useful to remind ourselves of who fits where (see Figure 1).

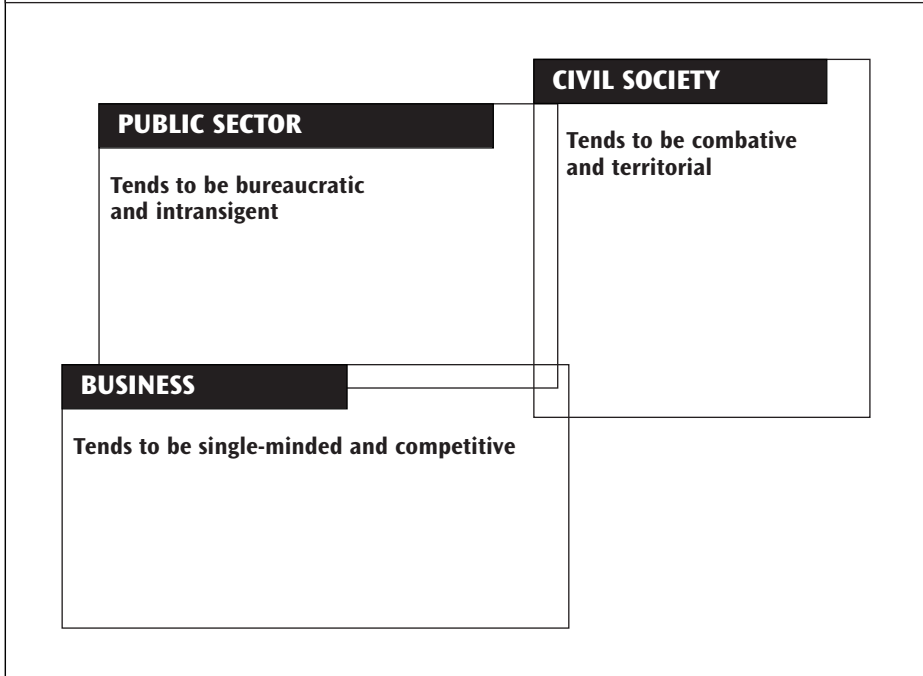


Each sector has a distinct and different role to play (see Figure 2).



While the separation of roles has given each sector a certain freedom of operation and independence, fragmented activity and compartmentalisation have invariably resulted also. Any interaction has tended to be either technical (for example, government and business working together on infrastructure issues) or hostile (for instance, civil society actively opposing business and/or government). Each sector has characteristics that can at best inhibit and at worst mitigate against collaboration (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Sector characteristics that inhibit collaboration



On the face of it, tri-sector collaboration may look all but impossible. However, we should not necessarily assume that each sector has to stay locked in its narrow, stereotyped box.

The changing role of the three sectors

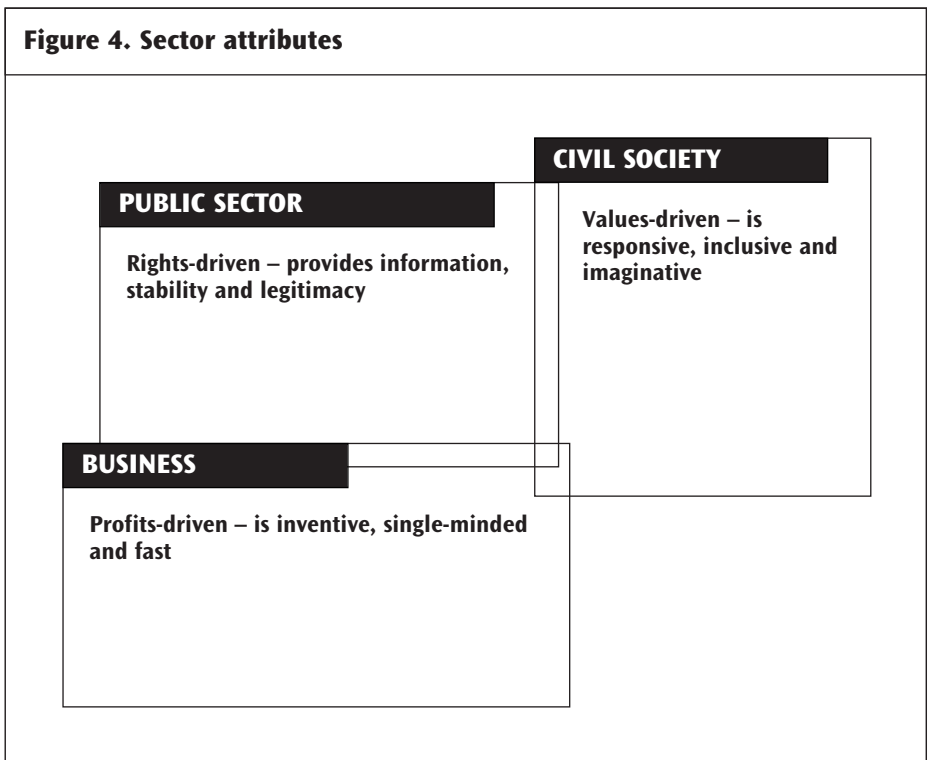
In recent years, the role of each sector has begun to change significantly, both within the sector and in relation to each other. Examples of the changes are:

- Civil society-led popular movements more or less peacefully overthrowing undemocratic governments in South Africa, the former Soviet Union and central Europe, with many of the civil society activists forming the new governments.
- The Southeast Asian so-called “economic miracle” having come and gone within a decade, reminding governments and international organisations that business investment alone will

not bring the needed development they (perhaps naively) hoped it would.

- Many international businesses, previously entirely focused on maximising shareholder value, rethinking their responsibilities to the societies in which they operate as the gulf between rich and poor widens and threatens social stability and economic growth worldwide.

These and other events have opened up new possibilities for a greater interdependence between sectors and have led to innovation and creative collaboration. So world events have, in a sense, encouraged the sectors to work together. Now that they have begun to do so, it is becoming clear that each sector brings to the collaboration different but potentially complementary skills, experiences and attributes (see Figure 4).



Collaboration created by drawing together and building on the drivers of each sector (rights, profits and values) – more familiarly known as partnership – rests on the assumption that one plus one plus one equals a great deal more than three.

A definition of partnership

Despite partnership being a relatively new development paradigm, the term is already used widely – and often misleadingly. For example, politicians use it to refer to an informal association with unspecified commitments; donors use it to describe essentially a financial arrangement; and advertisers use it to describe a creative engagement between suppliers, manufacturers and customers.

Partnership – as defined in the dictionary – has two distinct meanings. In one definition, it refers to a formal business relationship between professionals (eg, doctors, lawyers or architects) where the risks and profits are shared. In the other definition, it means a relationship between two people (as in chess or other games, marriage or dancing).

In this publication, we are working with the following definition of partnership:

A partnership is an alliance between organisations from two or more sectors that commit themselves to working together to undertake a sustainable development project. Such a partnership undertakes to share risks and benefits, review the relationship regularly and revise the partnership as necessary.

A genuine partnership initiative should properly have an expectation of benefits being shared as opposed to one-directional. This is often described as a “win : win” scenario (though in a tri-sector partnership, perhaps a more accurate description is “win : win : win”). Achieving “mutual benefit” is not easy, yet is necessary to strive for or the partnership will be unsatisfactory for some of the key players and therefore ultimately unsustainable.

A partnership example at a local level

In the early 1990s, a workshop aimed at developing a partnership approach to environmental issues was held in a city in southern Poland. Together in the same room for the first time were senior figures from local government, universities, the newly privatising business sector and environmental groups.

At a certain point in the proceedings, a rather anguished businessman – a paper manufacturer who ran a packaging company – spoke out. He said (with some passion) that, however much he wanted to “go green” with his products, he was not in a position to invest what it would cost to research and develop the new approach.

A university lecturer – who moments before had been talking about the need for academia to move from theory to practice if students were to successfully move into the world of business once they graduated – jumped to his feet. He proposed that he select a number of his technical students to work on the research and development of new packaging as part of their studies. His only concern was that they might not know how to access the latest environmental thinking.

At this moment, one of the NGO leaders present – who earlier had been berating both business and academia for their lack of commitment to environmental issues – said that his organisation would collaborate by undertaking to find the latest thinking on the subject from international colleagues via the Internet.

It took five minutes to sow the seeds of this partnership, which within two years had transformed the packaging company into an eco-friendly business with a leading edge in the market. In this scenario, every sector had played the role it could play uniquely well – and each had benefited, whether professionally (the students), financially (the businessman, employees and shareholders), or ethically (the environmental NGO and the customers who purchased the packaged products).

At both local and global levels, such tri-sector partnership approaches to development are becoming more common. Partnership is increasingly seen as a way of forming new types of societal relationships for development that are replacing more traditional single-sector models. Kofi Annan's call for a new partnership (see page 6) suggests that only such a coordinated and integrated approach will be able to move the agenda for change from "distant dream" to reality. The complex linkages between economic growth, human development, social cohesion and environmental sustainability require a breadth and range of approaches and resources that no one sector can muster alone.

Successful partnerships

Tri-sector partnership approaches offer a new – and much-needed – paradigm for sustainable development. Many important partnership initiatives have been born during periods of major social and political transition. In South Africa, for example, the ANC government has set up a national tri-sector organisation, NEDLAC (National Economic Development and Labour Council), to provide a forum for multilateral decision making to impact policy, economic growth and social equity. The forum comprises representatives from business, government and civil society, with labour organisations included as in effect a fourth sector.

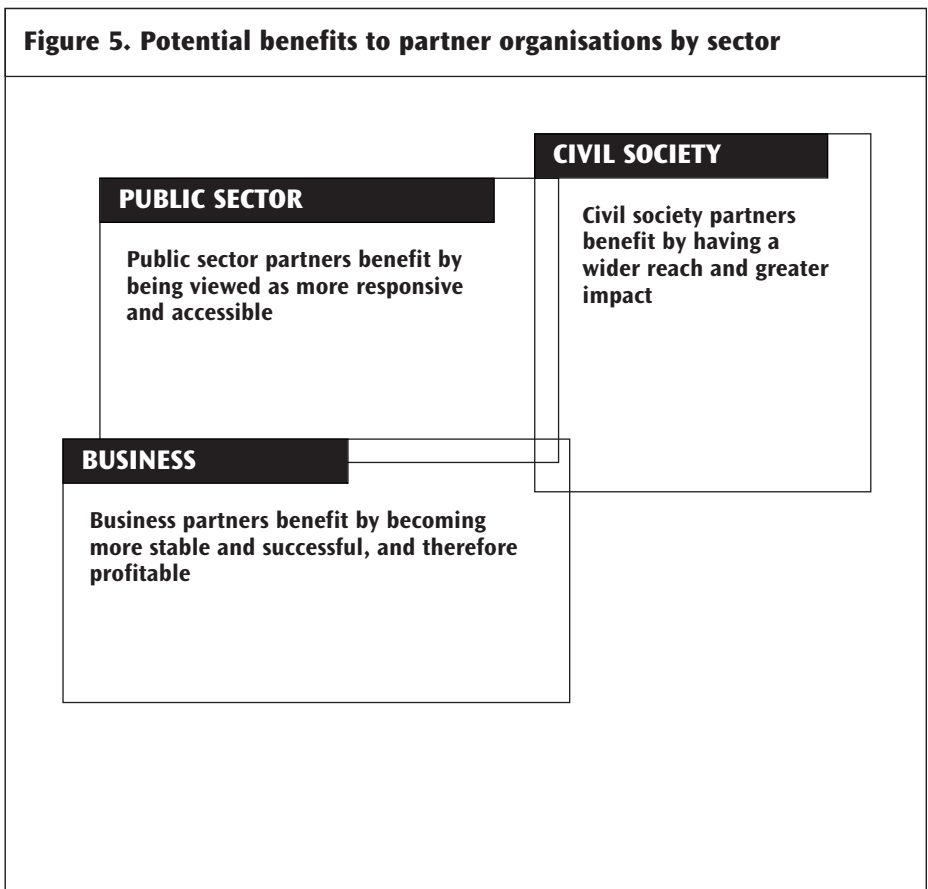
What makes a partnership successful and effective? Such partnerships have partners who share four key characteristics:

- Uphold the principles of openness and equity
- Share risks and benefits
- Adapt well to change
- Work towards empowerment.

The first step in creating successful tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development is to clarify what all potential partners and other stakeholders understand by the term. Exploring and agreeing on a definition will help avoid misunderstandings and

frustrations at a later stage. Each partner may have different priorities and objectives for participating in the partnership. Whatever the sectoral differences, gaining consensus on a working definition of partnership is essential.

A partnership's strength also depends on each partner having clear and consistent organisational priorities. All partners can then ensure that the partnership benefits their specific organisation at the same time as securing the anticipated wider social, economic and environmental benefits. The individual benefits for partners may differ, but can still be complementary (see Figure 5).



When each partner genuinely seeks to understand the priorities of the other partners, the likelihood of finding objectives that are complementary, even if not identical, becomes significantly greater. Each partner needs to put his or her case clearly and to listen to each other's case sympathetically. This will strengthen each partner's resolve, as well as the partnership as a whole.

Resources and other tangible commitments

Experience of partnership-based initiatives indicates that only when a tangible commitment is made does the relationship move from a dialogue to an actual partnership.

The most visible form of tangible commitment is money, but assuming that a financial contribution alone leads to a partnership commitment would be a mistake. The familiar phrase "He who pays the piper calls the tune" indicates how easily money can be used as a lever for undue influence, making a true partnership impossible.

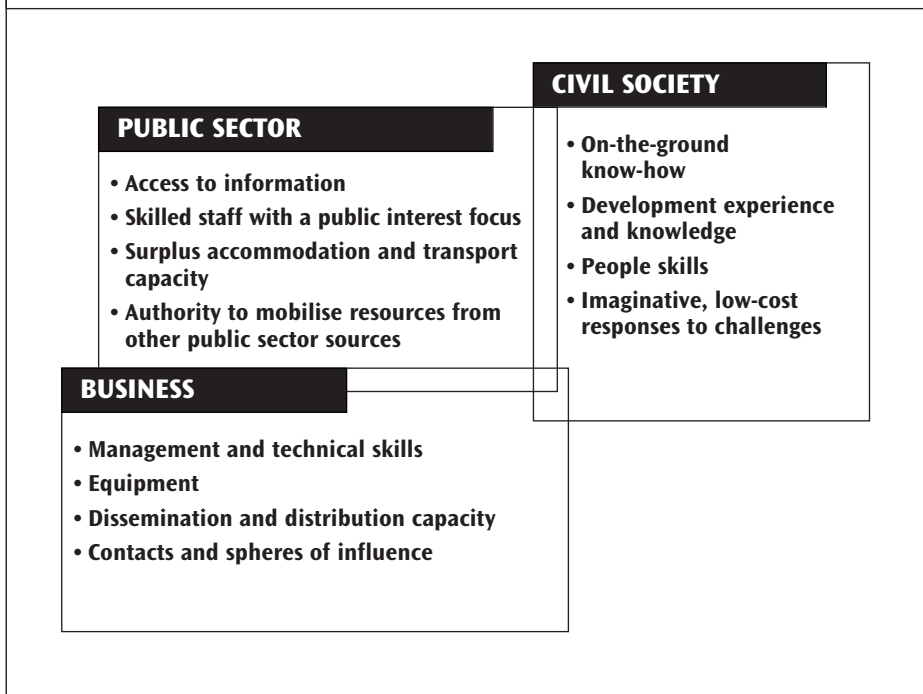
Money can only be put into the partnership commitment equation if those contributing most of the money either recognise others' contributions as of equal value or accept that they will only have the same rights as other partners in making decisions. This may not be easy to achieve either by external donors or by partners who are making large financial donations.

Key to our discussion is the recognition that the term "resources" refers to significantly more than money (see Figure 6).

***Resource commitment
– in partnership
terms – refers to
more than money.***

In a partnership, commitment is primarily that of dedicated time and effort from the individuals who are representing the different partner organisations. Only where this time and effort are freely given will a partnership be truly equitable. In fact, a key factor underpinning healthy

Figure 6. Potential resources from partner organisations by sector



partnerships is that all partners have agreed to the partnership and made their commitment without coercion. They must embark on a partnership and remain a partner by choice rather than by dictate, or the fundamental nature of the partnership will be undermined.

Commitment to the partnership is a critical success factor.

Since the partnership’s success will depend on the partners honouring any commitments they make, they must seriously think through the implications of what they agree to take on, and having done so, must be prepared to follow through conscientiously. In early discussions, potential partners need to analyse and understand what forms of commitment may be expected and why such commitment is so important.

The focus of the partnership

Tri-sector partnerships are conceived for a purpose, usually to address a serious social, economic or environmental challenge where conventional provision has failed. Typically, a partnership will be formed either to undertake a specific project (usually location-based and time-specific) or to develop a programme of activities (usually generic and ongoing). The partners will decide the scope, style and scale of the activities at an early stage, and will then agree how to implement the proposal. For the sake of simplicity, throughout this book we use the term “project” to refer to either a project or a programme.

Partners need to keep their work constantly focused on the partnership’s main purpose. Of course, a partnership may have valuable additional spin-offs for the partners, but if the partners become diverted from the primary task, the partnership will exist simply for its own sake and will fail to achieve its fundamental objective.

A partnership is essentially a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Actions speak louder than words. The partnership will be experienced (by those involved) or judged (by those not involved) as a success in direct proportion to how much it achieves in practical outputs and outcomes.

Uses and abuses of partnership

Achieving the basic tenets of successful partnership is often difficult, and mistakes are easily made – often unintentionally, but sometimes not.

In one tri-sector partnership, for example, a business partner used a UN logo on its annual report as a way of bringing additional status to itself as a company and to its products. The other partners saw this action as blatant opportunism, and the partnership was terminated as a result. An acceptable approach

would have been for the company to simply describe the partnership and its role in the partnership, and even its benefits from the partnership, in the annual report.

In another instance, an international NGO used its existing partnership involving a multinational company as “evidence” to a donor organisation that it could secure matched funding from the corporate sector for an ambitious new initiative. The donor made a large financial donation, but further funding from business never materialised. As a consequence, the NGO’s reputation for integrity suffered, and the original partnership, which until then had been amicable and productive, became unstable and acrimonious.

In other examples, partnerships have failed because one or other partner only revealed their true motivation for involvement once the partnership was under way. The other partners found these motives unacceptable and chose to withdraw from the partnership.

The appropriateness of the partnership approach

Tri-sector partnerships will not necessarily provide the answer to every development problem and are not possible in all circumstances. They are probably unsuitable (and usually unwelcome) in countries controlled by non-democratic governments or experiencing ongoing or recent conflict. They are also inappropriate in countries that lack an established and well-functioning business sector willing and able to take on a partnership role.

In any event, certain social and environmental needs are more efficiently and effectively met by legislation, government services, technical specialist services or other single-sector responses.

In general, tri-sector partnerships are likely to be most appropriate when tackling issues with a medium- to long-term perspective. They are probably less appropriate when a quick response is sought – unless of course the partnership is already well established. If it is, the partners should be able to respond quickly and effectively to an unexpected crisis.

Other stakeholders

In recent years, the business sector has led the way in creating the term “stakeholder” – referring to employees, suppliers and local communities in which a business is operating, as well as customers and shareholders. Stakeholders comprise a vast and inclusive group of those who either have an impact on, or are impacted by, the business.

The stakeholder concept has become increasingly widespread both in the public sector and in civil society. It is popular because it suggests that many different groups have a “stake” in any given situation, that all those involved contribute in some way or other, and that none is simply a passive recipient of someone else’s effort. This heralds an enormously important shift in thinking for the development community. A stakeholder-based approach to development is founded on a notion of equity. In other words, while all those involved may not be equally powerful or resource-rich, each has rights and deserves respect.

In any partnership, the principal players are the partners themselves. In the first instance at least, the partners invest the resources to establish the project, and they therefore should be seen as the primary stakeholders.

All partnership initiatives inevitably have a number of stakeholders over and above the partners. Tri-sector partnerships are by their very nature composed of a number of diverse yet

interdependent relationships. To be equitable and sustainable, the partnership project should be inclusive of all stakeholders and ultimately provide benefits for all. Therefore, partners need to have a clear picture of each stakeholder's role and to consider in some detail the most appropriate working relationship with each group.

In particular, partners need to build strong relationships with five key types of stakeholder:

- Beneficiaries
- Initiating organisations
- Champions
- External donors
- Project staff.

Building stakeholder relationships involves building trust, clarifying responsibilities and ensuring that everyone understands each other's place in the overall scheme.

We explore each of these partnership relationships in more detail below.

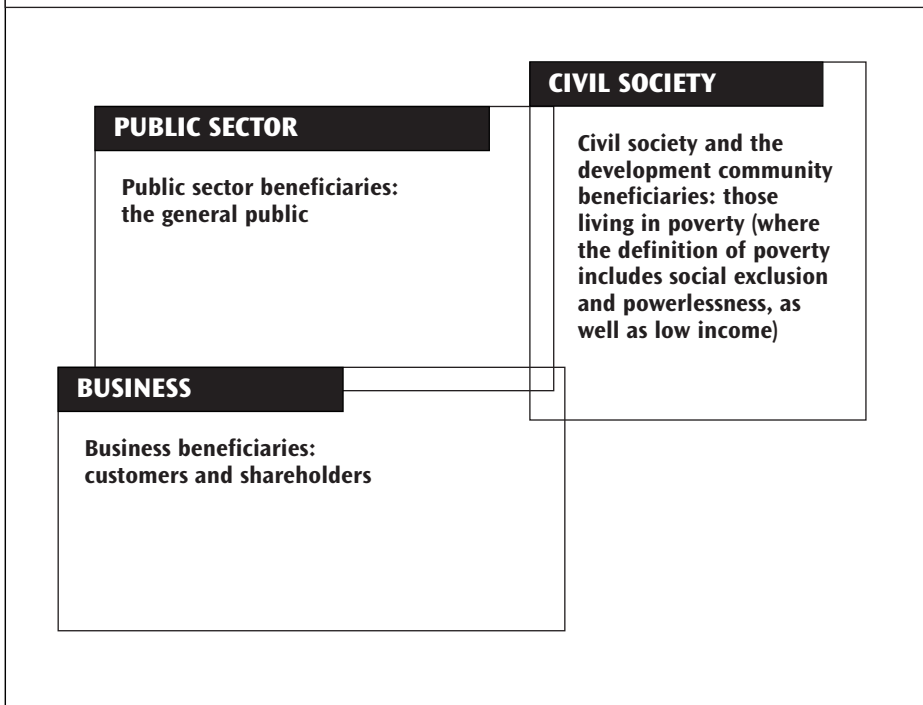
Beneficiaries

In the development community, “beneficiaries” is a familiar, if loaded, term. What does it mean, however, in a partnership context?

Each sector has its own target groups that are in effect the “beneficiaries” of their day-to-day activities (see Figure 7).

A starting point for any partnership is to consider how the partnership will positively impact each partner's target groups or beneficiaries. Partners may need some persuasion to accept that they may have a responsibility to each other's beneficiaries as well as to their own. This needs addressing at an early stage of the partnership.

Figure 7. Traditional “beneficiaries” of each sector’s activities



Once the partnership is established, however, it will move into project development and implementation mode. At this stage, a larger number of other beneficiaries need considering. These can be classified in three main groups:

- The target population who benefit directly (eg, those who as a result of the project have greater health and wellbeing, as well as opportunities for self-expression, financial self-sufficiency and improved skills).
- Others who may benefit indirectly from positive changes in the target population (eg, families, the wider local community, local organisations and services providers).
- Future generations who will benefit in terms of a less degraded environment and a more stable and prosperous society.

The term “stakeholder” is for many reasons preferable to the term “beneficiary”. “Stakeholder” is acceptable to the different sectors and is inclusive rather than divisive – as long as those least able to make their presence felt are not lost in what might rapidly become “politically correct” jargon.

It may well be that in a partnership paradigm the term “beneficiary” is redundant, perceived by many of the stakeholders as both patronising and confusing.

Initiating organisations

One, or sometimes more than one, organisation will be responsible for initiating the partnership – developing an initial idea and taking the first steps in formulating a partnership approach. The initiating organisation (or, more precisely, key individuals within that organisation) provides much of the early energy, direction and backup. Depending on the circumstances and the particular challenges, an organisation from any sector and at any level can play this role.

Example of a global initiating organisation

At a strategic level, the partnership BPD (Business Partners for Development) was initiated by the World Bank in 1998. Within two years of its inception, BPD had become an international programme based in the offices of five international NGOs, with more than 60 business and public sector partners and 30 locally based tri-sector “focus” projects. Over the same period, the World Bank exchanged the role of “initiating organisation” to that of equal partner, no longer either the “owner” or the major donor.

Example of a regional initiating organisation

At a regional level, EPCE (Environmental Partnership for Central Europe) was initiated by a group of American and European donor organisations working with national organisations. EPCE aimed to build effective community-led environmental programmes in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. Within four years, the national organisations in each country had become independent, each with a number of partner relationships with local governments, civil society organisations and businesses on a project-by-project basis. The initiating organisations have now changed their role to the more conventional one of donors. However, their donations are on a diminishing basis as EPCE resource needs are increasingly met from local sources. The expectation is that the original donor organisations will withdraw from the relationship in due course, leaving behind well-established, financially autonomous institutions.

Example of a local initiating organisation

At a community level, business is increasingly taking the lead in creating partnerships with the local government and civil society organisations, as the Golden Arrow Bus Company in Cape Town, South Africa, demonstrates. The company was the initiating organisation for a partnership-based foundation now jointly run by the company and key players from the other two sectors. The foundation seeks to support people in the local township by building self-reliance and entrepreneurship while encouraging them to make more active use of a transport system tailored increasingly effectively to meet their changing transport needs.

As we have seen in the examples above, once a partnership is formed, the initiating organisation can either become a partner on an equal footing with the other partners or withdraw, leaving the partners free to operate as an independent entity.

Whatever the longer-term nature of the relationship between partners and initiating organisations, from an early stage they should openly discuss the changing balance of power between them.

Champions

Any partnership-based initiative is likely to have one or more champions (we refrain from using the word “leader” here for reasons we will make clear in the Epilogue). The term “champion” describes someone – from any sector or from the wider community – who uses his or her profile, reputation or influence to promote a cause, project or organisation. Sometimes, a new partnership initiative may be the brainchild of such an individual.

At the beginning of an initiative, champions can have a vital role as highly effective spokespeople – giving the initiative invaluable publicity, helping to mobilise resources, or identifying and encouraging key players to become involved. At the same time, they need to stay cognisant of the limitations of their role – in particular, recognising that their help in creating or supporting the partnership does not entitle them to own or control its development.

Partners need to find creative ways of building on the energy and dedication of one or more champions while not allowing the initiative to become “personality-led”.

External donors

Partners will also need to build relationships with external donors, if any. An external donor is an organisation or person outside the partnership providing financial or other resource support. External donors in this context can refer to individuals, foundations, governments, bilateral organisations and international agencies.

If external donors are unused to supporting a partnership or a partnership-based initiative, the partners will need to explain in detail how this approach differs from its more conventional counterpart. If necessary, the partners can further educate external donors about the nature of the partnership approach. This may include assisting them to better understand the need for financial and other support for the partnership-building process, and not just for the project itself.

Despite the partners' input, some potential donors may remain somewhat inflexible and traditional in their approach, possibly to the extent that accepting the proposed donation would compromise the partnership's autonomy and integrity. Partners may decide that refusing a donation is preferable if it has strings attached that could weaken the partnership's capacity to operate effectively.

Partners should not underestimate the degree of awareness raising that may be necessary to change conventional donor behaviour patterns. The process can take significant time, perseverance and skill.

All partnership initiatives need resources in some form or other; any partnership will need donors to support the project. However, in a partnership scenario with multiple stakeholders, the term "donor" needs further clarification. Given that a donor inevitably has an impact, a donor is a de facto stakeholder. However, as we have already discussed, in a partnership paradigm, resources, contributions and commitments are about more than simply money. That being the case, surely all those who contribute time, effort and ideas are as much donors as those who contribute cash? If all partners are in some way or other making a contribution to the initiative, are not all partners also de facto donors?

In due course, we may see a radical reappraisal of the role and function of the donor community, and, perhaps, brokers of successful partnerships will be a position to contribute to this reappraisal. For the time being, however, let us consider the current role of donor organisations in relation to partnership initiatives.

Sometimes, donor organisations themselves initiate the setting up of a partnership. For example, several of the UN partnerships involving business and NGOs have been initiated by a UN agency. In these situations, the donor either remains as a partner or having “brokered” the partnership withdraws, or retreats to the more traditional position of simply donating financial support.

In other situations, where the organisation initiating the partnership is an NGO, a business or a public sector agency, it may decide to seek financial support from a donor, especially in the early scoping and partnership-building stages. Donors will essentially be external to the partnership, their participation limited to seed funding for the pre-partnership stages. How will such donors learn to move away from the more traditional donor–recipient relationship in order to arrive at a new and more appropriate way of relating to the partnership development paradigm?

Some of the most ambitious and successful partnerships have started with very few financial resources. In these circumstances, the partners have had to become imaginative and resourceful in finding other ways of supporting the work. A good moment for a partnership initiative is when it can tell a willing external donor that it doesn't actually want or need its support.

In fact, in some circumstances, contributing cash may be too much of a “quick-fix” solution that in the long run does not enrich the quality and potential sustainability of the partnership or its project.

Project staff

Once the partnership is established and the partners have designed and agreed on the project, the implementation process

begins. In most situations, the partners will appoint a manager or director, who will assume responsibility for managing and developing the initiative and overseeing the day-to-day activities. He or she will appoint other staff in due course, probably involving the partners either in informal consultation or as a formal part of the appointment procedure.

The relationship between the partners (assuming they continue to provide support, governance and overall direction) and the project staff is paramount. In a well-established partnership, the partners will give clear direction and backing to the project staff while allowing them to carry out their work without too much interference. The partners will establish mechanisms for reviewing the project, and will mandate to what extent the project staff can speak on behalf of the partners.

Relationship building: brokering partnerships

Partnerships are complex phenomena. They depend on establishing strong working relationships between the partners and can take considerable effort to establish and to cultivate to maturity. The urgency of need measured against the time required to build a sustainable partnership between the different sectors could easily lead to early frustration and disappointment. The challenge is to form effective and successful partnerships as quickly as possible.

How is it best to do this? Who will take the lead in drawing together the partners and creating the partnership? Who will build and cement their working relationships? Who will give the partnership priority when everyone else is caught up in other, unrelated tasks? Who will stay with the partnership and help pull it together if it starts to come apart? Who will assist the partners to hold onto a vision when they are getting bogged down in the inevitable day-to-day challenges?

Scratch below the surface of any successful partnership and you will invariably find one or more individuals who have taken on the role of the partnership's "broker". Brokers rarely receive recognition and acknowledgement. In circumstances where they have taken on the role informally rather than by appointment, they may not even understand that they have played this role. But the role is essential, and without it a partnership-based development initiative is highly unlikely to achieve its goal. Indeed, without a broker a partnership may never even become established. The broker does much of the "behind-the-scene" painstaking work to create, build and nurture the partnership until it either becomes self-sustaining or disbands because it has completed its task.

In the next chapter, we examine the role of the partnership broker in more detail.

The need for this new paradigm to be effective is urgent: the imbalance between wealth and poverty grows daily. Expectations of tri-sector partnerships as a solution to development problems are high. Partnerships are complicated and difficult, and the broker's role is crucial.

2

Partnership Brokers: Understanding the Role

“How wonderful that Aung San Suu Kyi’s first public utterance after her release should be a clarion call to all the major role-players for dialogue and reconciliation!”

“The way forward will demand people of stature who are ready to compromise for the greater good of all, not those who remain intransigent by demanding all or nothing. The way forward will require persons of integrity, who know that negotiation is the art of how to give and take.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu⁵

Neither Aung San Suu Kyi nor Desmond Tutu is specifically referring to tri-sector partnerships in their shared vision of what the future needs. However, the person they describe closely resembles the vital and pivotal role of a partnership broker: individuals of stature for whom the skills of dialogue, reconciliation and negotiation are paramount, and who are willing to compromise for the greater good.

In this chapter, we describe the role of the partnership broker, and examine what the initiating organisation and, in due course, the partners need to consider in selecting and appointing a partnership broker.

What is a partnership broker?

Perhaps we should start with exploring the word “broker” itself. A broker is a “go-between” in making relationships (for example, a marriage broker) or a middleman (for example, a stockbroker). In all cases, a broker acts as an intermediary between different parties, but in an active rather than a passive way, to interpret one party to the other or to negotiate some kind of agreement or “deal”.

Most, if not all, tri-sector partnerships need a broker, at the very least in the early stages. The more complex the partnership (for example, involving a large number of partner organisations) and ambitious the project, the more vital the broker’s role.

The broker carries responsibility for the process of building a successful partnership and securing its effective functioning long-term.

The broker essentially performs a service on behalf of the partnership and supports the partners in designing and implementing the project that they agree to undertake. In particular, a broker does the following:

- Acts as an intermediary and builds collaboration between the partners.

- Inspires others in the initiating organisation and the partner organisations to follow the partnership approach.
- Encourages the adoption of behaviours to help the partnership to function effectively and grow.
- Protects the principles and vision of the partnership.

During the early stages, the partnership is likely to be strongly identified with the broker personally. But as the partners become more engaged, they will quickly and rightly take a more central role, and the sense of “ownership” will shift to them.

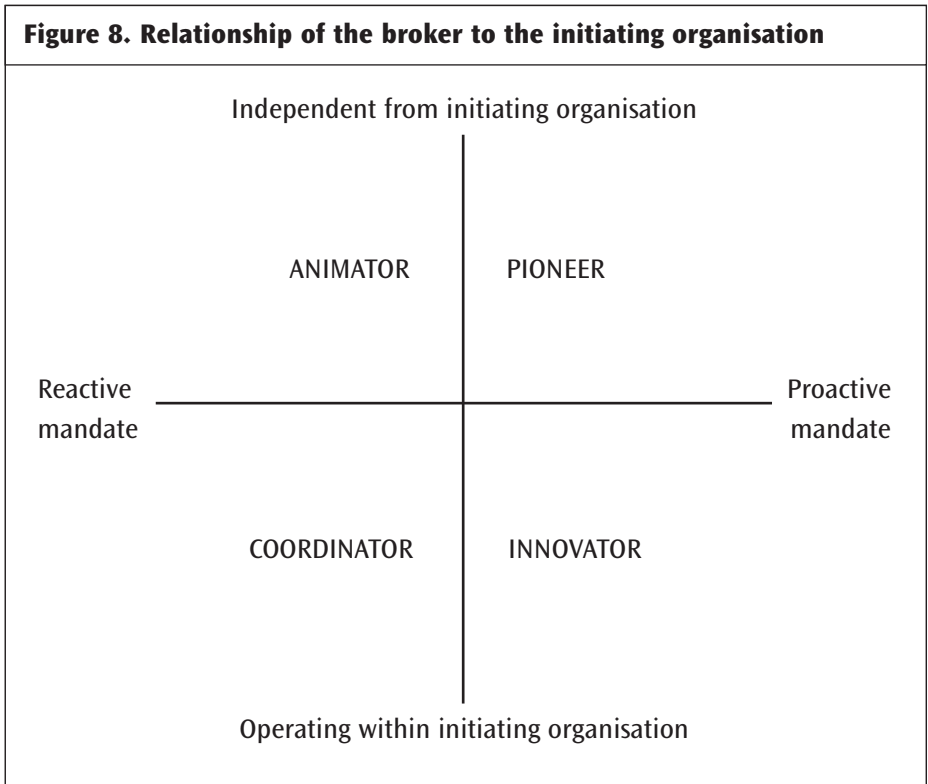
The broker takes a cutting-edge role on behalf of the partners. Such a role includes holding a vision of the partnership’s potential and creatively directing the partners’ energy and input. To be effective, a broker needs to be focused and determined. This requires personal integrity and willpower, rather than status and position.

The broker and the initiating organisation

All initiatives to build a partnership are started by someone with a good idea. Usually the good idea is born within – or soon becomes attached to – an organisation. As that idea transmutes into a viable proposition, the organisation assumes the role of “initiating organisation” (see Chapter 1). The initiating organisation will nominate an individual to act as the partnership “broker” to develop the partnership approach – though the organisation may not necessarily use this term. This individual will either be identified from the organisation’s staff or will be a new appointee, perhaps an independent consultant. The choice may be made for reasons of expediency or financial constraints, rather than a full appraisal of the best course of action, but potential consequences should be considered, if possible.

Figure 8 summarises the four kinds of situation in which a broker can find him or herself. The vertical axis indicates the degree of

independence from the initiating organisation. The horizontal indicates whether the broker is expected to adopt a proactive or reactive approach to tasks.



Each situation in which a broker operates has its advantages and disadvantages. Those assuming the role of or appointing a partnership broker need to clearly understand the implications of the four roles – coordinator, animator, pioneer and innovator – shown in Figure 8.

The broker as “coordinator”

In this situation, the broker is likely to be a member of the initiating organisation’s staff, perhaps with the brokering role added to a list of existing duties.

Advantages for the partnership are:

- Familiarity with the initiating organisation and an established network of contacts.
- Knowledge of the organisation's values and procedures, as well as its wider operational context.
- Access to the initiating organisation's resources.

Disadvantages for the partnership are:

- Potential (actual or perceived) bias in favour of the initiating organisation.
- Inability to challenge colleagues or take risks, as too caught up in the initiating organisation's culture.
- Insufficient time to devote to the role of broker.

The broker as “animator”

Here, the initiating organisation is likely to appoint the broker specifically for the task and give him or her a degree of authority and independence.

Advantages for the partnership are:

- Freedom to operate more independently, though will need to win the confidence of colleagues from the initiating organisation.
- A fresh perspective from which to build and maintain an equal understanding of the partners' views and concerns.
- Recognition as an “expert” in the partnership-building process; partner organisations will look to the broker for guidance.

Disadvantages for the partnership are:

- An inadequate understanding of the culture and practices of the initiating organisation.
- Ability to “move on” too easily if the situation becomes difficult.
- Frustration resulting from the lack of opportunity to work more proactively.

The broker as “pioneer”

In this case, the broker is likely to be someone who has initiated the partnership and persuaded an organisation to provide backing.

Advantages for the partnership are:

- Considerable (almost total) independence from the initiating organisation to operate.
- Ample opportunities for creativity and innovation.
- Lack of the constraint that could result from a more subordinate role.

Disadvantages for the partnership are:

- Too much opportunity for unilateral decision making.
- Potential unwillingness to transfer “ownership” to the partners in due course.
- Easy confusion of the role of broker with that of “champion”.

The broker as “innovator”

The broker in this situation is also likely to be a member of the initiating organisation’s staff, but one who has taken the initiative in promoting a partnership approach and is then confirmed in the broker’s role.

Advantages for the partnership are:

- Strong likelihood of being highly motivated.
- Ability to introduce new ideas and approaches to the initiating organisation.
- Opportunity to build capacity and new approaches within the organisation.

Disadvantages for the partnership are:

- Some constraint resulting from having a position in the organisation.
- Comparative freedom of operation a possible source of

resentment by colleagues within the initiating organisation.

- Vulnerability to any change in organisational policy.

Ending up in the wrong situation can result in the broker becoming dysfunctional and, in a worst-case scenario, unwittingly undermining or damaging the partnership itself.

Any individual taking on the role of broker will tend naturally towards one or other of these situations. Some brokers operate best in a “pioneer” setting, with maximum autonomy. Others operate better in a “coordinator” role, with maximum integration and support. Matching the individual to the situation will ensure the best work in the particular circumstances. Someone who inclines towards being a pioneer will be frustrated and unproductive if expected to perform as a coordinator, and vice versa.

Brokers need to understand the full implications of the circumstances in which they being asked to operate. Sharing the four characterisations (coordinator, animator, pioneer and innovator) with those making the appointment in the initiating organisation should enable full discussion to take place prior to confirming the broker’s appointment.

Finding and appointing a broker

Partnership brokers can come from any sector. They can draw on – and where necessary refer to – their sectoral experience. The ideal broker is someone who can genuinely claim to have experience of all sectors. To date, such individuals are unfortunately few and far between.

The initiating organisation may be constrained in whom they can appoint and how much autonomy they are able to allow the broker. A public sector agency, for example, may be more constrained in the degree of responsibility it can allocate to a partnership broker, in comparison with an NGO or a business.

Hence a public sector organisation may be inclined to position a partnership broker as either an animator or a coordinator.

Other factors may also affect whether the initiating organisation elects to make an internal or external appointment. Two questions are fundamental: whether funds are available to make a new appointment, and whether someone in the organisation is suitable to undertake the role (see Chapter 4 for an elaboration of the attributes and skills required by a broker).

If the initiating organisation decides to appoint someone external to the role, the next challenge is where to look for a suitably skilled and experienced professional. While the formal profession of “partnership broker” is not yet established, an increasing number of individuals in different parts of the world have undertaken the role and are well able to transfer that experience to new situations. Until a more systematic way of accessing good brokers has developed (as undoubtedly it will), initiating organisations should consult electronic databases listing organisations concerned with partnerships for sustainable development, or seek good contacts directly from peers and colleagues working in other partnership initiatives.

Like any other professional appointee, a broker will require a comprehensive job description, clear terms of reference, supervision and reporting arrangements, and suitable remuneration for the job. Chapter 3 details the tasks of the partnership broker. These can form the basis for a job description.

In practice, while an increasing number of initiating organisations recognise the role of the partnership broker, many still do not. Brokers themselves will probably need to help “steer” their role with both the initiating organisation and the partners for some time to come.

Clarifying ownership and accountability

Who “owns” the partnership, and therefore to whom is the partnership broker ultimately accountable? These are not easy questions to answer.

Perhaps it is obvious that the partners “own” the partnership. Clearly, the partners as a group decide how the partnership’s work will develop, who will undertake what tasks and whether the partnership should be disbanded. However, co-owning something as complicated as a tri-sector partnership for sustainable development has its challenges.

In many circumstances, one partner organisation believes it has more ownership rights than others. This could be the initiating organisation or the partner organisation that has put most resources into the partnership. In other situations, the partnership is in reality “owned” by one organisation that acts as the manager on behalf of the partnership – for example, where one partner organisation manages funding from an external donor.

From an early stage, the partners need to openly discuss and explicitly agree on how responsibility for the partnership is “carried” and to whom the partnership broker will be accountable. The broker needs a clear understanding of not just his or her working arrangements, but also the holding and sharing of power among the partners. For example, the broker should know – and perhaps even help the partners explicitly clarify – the circumstances under which the partnership can be terminated. Has each partner got the power to terminate the partnership? Do only some of the partners have this right? Or can a partner choose to leave, and the other partners retain the right to continue with the partnership?

As the partnership develops, pre-agreed ownership arrangements may sometimes need to change. The partnership may become the

basis of a new organisation in due course. If so, the partners would change their role to perhaps that of trustees or management board.

No matter where the ownership of the partnership lies, the broker does not own the partnership, however important his or her role in creating it. All brokers need to remember that they are essentially managers of a process. They may have a role in helping the partners think through the issue of ownership, but they must never assume ownership themselves, either in their management style or in their thinking.

The whole issue of accountability becomes particularly interesting within a partnership paradigm. Experience suggests that the best approach has the partnership broker accountable to one individual appointed by the partners to act on their behalf. Only in this way can the broker act with a degree of independence towards the partner group and avoid the possibility of becoming little more than a secretary to the partners or – even worse – the repository of all the frustrations the partners have with each other.

In partnership initiatives, we may have to rethink traditional “line management” arrangements and develop new approaches to accountability.

First the initiating organisation and later all the partner organisations need to give the broker regular feedback, support and acknowledgement in a structured way. This will enable him or her to do the best possible job, which will have direct spin-offs for the partnership and indirect spin-offs for the project.

Establishing a partnership identity and style

At an early stage, establishing the partnership’s identity as an entity separate from its constituent partner organisations raises a number of questions. This is particularly likely when the

partnership needs to make a collective decision (eg, appointing a project manager) or to present the partnership to an external audience (eg, the media, a local government department or a donor).

To what extent does the partnership have a separate identity from the individual partner organisations? How far is it possible for the individuals representing the partner organisations to feel loyalty both to their own organisation and to the partnership? How can each partner organisation on the one hand feel committed to decisions and statements made in the name of the partnership, and on the other hand not insist on “signing off” every public utterance before it is made?

The broker will play a key role in helping the partners agree on an independent identity and a modus operandi for the partnership in relation to its public face. This may take considerable time to do, yet such an agreement should be in place before anyone (initiating organisation, partners, project staff or broker) presumes to put information in the public domain.

Of course, a key question for the broker is how far does he or she represent or speak for the partnership (or the partners)? In the early stages, the broker will probably have to take on a considerable “fronting” role. The broker is also central to decisions about the partnership’s identity, particularly while the partnership is forming, since he or she is likely to have the clearest view of the partnership and its aspirations.

The broker should also ensure a continuity of style in the way the partnership is represented and can advise the partners on the best communications strategy. Developing a communications strategy will help the partners clarify their thoughts on the partnership, their role in it and its potential importance in implementing a valuable sustainable development project. The

strategy will also help partners experiment with being open and transparent with each other and will set a standard for the partnership in its dealings with others.

Agreeing the brokering process

Once the broker is appointed, agreement on the brokering process – the tasks the broker will undertake and the procedures he or she will follow – is required. The broker is likely to have the overall remit for developing the partnership, with more specific terms of reference for each stage of the work. In the next chapter, we consider the seven key stages in brokering partnerships for sustainable development.

To reach agreement on the broker's remit, the broker and the initiating organisation need as full an understanding as possible of what the role will entail and how to achieve a good balance between a structured job and a degree of flexibility.

The broker must be enabled to respond appropriately to changing circumstances.

During the brokering process, not only do the broker's tasks change significantly, but his or her style of operation changes too. Whether positioned as coordinator, animator, pioneer or innovator, the broker should operate quite differently at each stage of the partnership's development.

Initially, the broker will need to “front” the partnership, giving it shape, character and vision. In due course, the broker will take on a coaching or mentoring role, as the partners assume increasing ownership and responsibility. When the partnership becomes fully established (or moves to termination because the project is completed), the broker's role transmutes into that of steward or guardian. Finally, as the brokering work nears completion, the broker should have become so peripheral to the partnership that he or she can complete the final brokering tasks and move away from the partnership almost unnoticed.

The partnership broker who can function equally well in all these roles is a highly skilled individual, perhaps coming close to joining the ranks of what Desmond Tutu describes as “*people of stature who are ready to compromise for the greater good of all*”.

3

The Partnership Broker's Path

*A good walker leaves no tracks;
A good speaker makes no slips;
A good reckoner needs no tally;
A good door needs no lock.*

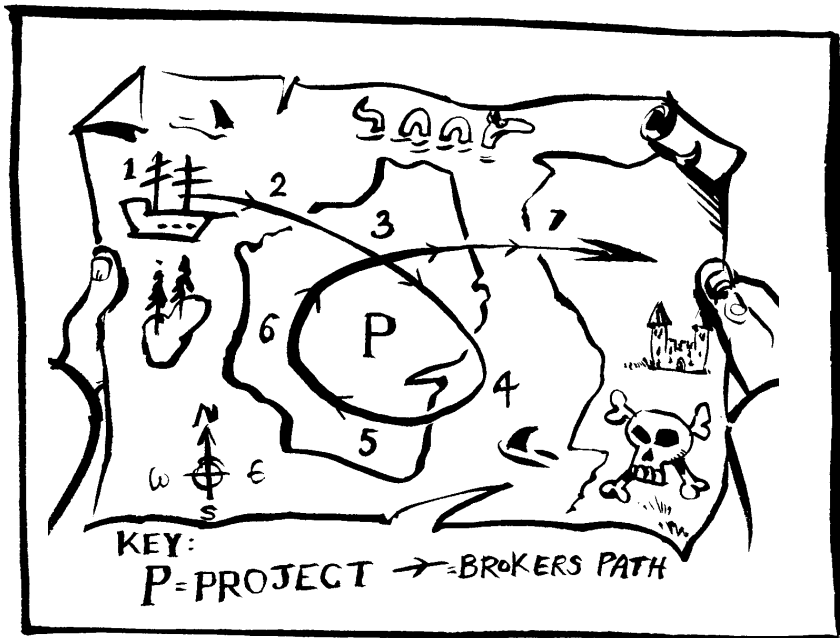
*“Good binding requires no knots,
Yet no one can loosen it.*

*“The sage takes care of all things
And abandons nothing.”*

**Lao Tsu
6th century BC⁴**

Mapping the route

Once a partnership broker is appointed, drawing up a plan of action becomes imperative. Each situation is unique, and every broker will have his or her way of approaching the task. A few staging posts along the way, however, can provide the broker (and the partners) with a simple “route map” for the journey. Facing uncharted territory is not necessary each time someone, somewhere, attempts a partnership approach to development.



Perhaps the first challenge is to differentiate between setting up the partnership (the central responsibility of the broker) and establishing the project (the role of the project's manager). A clear route map will minimise the risk of confusion of roles and responsibilities. Feasibly, the broker can become the project manager, but, as anyone who has undertaken both roles knows, clarifying when this transition has taken place and what implications it has for the partnership, as well as for the individual broker, is vital.

In due course, the project will have its own development and implementation plan; this is not our concern here. In this chapter we cover essentially the broker's day-to-day tasks in planning and nurturing the partnership. We also consider the changes to his or her role during the life of the partnership as responsibility increasingly transfers to the partners and/or the project. The process of brokering a partnership has seven clear stages (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Summary of the seven stages of brokering a partnership

Stage 1 Getting started

Once the broker is appointed (or identified) by the initiating organisation, a precise formulation of the problem is required to provide the foundation for all future work. Stage 1 is essentially a scoping and data collection exercise to assemble a comprehensive picture of the nature of the challenge, the options available and the potential for a partnership approach. The broker's report will make recommendations for further action that the initiating organisation will need to agree on prior to Stage 2.

Stage 2 Identifying partner organisations

Identifying and involving suitable partners is a critical task for a partnership-based initiative. This cannot be rushed. Taking sufficient time to check out the motivation and commitment of potential partners is as essential as finding the right combination of partner organisations.

Stage 3 Committing resources

The partnership itself will need resources – including a time commitment from each partner organisation, as well as cash – to build, administer and manage the partnership. Encouraging the partners to consider “resources” (in the broadest sense) and to decide on their resource commitment is central to establishing the partnership. Without such commitment in place, it is unwise to move into Stage 4 (normally when the project is developed and project staff appointed).

... more ...

Figure 9, continued

Stage 4 Building the partnership

A partnership-based initiative requires ongoing involvement of partner organisation representatives, who will need to develop and strengthen their working relationship over time. The partnership will face its real tests during the project design and early stages of implementation. The broker plays a critical role in working with the partners to address conflicts of interest or tension resulting from their different working styles.

Stage 5 Learning the lessons

Any partnership initiative is complex, and inevitably, errors will be made. The broker helps partners see difficult situations and “mistakes” as opportunities for learning, and enables the partners to apply what they have learnt to improving the partnership and the project for the benefit of all concerned.

Stage 6 Assessing the value

All partners will need to see value in what the partnership has undertaken – often to justify their organisation’s involvement and the resources they have committed. The impacts of the partnership may only be assessed fully after considerable time. Meanwhile, the broker can assist the partners to identify and appreciate “value added” in other ways.

Stage 7 Moving on

The broker encourages the partners to consider longer-term issues. How will the project be maintained long-term? Has the partnership completed its work? Should it be terminated? Should the partnership be “institutionalised”? The broker can be helpful in articulating the range of options, and once a choice is made, working with the partners on implementation.

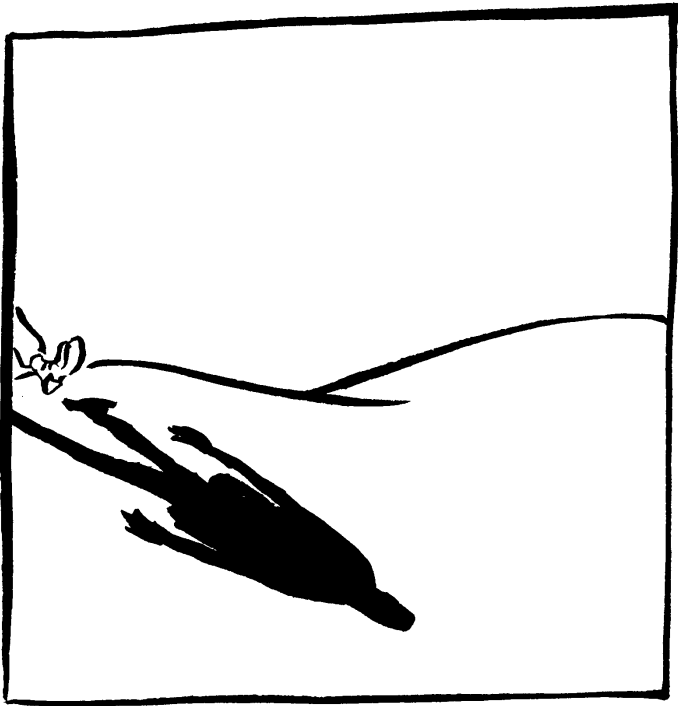
At this point, a broker’s work is completed, and it is time to move on. The broker implements his or her exit strategy, which should have been fully discussed with the initiating organisation prior to Stage 1 and with the partners from Stage 4 onwards.

We look at these seven stages in the partnership-brokering process in some detail below and outline the following for each stage:

- The broad objectives that are likely to be a priority
- The key tasks that the broker will need to undertake
- The main issues to be considered
- A stocktaking exercise that the broker conducts towards the end of each stage
- The actions to take in moving to the next stage.

Clearly, the partnership broker plays a critical role in enabling a partnership initiative to come into being and to be productive. However, the partners, not the broker, take the risks and deserve the credit for success. An effective broker will work hard to ensure that the partners receive such credit.

To borrow the words of Lao Tsu, good brokers are like good walkers – they leave no tracks.

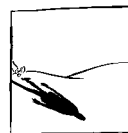


Stage 1: GETTING STARTED

Objectives

- To assess and confirm the scope and nature of the proposed project.
- To evaluate the advantage of a partnership approach compared with alternative approaches.
- To make recommendations and agree next steps with the initiating organisation.

Stage 1: Getting started



| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|--|
| Formulate a concise statement of the problem as a basis for all further work. | Ensure the broker's understanding of the problem is the same as that of the initiating organisation. |
| Review the data on both the problem and the proposed project. | <p>To understand better what has led to the proposed project, the broker should consider the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence indicates that the proposed work should be tackled? • What, if anything, has been done to date, and who has been involved? • What has been the impact of any past activity? • What can be learnt from what has been attempted before? |
| Seek supplementary information. | <p>Such information could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics • First-hand observations and evidence • Interviews with stakeholders • Meetings with potential partners. |
| Assess external factors that may influence prospective partners or impact the proposed project. | The brief from the initiating organisation will undoubtedly be based on assumptions about the environment in which the proposed project will be operating – including political, legal, economic, social, technological and ecological. These will need to be checked out. |
| Examine a number of development approaches, and articulate the case for a partnership-based approach, if appropriate. | Seek out case studies of successful solutions to similar problems, and consider in what circumstances a partnership approach is the most effective. |



Stage 1: Getting started

| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|--|
| | <p>Consider also whether the initiating organisation is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appropriate one to take the lead (ie, will others see its lead role as legitimate?)• Already committed to a particular approach (with either explicit or implicit arrangements with potential partners)• Open to any alternative suggestions the broker might make. |
| <p>Draft a report indicating how the recommended approach (partnership-based or other) can most effectively solve the identified problem.</p> | <p>Recommendations should indicate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partnership approach is the most appropriate, or• The initiating organisation would do better to consider a non-partnership approach, or• The initiating organisation should abandon the project altogether. |
| <p>Secure the initiating organisation's agreement to proceed with the recommendations.</p> | <p>An experienced broker will keep the initiating organisation informed of work in progress. Deciding how to proceed can then happen rapidly on receipt of a report or update.</p> |
| <p>Confirm the broker's future role (see "Next steps", overleaf, for likely options).</p> | <p>By observing the broker's work during Stage 1, the initiating organisation will have had the opportunity to evaluate his or her actions and likely effectiveness in implementing the next stages of the process.</p> |

Stage 1: Getting started



Taking stock

- A number of useful contacts made and early interest in the project established.
- A report completed and submitted to the initiating organisation.
- Agreement reached on the next steps.

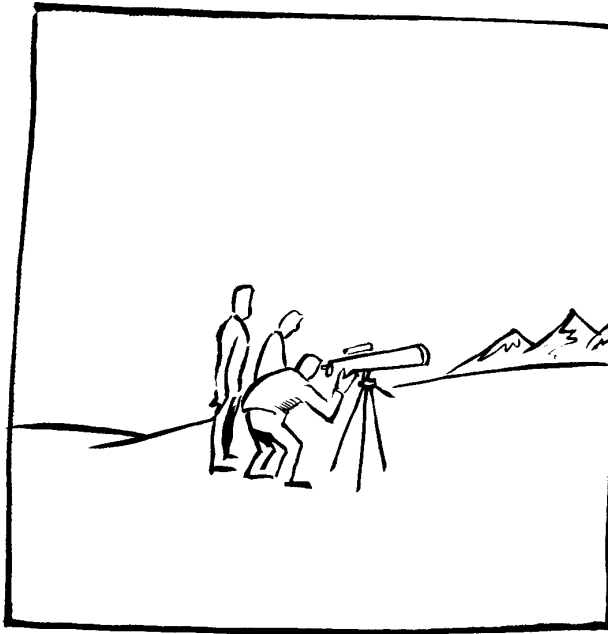
If appropriate:

- The broker's longer-term role confirmed, with an agreed job description, terms of reference and initial contract in place.

Next steps

At this point, one of three next steps is possible:

- The broker agrees to continue in the role, focusing on building and nurturing the proposed partnership.
- This broker's role is terminated because different skills are needed. The outgoing broker helps the initiating organisation to identify and brief another person to continue in the broker's role for the next stages of the partnership-building process.
- The broker's role is terminated because the initiating organisation decides not to pursue a partnership approach (for example, where the report has indicated such an approach would be inappropriate or unworkable). A broker will therefore be unnecessary.



Stage 2: IDENTIFYING PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Objectives

- To identify and engage the interest of partner organisations, either making new contacts or confirming previously agreed-on partner organisations.
- To explore partners' potential inputs to the partnership and the proposed project.
- To clarify partners' concerns and possible conflicts of interest, if any.

Stage 2: Identifying partner organisations



| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|---|
| <p>Conduct research into prospective partner organisations and their appropriateness as partners for this particular project.</p> | <p>Either the initiating organisation will have predetermined the partner organisations or the broker, in discussion with the initiating organisation, will seek out new partner organisations.</p> <p>In researching a partner organisation, the broker needs to gather as much information as possible before arranging a first meeting. The broker should only schedule a meeting if he or she considers the organisation likely to be, or have the potential to become, a strong partner.</p> |
| <p>Arrange meetings with the right people within each potential partner organisation – normally at both senior management and operational levels.</p> | <p>The broker should strive to give full attention to each individual's point of view, particularly his or her organisational priorities and concerns. At the same time, the broker should confidently take a lead in discussions, since the partners may be unsure about what being a partner will entail and what might be expected of them.</p> |
| <p>Identify the appropriate partner organisations, build the motivation and commitment of key individuals, and secure their participation.</p> | <p>For many organisations, this style of working will be unfamiliar and may be perceived as threatening to the status quo. The process of identifying and energising potential partners takes patience and perseverance, as well as ongoing dialogue and active negotiation.</p> |



Stage 2: Identifying partner organisations

| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|--|
| <p>Work with representatives each identified partner organisation to jointly develop a sound “case” for their involvement in the partnership to present to their (possibly sceptical) colleagues. Consider with them in what ways they might contribute to the partnership and what benefits their organisation may expect from it.</p> | <p>Every organisation – even those that appear enthusiastic – is likely to house cynics and sceptics: people who are firmly convinced that a partnership approach (or even organisational involvement in the issue) is inappropriate and unlikely to work. The broker has to estimate the prevalence of these attitudes within the organisation. Extensive scepticism may even lead the broker to the decision that the organisation is unsuitable as a partner.</p> |
| <p>Consolidate a good working relationship with key individuals in each of the partner organisations, encourage them to make precise and firm commitments to the partnership, and when the time is right, introduce the different partner organisations to each other.</p> | <p>Once a partner organisation makes a commitment, the broker has a key role in assisting his or her main contacts to present the organisational benefits to their colleagues.</p> <p>All parties in the partnership must perceive the broker as a nonpartisan and trusted “go-between”. Ensuring this requires openness on the part of the broker, plus a genuine interest in and understanding of each partner’s perspective.</p> |
| <p>With the initiating organisation and the partners, draft guidelines for the partnership or an agreement outlining the partnership terms.</p> | <p>Consulting with partners – particularly in a workshop format – to draw up the guidelines or agreement constitutes a valuable partnership-building exercise. It enables the partners to learn how to work together and gives the broker an opportunity to demonstrate the value of his or her role.</p> |

Stage 2: Identifying partner organisations



Taking stock

- Partners identified and confirmed, both with the initiating organisation and with each other.
- Partners' contributions to and benefits from the proposed partnership clarified – maybe as a statement of commitment from each partner.
- Broker and partners' initial understanding of each partner organisation's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the partnership.
- Partners' demonstrated recognition of and sensitivity to other partners.
- Evidence of partners working proactively – eg, taking the initiative in calling meetings or visiting other partners in order to develop stronger working relationships.
- Partners' clearer understanding of the broker's role.

Next steps

At the end of this stage, the broker will probably follow one of three routes:

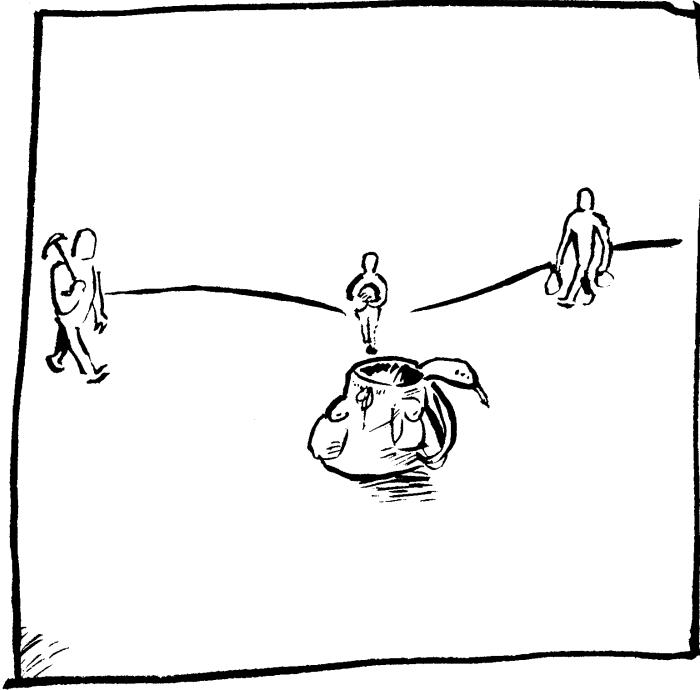
- Proceed to the next stage.
- Replace one or more partners and revise the project, in close discussion with the initiating organisation and the remaining partners.
- Propose that the partnership approach or the project be abandoned. The broker will need to explain to the initiating organisation why he or she is recommending this route, since it makes the final decision. If Stage 1 has been completed well, this decision is unlikely. Termination may be needed, however, if the external circumstances change radically and a partnership-based initiative is no longer relevant or necessary.

Before moving on to Stage 3, the broker should consider whether each partner has the following:

Clear commitment to the partnership and the proposed project

- The capacity to follow through on agreed actions
- Realistic expectations of both the partnership and the broker.

Stages 3 and 4 will address these issues more fully.



Stage 3: COMMITTING RESOURCES

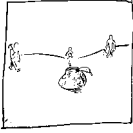
Objectives

- To promote a concept of resources that encompasses more than money.
- To help the partners and project staff to identify resource needs and understand the importance of sustainable resource arrangements.
- To encourage the partners to commit their resources to the project.

Stage 3: Committing resources



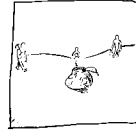
| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|---|
| <p>Present the case for broadening the term “resources” beyond money to include people, equipment, knowledge, technical and managerial skills, reputation, contacts and other forms of “in-kind” contributions.</p> | <p>The broker can inspire new thinking from the partners and encourage imaginative approaches to how they can contribute by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citing examples of partnership projects with low financial investment (perhaps less than in a traditional donor-funded project) • Highlighting the significant use of non-cash resources and in-kind contributions in other development partnerships. |
| <p>Clarify the resource implications of the proposed project.</p> | <p>Most projects have three broad groups of resource needs – partners may need help in differentiating these:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial funding to secure and build the partnership – ie, to cover meeting costs and the broker’s salary and expenses 2. A range of cash and non-cash resources for the start-up phase of the project 3. Renewable resources for the project’s long-term sustainability. |
| <p>Ensure that partners understand the resource implications and recognise their role both in contributing resources and in locating resources from elsewhere if needed.</p> | <p>A true partnership only comes into being when an organisation makes a definite commitment – normally demonstrated by an agreement to allocate time and effort, and not simply financial resources.</p> |
| <p>Negotiate with each partner to identify the range of resources they can draw on for the benefit of the project.</p> | <p>Partners may need assistance in identifying resources in their organisation that can potentially benefit the partnership – see page 16.</p> |
| <p>Seek upfront resource commitment from each partner.</p> | <p>It may be necessary to “start small”. Partners may only make significant contributions once they are confident that the partnership is working well.</p> |



Stage 3: Committing resources

| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|--|
| <p>Where necessary, work with the partners to seek external funding from a donor organisation.</p> | <p>When a donor organisation is involved (or when the initiating organisation is a donor), the broker may need to work with the donor and partners to clarify the relationship.</p> <p>In a development partnership, the donor needs to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complex nature of tri-sector partnership • The importance of investing in the early stages of the partnership-building process – for example, by funding the role of the broker • The need to negotiate the funding allocation at each stage as the project needs become clearer over time. <p>Note: Brokers should remember (and remind partners and donors) that while donors are always stakeholders, they are not always partners.</p> |
| <p>With the partners, develop a methodology for assessing and recording the true worth of non-cash contributions.</p> | <p>The different – and potentially complementary – resources available from the partners can result in a valuable mixed-resource package. Compiling this package as a group – in effect, building a complex and comprehensive resource profile from the partners' diversity – can also contribute to building and consolidating the partnership.</p> |
| <p>Ensure full acknowledgement of all resource contributions.</p> | <p>The issue of resources is always sensitive and often causes tension within a partnership. If necessary, the broker may need to suggest that the partners step back, review their partnership – in particular, any resource problems – and make adjustments before proceeding to the next stages of implementing the project and further strengthening the ways in which they work together.</p> |

Stage 3: Committing resources



Taking stock

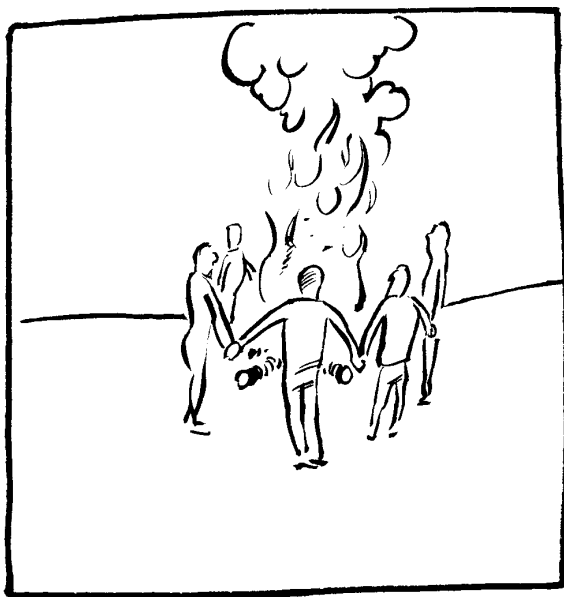
- Some short-term resource commitments in place and more in the pipeline.
- Partners' resources committed willingly, responsibly and imaginatively, and partners actively engaged in the wider resource procurement process.
- Longer-term resource strategies in place and early indications of their success.
- The broker supporting and not leading the partners' efforts to secure resources from elsewhere.
- Partners' acceptance and approval of the procedures for mobilising resources, and their recognition and acknowledgement of all contributions.
- Partners in a position to begin the more detailed design and implementation of the proposed project.

Next steps

Mobilising resources from partners can be straightforward when they are fully engaged and act with goodwill and clarity of purpose. If resourcing from partners proves difficult, brokers should ask themselves the following questions:

- Did reluctance or lack of capacity stop partners committing resources? Does this indicate that the partnership is sufficiently robust at this stage?
- Has resource procurement become marginal, rather than remaining central to the partnership-building and project development work?
- Did too many resources come from one source? Has that resulted in imbalance or resentment within the partnership? If so, how can we most effectively redress this?

These and any other outstanding issues need raising and resolving before moving on to implementation of the project.



Stage 4: BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP

Objectives

- To build a strong working relationship between the partners that is capable of withstanding difficulties and challenges.
- To confirm the principles underpinning the partnership, as well as the ground rules and modus operandi for the continuing partnership.
- To secure the partners' agreement on project objectives, as well as a detailed project design and implementation plan.

Stage 4: Building the partnership



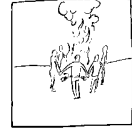
| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|---|
| <p>Use all activities, events and meetings between partners to encourage them to get to know each other better and learn how best to work together.</p> | <p>The broker plays a critical role in helping the partnership to become stronger. Until well into Stage 4, the broker is likely to be the only person with an overall grasp of the attributes and priorities of the different partners.</p> <p>The partners are likely to have a narrower and more partisan focus, especially at the beginning. Managing this discrepancy will take subtle leadership skills alongside the more conventional skills of facilitation.</p> |
| <p>Facilitate discussion and agreement on the principles and ground rules for working together.</p> | <p>Partners do not necessarily have to like each other in order to work together, but they do need an understanding of and professional respect for each other.</p> <p>A skilled broker will know when to press forward with making decisions and taking action, and when to hold the partners back, assisting them to assess the situation and review their working relationships.</p> |
| <p>Discuss issues of accountability and governance, as well as any potential conflicts of interest, and aid partners in resolving any disagreements if necessary.</p> | <p>The broker has to be prepared to “carry the risk” of dealing with difficult issues on behalf of the partnership – for example, challenging unhelpful behaviour patterns in individual partners, or acting as an advocate for a partner whose point of view is being ignored.</p> <p>Striving for consensus must not be at the cost of addressing conflicting agendas and even barely disguised hostility between partners. A partnership will never be stable or sustainable where any disagreement is unresolved.</p> |



Stage 4: Building the partnership

| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|--|---|
| <p>Work with the partners to design and develop the project, helping them to agree how they propose to oversee and manage the implementation of the project.</p> | <p>The best way of building collaboration is to work together on a common task – in this case, putting together the project.</p> <p>Most partner organisations will have been operating in a “cut-and-thrust”, competitive culture. Learning that this approach is ineffective in building collaboration takes time, and the broker may have to justify or explain why he or she is putting so much effort into doing so.</p> |
| <p>Assist partners to identify project staffing needs and agree on a procedure for appointing a project manager or director.</p> | <p>The broker needs to engage partners fully in this activity while remaining realistic about how much time any partner can allocate to the project given the partner’s other work and organisational priorities.</p> <p>Individuals welcome recognition, encouragement and appreciation for the time they give and the work they undertake.</p> |
| <p>Further clarify the broker’s role once the project gets under way. If necessary, talk partners and the project manager through the objectives and tasks of stages 5 to 7. Include a discussion in principle of the broker’s eventual exit strategy.</p> | <p>By Stage 4, the assumption is that the initiating organisation has handed over responsibility for the partnership or has joined the partnership as an equal partner. Also, the initiating organisation has passed the management of the broker’s role to the partners.</p> |
| <p>Continue to build and strengthen the partnership throughout the life of the project.</p> | <p>Even if the project is under way, the partnership relationships may need strengthening and revitalising regularly. The broker should consistently check and double-check that the partnership is intact and functioning well.</p> |

Stage 4: Building the partnership



Taking stock

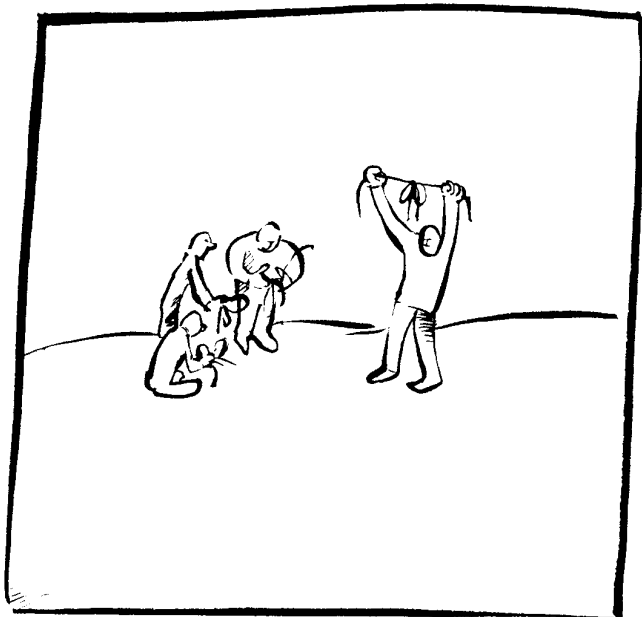
- An established partnership, with formal or informal agreements on commitments and roles for all partners.
- A modus operandi that is comfortable for all partners and which balances action and reflection.
- Indications that the partners are beginning to operate as one body, rather than as separate entities.
- Agreement on the project's development and management, including clarification of each partner's role and responsibilities during implementation.
- Project staff – at a minimum, the project manager or director – in place.
- A shared understanding of the broker's changing role throughout the process.

Next steps

The broker and the partners will need to judge when the project is running well enough for the partnership to move on to Stage 5 – in other words, to move from building and sustaining collaboration, to learning lessons, reviewing effectiveness and assessing value. Not all issues need resolving fully by this stage, but the broker has to feel confident that partners have established a sufficiently robust working relationship to face any future challenges.

Partnership issues to consider before moving to Stage 5 include the following:

- Are all partners equally committed to the work of the partnership?
- Which partners are active and which passive in pushing the agenda? Does this need adjustment?
- To what extent have partners agreed on the development of the next phase of the project and the possible changing nature of their roles as partners?
- Are the working relationships between partners, project staff and other stakeholders well established and running smoothly?



Stage 5: LEARNING THE LESSONS

Objectives

- To ensure continued good practice within the partnership.
- To create a “learning culture” within the partnership in which the partners are willing to learn from experience and to disseminate what they have learnt more widely (within their organisations and beyond).
- To build the partners’ capacity to take increasing responsibility for leading and developing the partnership without the day-to-day interventions of the broker.

Stage 5: Learning the lessons



| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|--|--|
| <p>Create effective learning opportunities for partners by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a “no-blame” environment. In such an environment, mistakes are valued as offering a learning opportunity. Resting on early success can inhibit a review of what could be improved, may not engage the partnership’s full creative capacity and can lead to stagnation.• Encouraging partners to take risks. Putting energy into finding out how to put matters right, rather than who was wrong, can prevent partners from becoming “risk-averse”.• Ensuring partners know how to integrate their learning back into their organisations. This will promote wider organisational participation in the project while also strengthening the individual partner’s sense of responsibility for both the partnership and the project. | <p>Partners who are accustomed to working in this way and see its value may be invaluable in pushing their partner colleagues into more of a learning mode. But they risk dominating the proceedings, leaving those unused to this way of working to experience increasing discomfort and even resentment. The broker needs to be aware of this danger and to develop strategies that ensure inclusive and effective learning for all.</p> |

Stage 5: Learning the lessons



| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|--|--|
| <p>Provide a role model (the broker as “learner”) for the partners of the possibility of “learning by doing”.</p> | <p>Up to now, the broker has taken a leadership role in the partnership-building process. For the partnership to grow and develop as a strong and healthy entity, the broker must now ensure that leadership passes to the partners themselves. For this transfer to happen successfully, the broker, in addition to being a role model, needs to increasingly adopt the role of coach or mentor.</p> |
| <p>Work with the partners to develop methods for analysing situations and creatively critiquing work in progress.</p> | <p>Many people experience anxiety about public criticism of their performance. They may be equally nervous of criticising others. The broker plays a key role in developing a creative learning culture by demonstrating how to give and accept critique.</p> |
| <p>Discuss with partners (and, if appropriate, project staff) the right time to share the partnership experience more widely (eg, within partner organisations, locally, nationally or internationally), as well as the best approach and the most appropriate spokespeople.</p> | <p>The broker is ideally placed to judge the timeliness of “going public”.</p> <p>A partnership project that receives high exposure, or is pressured into becoming a role model for others too early, may suffer the consequences. The partnership itself may be stretched too thin or even fall apart as a result of insensitive external scrutiny.</p> <p>The broker may be best placed to articulate and share the process of the partnership’s creation and development over time.</p> <p>The broker intimately understands the partnership from within and therefore holds the key to spreading good partnership practice for wider social and economic impact.</p> |

Stage 5: Learning the lessons



Taking stock

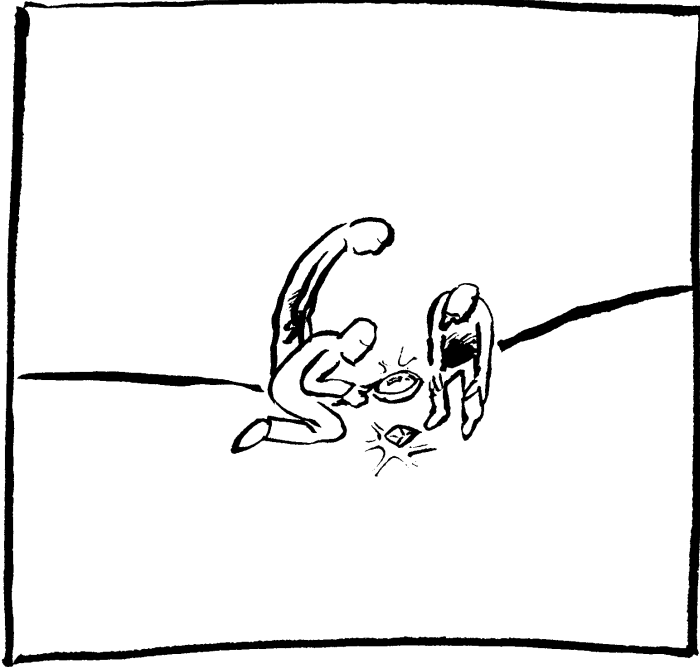
- Partners' understanding that openness to learning and critique is essential to the health of the partnership and adds to their professional development.
- Partners' willingness to be open about their strengths and weaknesses, to learn from their mistakes, to value the sharing and honesty of others, and to be constructively critical of others as needed.
- The partnership providing a forum for sharing learning effectively, which has useful spin-offs for the project's development, and for the partner organisations and others.
- Evidence that the partners are becoming more autonomous and more independent of the broker.

Next steps

Stage 5 – like Stage 4 – is likely to run in parallel to the project implementation process and to continue over a considerable time. The broker will need to assess how long to keep this stage going and when the time is right to move on.

When the broker and partners are satisfied that the following three conditions are in place, moving on to Stage 6 is appropriate:

- Learning and sharing procedures have proved useful and effective.
- The partnership is continuing to function well.
- The partnership is sufficiently developed to undertake a more rigorous assessment of outcomes and outputs.

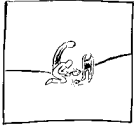


Stage 6: ASSESSING THE VALUE

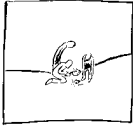
Objectives

- To critically assess the value of the partnership (eg, consider whether it has fulfilled the objectives agreed in Stage 2).
- To involve other stakeholders and project staff, as well as partners, in assessing the partnership's effectiveness and value.
- To assess the impact of the partnership-based project on the focus issue or challenge for which the partnership was developed.

Stage 6: Assessing the value



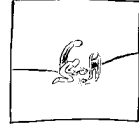
| BROKER’S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|---|
| <p>Secure agreement from the partners for an assessment of the effectiveness and outcomes of the partnership.</p> | <p>The project is likely to have assessment procedures built into its implementation cycle. The broker informally prompts regular project reviews, but his or her main task is to set up a process to assess the partnership value with the partners.</p> |
| <p>Agree on the parameters of such an assessment, and decide how widely to seek the views of stakeholders.</p> | <p>The broker should ensure that partners, project staff and other stakeholders have the opportunity to articulate their own questions whenever possible.</p> <p>Core questions for the broker and partners to consider might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What “works” in the partnership, and what doesn’t? • What major obstacles and challenges has the partnership faced? • Has the partnership approach had unexpected outcomes? What are they? Are they significant? Why? • How far have the partners developed their roles (including skills in working collaboratively and in assuming leadership) during the life of the partnership? • Is the partnership, or should it be, coming to the end of its current task? What might be the appropriate next step for the partners? |
| <p>Explore possible assessment methods, and present them to the partner group for consideration.</p> <p>With the partners, agree on the assessment method to use, and</p> | <p>The most suitable methods are likely to include group discussion, one-to-one conversations and action research (as opposed to academic research) approaches. Adhering to the ground rules established in Stage 4 (see page 64) will ensure that a clumsy and insensitive appraisal process does not</p> |



Stage 6: Assessing the value

| BROKER'S TASKS, cont | CONSIDERATIONS |
|--|---|
| plan the process. | undermine the hard-earned trust of the partners. |
| If required, recommend the appointment of an external person or agency to conduct the assessment. | <p>The partners will make the decision on an external appointee. The appointee should understand tri-sector partnership as a new development paradigm, to ensure he or she does not attempt to assess the partnership using inappropriate methods.</p> <p>The broker may have a key role in briefing the external assessor about the nature of tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development on behalf of the partners.</p> |
| Secure the resources to enable a rigorous and professional assessment. | <p>The existing budget may not cover the assessment cost. The broker and partners will need to seek further resources if required.</p> <p>If one partner offers to cover the cost, the broker should help the other partners assess whether this may prejudice the impartiality of the assessment process.</p> |
| Explore with partners and project staff how best to use the findings from the assessment process to benefit the partner organisations and the project. | Assessing the value of the partnership is, of course, vital to partners and to other stakeholders. Hopefully, it should provide useful evidence and reassurance that the time and effort invested by partners have been worthwhile. |
| With partners and project staff, decide how extensively to release the findings and conclusions into the public domain. | The broker should remind partners of the advantages and disadvantages of “going public” – these are discussed on pages 92 and 93. |

Stage 6: Assessing the value



Taking stock

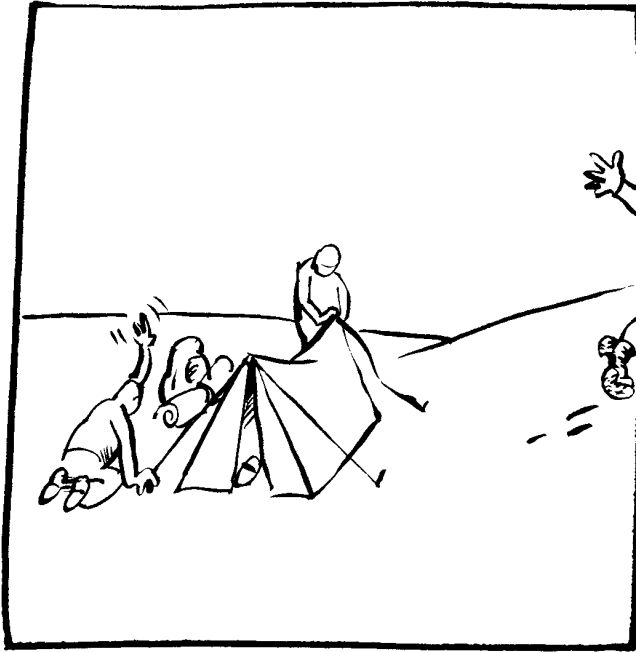
Stage 6 should reveal:

- The value of the partnership approach in undertaking the project effectively.
- The degree to which partner organisations have been impacted positively, with potentially wide-ranging ramifications for future work and behaviour.
- Any remaining weaknesses that can be addressed collaboratively.
- The potential for making the whole experience public – and the partnership's value as a possible model for others.
- The partnership's relative strengths that will take it successfully into Stage 7.
- The increasing autonomy of the partnership and the diminishing role of the broker.

Next steps

The findings can help in consolidating the partnership, making needed changes and, if indicated, agreeing on new directions or work. However, they may also reveal serious weaknesses or flaws in the partnership. In this case, moving on to Stage 7 would be premature without further work. A repetition of some of the activities outlined in Stage 5 may be required.

Once the broker and the partners consider that any such difficulties have been addressed, they can move on to Stage 7, confident that the partnership is as robust as possible at this point.



Stage 7: MOVING ON

Objectives

- To consider the long-term options for the partnership, and to select and implement the appropriate option (see Figure 10, overleaf).
- To ensure that resources and delivery mechanisms are in place, either to complete the project or to support and sustain it over the long term.
- To implement an “exit strategy” for the partnership broker successfully.

Stage 7: Moving on



Figure 10. Partnership options and the role of the broker

| OPTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP | THE BROKER'S ROLE |
|---|--|
| <p>OPTION 1. Institutionalise the partnership</p> <p>Institutionalisation means moving from an ad hoc set of actions by selected individuals to a more regulated approach involving the whole organisation.</p> <p>For some partnerships, the process may begin as early as Stage 3. If by Stage 7 the partnership relationships still rely heavily on one or two individuals, rather than the wider organisation, the partnership is unlikely to be robust in the longer term.</p> | <p>The broker should be able to help each partner to review the situation. If necessary, the broker can support partners to more effectively promote the partnership work in their organisations.</p> |
| <p>OPTION 2. Develop an independent partnership organisation or mechanism</p> <p>In some situations, the need to establish a new partnership mechanism or even a new organisation may become apparent if the project is to continue and grow over the long term. The partners, in discussion with the project staff and other stakeholders, will be in a position to assess this and to consider alternatives.</p> | <p>The broker's role may include highlighting, and elaborating on, different partnership-based organisational models or mechanisms, and assisting everyone involved to explore the pros and cons of each approach.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>... more ...</i></p> |



Stage 7: Moving on

Figure 10, continued

| OPTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP | THE BROKER'S ROLE |
|--|--|
| <p>OPTION 3. Terminate the partnership</p> <p>A partnership may be temporary, designed to undertake and complete a specific task. Alternatively, it may become clear that the partnership is no longer necessary to sustain the project long-term.</p> <p>In either case, the partnership will be terminated. The partners, in discussion with project staff and other stakeholders, will make the decision to end the partnership and then manage the termination. The relationship should end well for everyone and may involve a small celebration to mark the occasion or a more public event to publicise achievements.</p> | <p>The broker will work with the partners and project staff to ensure skilful handling of the process and any relationship issues arising from the decision to conclude the partnership.</p> |

Stage 7: Moving on



| BROKER'S TASKS | CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|---|
| Help the partners to implement the agreed option. | No longer the leader of the process, the broker should now serve in an advisory capacity. He or she may need to help partners understand this. |
| With the partners, discuss issues of scaling up the project or replicating the partnership. | <p>The partners (and project staff, if appropriate) make this decision.</p> <p>The broker's role may be to ask searching questions for the partners and others to consider. These might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the project ready – robust enough – for replication?• What additional pressures will replication put on the partners, the project and other stakeholders?• How can the partners and the project staff “ring-fence” their commitment to helping others replicate, so that their own work is not compromised? |
| Implement the broker's exit strategy in a previously agreed and structured way. | <p>The broker's exit strategy needs to be realistic, appropriate and acceptable to all partners and other stakeholders. It should be well planned and openly discussed with all stakeholders prior to implementation, and should specify identify an agreed handover action plan.</p> <p>The broker may need to ensure the partners understand the exit strategy and are comfortable with the implications.</p> <p>By this stage, the broker will have become increasingly “detached” in his or her relationship with the partners and project staff.</p> |



Stage 7: Moving on

Taking stock

- The project completed or running independently of the broker.
- Partners satisfied by the results to date, both general and specific to their organisations.
- Clear “buy-in” from others within each partner organisation.
- Depending on which option has been chosen, either:
 - The project ongoing with continuing commitment from all partners, or
 - An established partnership mechanism in place, or
 - The project completed successfully and the partnership terminated (hopefully with ongoing working relationships between partners in place).
- A completed final report from the broker to the partners, if required.
- Recognition of the value and achievements of the partnership – for example, by governments, other agencies, the media and the wider community.

Next steps

It is time for the broker to move on – and out of the picture.

The only outstanding issue will be consideration of the long-term relationship, if any, between the partners and the broker. The partners may wish to maintain contact with the broker, either for a further review (say, after a year) or for additional assistance if the partnership experiences relationship difficulties or other problems at some future stage. The broker and the partners should negotiate in principle the terms for this eventuality before the broker’s contract is terminated, so that the broker and the partners are clear about any future relationship.

Broker(s) in action

At this point we move from theory to practice, we look in more detail at a specific partnership and try and understand the brokers role in action. In this project, a designated broker was not allocated to the partnership per se – instead, several people undertook the brokering role at the different stages.

Profile: Management of water services in suburbs of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

National context

Since 1994, political changes in South Africa have created an urgent need to redress the severe imbalances that still exist in many areas of life. The cities are facing a particular challenge in providing affordable and reliable services to the neighbouring townships, now incorporated into municipal jurisdictions. The strain on resources, coupled with the need for political stability, environmental protection, improvement in the quality of life and disease prevention, have served as incentives for a new approach to service delivery.

Local context

Within KwaZulu-Natal province, the two major cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg have doubled or tripled their populations over the past six years. Vivendi Water, an international water company, took the first steps towards developing a tri-sector approach to finding an affordable solution for providing water and sanitation services to the growing urban poor in these two municipalities.

Business Partners for Development

This project is “focus project” of an international initiative known as Business Partners for Development (BPD). BPD’s objective, as its name suggests, is to find ways of incorporating business systematically and sustainably as partners in development. The World Bank Group (WBG) was the initiating organisation behind BPD (see page 23), and as such, has demonstrated the key role that it and other international agencies within the UN family can play in establishing tri-sector partnerships.

Vivendi Water, the initiating organisation of this project, is a BPD corporate partner. The partners and project staff accept that the BPD programme is viewed as a model that permits broader analysis and wider sharing of experience. The partners recognised from an early stage the importance of this investment in consultation and relationship building, and the opportunity to learn about each other’s organisational strengths and weaknesses.

Project objectives

To find coordinated and community-oriented solutions to water and sanitation issues affecting the urban poor in Durban and Pietermaritzburg by:

Profile, continued

- Providing adequate, acceptable and affordable levels of service.
- Addressing issues of water loss, operation and maintenance.
- Developing community awareness of the importance of water conservation, health and hygiene.
- Relating the delivery of drinking water to sanitation issues.
- Providing comprehensive customer management (including tariff policy, billing and cost recovery procedures).
- Ensuring effective project management, coordination, monitoring and impact dissemination.
- Actively involving the communities themselves in achieving these objectives.

The table below briefly summarises the main activities as the partnership was built and identifies the role of the broker in this process. This has been broken down into the seven stages of partnership building. Six different people have acted as brokers in the partnership to date. Each person was either assigned or chose to take on the broker's role because of a need for his or her skills and experience at a particular stage of the partnership-building process.

Summary of the partnership-building process

Stage 1. Getting started

ACTIVITIES

Vivendi Water, as the initiating organisation, sought to better understand the water and sanitation needs of urban communities, and to identify new approaches to achieve this.

In parallel, the Business Partners for Development (BPD) programme, with Vivendi as a partner, was looking for tri-sectoral examples of water and sanitation provision for the urban poor.

BROKER'S ROLE

Broker A (Vivendi's international technical director) acknowledged the valuable learning opportunities offered by a partnership approach through her experience with BPD. She consulted with a number of Vivendi staff in different regions and concluded further development was possible within South Africa.

Broker B in South Africa, also from Vivendi, undertook local research and analysis in consultation with key players in water and sanitation provision in KwaZulu-Natal province.

Stage 2. Identifying partner organisations

The project was explored in two municipalities, Durban (Durban Metro) and Pietermaritzburg (Pietermaritzburg Msunduzi). Umgeni Water, South Africa's

Broker A continued to build interest and support at Vivendi headquarters, while Broker B liaised on behalf of Vivendi's commercial interests and coordinated

| Profile, continued | |
|---|--|
| Stage 2. Identifying partner organisations cont. | |
| ACTIVITIES | BROKER'S ROLE |
| <p>second-largest national water services provider, was required by legislation to provide water for these areas. Vivendi, the municipalities and Umgeni Water moved ahead in formulating the project and analysing the need for additional partners.</p> <p>The regional office of Mvula Trust, a national NGO specialising in water and sanitation issues, became the third sector player ensuring the project's community inputs and long-term sustainability.</p> | <p>approaches to other local partner organisations.</p> <p>Brokers A and B were able to identify partner organisations relatively easily due to the South African legislation on water providers and the clear need for a new approach. Umgeni Water played a crucial role in supporting the process.</p> <p>Broker C, from Durban Metro, built support for the tri-sector approach within his constituency while helping the partnership to develop. This resulted in increased acceptance within the Pietermaritzburg municipality of the tri-sectoral approach.</p> |
| Stage 3. Committing resources | |
| <p>As a key part of the process, the partners agreed to commit a range of (cash and non-cash) resources to the project. Where necessary, further resourcing was secured from external agencies that demonstrated interest in the partnership approach adopted by the group.</p> | <p>Brokers A, B and C steered the process by which partners committed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vivendi Water and Umgeni Water – technical and financial resources • Mvula Trust – community development skills • Durban and Pietermaritzburg municipalities – access to customers and legislative capacities. |
| Stage 4. Building the partnership | |
| <p>For more than a year, considerable time and effort went into building the partnership.</p> <p>After 6 months, all partners signed a cooperation agreement and established a steering group of partners and other stakeholders to ensure governance procedures were in place.</p> | <p>Despite the partners recognising the need for mutually agreed objectives, the priorities and approaches varied between the sectors involved. To resolve this, brokers B and C consulted with stakeholders, conducted a needs analysis, and developed a common vision and set of objectives.</p> |

| Profile, continued | |
|--|--|
| Stage 4. Building the partnership cont. | |
| ACTIVITIES | BROKER'S ROLE |
| <p>The water and sanitation project was agreed and proceeded to the implementation phase. Vivendi's role changed from that of initiating organisation to the partner responsible for overseeing project implementation.</p> <p>The project had by now acquired an independent identity.</p> | <p>Over time, broker B moved away from the project and partnership and Broker D (also from Vivendi) took on his role to assure continuity within the partnership and coordinating the process. Broker D also became the full-time project manager.</p> <p>Later, Broker E (also from Vivendi), became project director, to liaise with partners and take responsibility for overall project management and delivery.</p> |
| Stage 5. Learning the lessons | |
| <p>Although it was still early in the project's life, the partnership-building process to date had already offered significant learning to share with local and international colleagues. As part of the BPD programme, an international study visit to KwaZulu-Natal took place one year after the partnership was established. All partners participated.</p> <p>Recently, the Water Research Commission (WRC) was identified as an additional partner to fund the learning elements and disseminate the lessons learned from the project.</p> | <p>Broker F (BPD coordinator working globally on water and sanitation projects) undertook an external evaluation of the partnership and facilitated the international study visit to ensure beneficial outcomes for all participants.</p> <p>The WRC has the potential to take on the brokers' role of evaluating the partnership successes and failures and then disseminating outcomes, particularly in other cities in South Africa. This will be undertaken over the next few months and continue past the projects' life.</p> |
| Stage 6. Assessing the value | |
| <p>The partners recognised the importance of assessing the value of the project, and initial indicators are in place. The partnership measurements are less clear, and there are plans to research this in more depth.</p> | <p>Brokers D and E with the steering committee, ensured indicators are in place to measure the projects' success. They are responsible for communicating the successes and failures of the project to stakeholders and ensuring the improvement of performance.</p> <p>Broker F, within his role at BPD, has externally evaluated the project and partnership and suggesting improvements</p> |

| Profile, continued | |
|---|---|
| Stage 6. Assessing the value cont. | |
| ACTIVITIES | BROKER'S ROLE |
| | <p>in comparison with other international examples.</p> <p>Broker F, WRC and a local academic will work to capture the learning from within the partnership itself.</p> |
| Stage 7. Moving on | |
| <p>The initial stages of the partnership have been completed, and over the next two years, project objectives will be concluded. Impact assessment and dissemination processes will continue. The partners will then decide on the feasibility of replication and scale-up. By the end of May 2000, there are concrete outcomes of the partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ongoing and critical community liaison has been implemented. • information pertaining to the Project environment is permanently collected. • education and awareness programmes have started <p>Technical activities have been undertaken in some pilot areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community-based upgrading of water and sanitation services and provision of water • water and sewer surveying almost completed, with the implementation of a GIS tool to begin soon • overall water loss management study is underway with plans to install roof tanks, ground tanks and pre-paid standpipes • three major sanitation initiatives are being implemented. • socio-economic surveys are being conducted • customer management component has begun and will be replicated shortly. | <p>Broker A continues to take an active interest in the partnership, attends steering committee meetings and communicates the tri-sectoral learning within Vivendi.</p> <p>After a year, broker B completed his role within Vivendi and moved on to new role. Broker C remains a central figure in the partnership promoting and disseminating the outcomes, representing Durban Metro and the partnership, attending steering group meetings and acting as a broker when required.</p> <p>Brokers D and E will continue as project manager and project director respectively, for the life of the project. Broker E will look at the future potential of the partnership after the 3 years have been completed.</p> <p>Broker F's role will continue as the BPD programme evolves, encouraging communication and sharing between the KwaZulu-Natal project and other international tri-sector examples of water provision for the urban poor. It is likely that WRC's role in evaluation and dissemination will increase locally and nationally as the results of the approach becoming clearer.</p> |

Recording the journey

Remember that partnership building is a kind of journey. Recording the journey and sharing the lessons learned can benefit the partners themselves, as well as others embarking on future partnerships.

Developing a “logbook”

Just as a “route map” helps in planning where we are going, a “logbook” can be of great value in recording the experience. Such a document can take many forms – for example, a daily journal kept by the broker, or an audiotape or videotape of conversations with the partners at key stages of the partnership’s development. Or it might consist of a descriptive photomontage of important moments. Above all, what is needed is a good record of the story.

So who is the logbook for, and how might they best use it? Keeping such a record gives brokers an invaluable tool for charting progress, for reflecting on their work and for analysing patterns of behaviour (their own, as well as the partners) during the life of the partnership. In addition, three groups of people within the partnership are likely to benefit from having access to a record of the partnership’s history:

1. The partners, who can revisit decisions made and remind themselves why the partnership took a particular direction at a particular time.
2. Anyone undertaking aspects of the broker’s role – either sharing the job or taking on specific tasks – who needs to get “up to speed” and move on with the work.
3. Newcomers to the partnership who are replacing key people leaving the partnership because of a job change (a notorious problem for partnership initiatives).

Documenting the partnership process

Most people who have participated in innovative partnerships find that taking conventional minutes of meetings – essentially,

recording the decisions, rather than the process of reaching them – does not adequately capture the complexity and mood of, as well as any changes in, the partnership relationships. For many, the failure to capture the partnership “story” is a cause for considerable regret, making it far less easy to understand partnership building in practice.

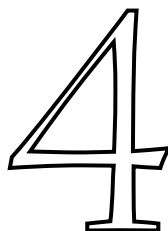
Disseminating the learning

Because partnership initiatives rely so fundamentally on individuals, they tend to be idiosyncratic and therefore unique in character. So a particular partnership is unlikely to be replicable. However, the **process** of building and nurturing a partnership is transferable, being essentially generic rather than situation-specific. The broker can use the logbook to disseminate material that can benefit broker colleagues and initiating organisations elsewhere – as long as he or she does so in a way that maintains confidentiality.

In spite of everyone’s best efforts, the partnership may ultimately not work out, and the broker will have to help partners face up to and manage its termination as professionally and dispassionately as possible. Once the partnership has been concluded, the broker can use his or her record of the experience to inform partners’ future work, possibly suggesting what to do differently next time.

Sharing such insights more widely can be of immense value. Disseminating the learning will mean that, despite the apparent “failure” of the partnership, the time invested will not have been wasted.

As Lao Tsu said: *“The sage takes care of all things and abandons nothing.”*



The “Good-Enough” Partnership Broker

“Can we rely on it that a ‘turning around’ will be accomplished by enough people quickly enough to save the modern world?”

“This question is often asked, but whatever answer is given to it will mislead.

“The answer ‘Yes’ would lead to complacency; the answer ‘No’ to despair.

“It is desirable to leave these perplexities behind us and get down to work.”

EF Schumacher⁵

As outlined in the previous chapter, a partnership broker undertakes a wide range of tasks, and has to continually adapt his or her operational style to fit a changing brokering role during the life of the partnership. For the broker, there is an almost continuous process of “turning things around”. In the early stages, turning a loosely connected number of individuals into an integrated group of partners. During the partnership-building process, turning “mistakes” into “learning”. Towards the end of the brokering remit, turning himself or herself from “manager” to “mentor”. All this requires considerable professional skill.

A number of additional demands on the broker arise from the partnership paradigm itself. These invariably take up more time than expected and need to be anticipated if they are to be managed well.

Scepticism and other challenges

The kind of challenges a partnership broker faces throughout the brokering process include the following:

- Scepticism of key players inside and outside the partner organisations
- Rigid mindsets of partners towards their counterparts in other sectors
- Multiplicity of demands on the broker from partners
- Inflated expectations of the broker from partners and other stakeholders
- Pressure to “go public”.

Brokers need to prepare strategies for meeting each of these challenges at whatever stage they occur in the life of the partnership.

Dealing with scepticism

In most situations where tri-sector partnerships are under development, one or more key players, either within a partner organisation or from outside the partnership, may convey scepticism about the partnership possibilities. The broker should not dismiss such individuals out of hand, since their attitudes have resulted from real experiences that predate the partnership (and the broker's involvement) and may be well founded. Listening to the sceptic's point of view with an open mind can prove invaluable. It may yield vital information with regard to the partnership or the circumstances in which the partnership is operating.

The broker should always bear in mind that someone may have good reason for being sceptical. Indeed, the sceptic's perspective could prove accurate – the partnership may not subsequently work out. If, however, the broker believes the sceptic's attitude is unjustified, he or she needs to ensure that such views do not destabilise the partnership. In some circumstances, the partnership may need protection from the influence of a sceptic who may have a vested interest in the partnership failing.

If those concerned have central importance to the development of the partnership, the broker cannot afford to ignore their attitudes. The broker will need to assess the threat posed by such sceptics and decide how much time to allocate to overcoming scepticism. The process can be time-consuming. Patient face-to-face discussion can work well and is almost always more effective than a public relations "blitz", because it can be tailored to the individual. Developing well-rehearsed arguments underpinned by solid examples of successful partnership approaches in comparable situations and supported by facts and figures offers a good starting point. Figure 11 suggests three possible strategies to adopt in the face of scepticism.

Figure 11. Three strategies for dealing with the sceptic

- 1. Offer to set up a review procedure that will enable the sceptic to “benchmark” the partnership approach against other development options.**
- 2. Invite the sceptic to attend a partnership meeting to hear other people (especially those whose opinions they particularly respect) explain why they support the partnership and what they expect it to achieve.**
- 3. Consciously ignore the sceptic (even if their hostility increases as a result) until evidence supports the partnership’s growing effectiveness.**

Where the sceptics are peripheral to the partnership, such strategies will be unnecessary. In this case, concentrating on making the partnership work is the appropriate course of action. Demonstrating the partnership’s value and its contribution to society over time is likely to be the most effective way of changing the hearts and minds of even the most sceptical.

Brokers need to prioritise the demands on their time, and having developed a strategy, to stick to it.

Changing mindsets

Confronting and changing stereotypical thinking and rigid mindsets is another early and vital challenge to the broker. Professionals tend, often unconsciously, to adopt a sectoral attitude when handling issues. Such “group think” can feature in the operations of any sector – business, the public sector or civil society – and can lead to equal inflexibility across the board. Characteristic positions can range from sectoral intransigence towards the other sectors, to simple prejudice about a specific organisation.

In either case, unless this type of narrow and conformist thinking can be changed, the possibilities of forming a successful partnership are slim.

Brokers will need to develop a range of approaches to change rigid thinking (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Three strategies for changing mindsets

- 1. Arrange candid one-to-one sessions aiming to explain the other partners' points of view and challenge preconceptions head-on.**
- 2. Hold a one-day tri-sector workshop with key players from the various partner organisations. Have each sector group meet separately to discuss their sector's strengths and weaknesses, as well as general attitudes to the other two sectors. Then bring the groups together in a plenary session and ask them to present their views to each other. Once the preconceptions have been exposed and addressed, the workshop can move on to building genuine collaboration.**
- 3. Arrange for key individuals from different sectors to change places for a day (or more) to experience the other sector's culture and values first-hand.**

At their best, dramatic approaches to changing mindsets result in just the breakthrough that the various players need for the partnership to get under way.

The results of such activities can be startling: a heady mixture of positive reinforcement on the one hand and a rude awakening to previously unrecognised preconceptions and prejudice on the other. The process may prove uncomfortable and will certainly require determination and effort on the part of the broker to keep it on track and to manage dissent. As the quickest way to cut through conventional and stereotypical thinking, it will lead to more open, honest and considerate behaviour in the long term.

Balancing multiple demands on partners

All partners are likely to have multiple demands on their time. The individuals engaged in partnerships on behalf of their organisations commonly undertake this work as an add-on to their normal responsibilities. Not surprisingly, at times they may be

unavailable or unable to complete their allotted tasks. They may even experience serious stress as a result of being pulled in too many directions at once.

The broker needs to stay sensitive to the multiple demands each partner may be facing. Some partners may experience greater overload than others, and those contributing more time and attention to the partnership may start to resent those giving less. Addressing these issues with the partners as a group is usually the most effective approach. The broker can help the partners in a number of ways (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Three strategies for assisting partners to cope with multiple demands

- 1. Encourage partners to demonstrate greater sensitivity to each other's situation.**
- 2. Adjust the expectations that partners have of themselves and each other, so they can more realistically decide what is feasible.**
- 3. Restructure roles and responsibilities within the partnership to take account of partners' availability in light of other demands on their time.**

In more delicate situations, the broker may need to spend time with individuals, supporting them to make needed changes to how they manage their time and workload.

Managing expectations of the broker

The broker also faces multiple demands on his or her time. Not uncommonly, the broker is expected to be “all things to all people” – endlessly available, flexible and patient. This can place unrealistic expectations on the broker and may lead to the broker becoming overwhelmed. When the partnership is going badly, a further hazard for the broker is being made the scapegoat for the failings of individual partners or the partnership.

In managing such expectations, the broker can use one or more of the three strategies outlined in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Three strategies for managing expectations of partners and other stakeholders

- 1. Regularly remind partners of the role of the broker (what is and is not within his or her remit).**
- 2. Use partner meetings to get agreement on and prioritise their demands, or get to the bottom of their frustrations with the partnership, clarifying where they (rather than the broker) are responsible.**
- 3. Demonstrate honesty and courage in admitting when he or she has made a mistake or failed to deliver as expected (within the agreed remit). As a result, the broker should more easily respond assertively when partners make unreasonable demands or dump their partnership frustrations on him or her.**

Handling the pressure to go public

Donors, international agencies, governments, media and others eagerly seize on even the most embryonic partnership initiative as a “definitive” solution to major development problems – sometimes unjustifiably (because the case is not proven), and almost always too early in the partnership or project’s lifecycle.

A partnership project that receives significant exposure or is pressured into becoming a role model too soon may suffer the consequences. The partnership itself may be stretched too thin or even fall apart as a result of insensitive external scrutiny.

Usefully, the broker will counsel the partners against “going public” before they are ready. At the same time, he or she will keenly recognise the need for transparency in the partnership and the importance of sharing experience so that others may benefit. The broker needs to encourage the partners (and those pressurising the partners to go public) to acknowledge that the partnership may

have much of value to share with a wider audience, as long as this value is not misrepresented or exaggerated. See Figure 15 for a summary of possible approaches to use in counselling the partners.

Figure 15. Three strategies for assisting partners to handle the pressure to “go public”

Encourage them to:

- 1. Discuss the work in progress as an example of “interesting” or “innovative” practice, rather than “good” or (even less desirable) “best” practice.**
- 2. Find realistic stories to tell, preferably more modest than inflated. Partners will benefit from seeing some early results from their efforts. Make sure the people directly involved in the stories relate them, rather than outsiders or observers.**
- 3. Seek stories that emphasise the process and learning aspects of the partnership, rather than the products and results.**

Above all, remember that one advantage of “going public” is to discourage the partnership and the project from becoming too introspective.

Key skills and attributes

Brokers need a wide range of skills and attributes to do their job well. All individuals have professional strengths and weaknesses and are better at some tasks than others. A broker is no different in this respect from any other professional. Two (or more) people can share the broker’s role – though the partnership risks some loss of continuity. An alternative is to engage specialists, when needed, to act on the broker’s behalf. For example, learning or research specialists can help with specific tasks in stages 4 and 6 (see page 64 and page 72 respectively).

The art and science of partnership brokering

Good partnership brokering is an art, as anyone who has witnessed

a good broker in action can attest. It is equally, however, a science. Brokering requires as much analysis and systematic exercising of sound judgement as it does intuitive and imaginative spontaneity. A broker needs to be able to see when the one approach is more appropriate than the other, and to weave smoothly between the two. Figure 16 illustrates the balancing act required between the art and the science of brokering.

| Figure 16. The balance of skills and attributes required by a partnership broker | |
|--|---|
| THE ART OF BROKERING | THE SCIENCE OF BROKERING |
| Insight, imagination and feeling Vision of the future People skills Active listening Personal engagement | Knowledge, analysis and thinking Understanding of the past Administration skills Precise speaking Professional detachment |

Core brokering skills

Brokers have their own way of operating and need the freedom to tackle the role as they see fit and as suits their particular style and approach. Invariably, however, all brokers worth their salt need to be skilful in four key areas:

- Negotiation – especially at an early stage of identifying and engaging partners.
- Mediation – when introducing partners to each other, and managing tension or conflict.
- Facilitation – enabling the partners to work together easily and productively.
- Synthesis – as a rapporteur, mirroring back what the partners have said and agreed on.

In addition, brokers are good listeners, genuinely interested in people and sensitive to group dynamics, as well as taking a problem-solving approach to tasks.

Above all, a broker needs to be efficient, reliable and self-sufficient in terms of time management, follow-through and motivation.

Language as a partnership-building tool

A particular skill for the broker is to use language as a partnership-building tool. Language can so easily result in distorted meaning and reinforce the differences between people. Equally possibly, language can promote engagement and collaboration. Some examples follow to illustrate the creative use of language by brokers.

“Complementary” vs. “common”

An early task for the broker (Stage 2 in the broker’s “path” – see page 55) is working with the partners to define a vision and objectives for the partnership. The risk with a group of people from different backgrounds is that such an attempt ends up with the lowest common denominator as opposed to the highest ideal. In looking for “common objectives”, that is the likely outcome. If, on the other hand, the broker invites the group to look at “complementary objectives”, the chances are that a much richer dialogue will take place and a common vision based on respecting diversity will result.

“Benefit” vs. “profit”

Similarly, one of the great stumbling blocks to partnerships with business (from the perspective of the public sector and civil society) is the word “profit”. But look up “profit” in the dictionary and it is defined as “benefit”. Each sector can discuss “benefits”, but only one sector is comfortable talking about “profits”.

“Transparency” vs. “trust”

A further example is the use of the word “trust” in partnerships. Trust has to be earned over time – it cannot be imposed. Of course, trust is important (perhaps essential) to a long-term partnership, but it is rarely possible for trust to be present from the beginning. If a broker insists on “trust” as a prerequisite of a partnership, the partnership is unlikely to get off the ground. If, however, the focus is on a principle of openness or “transparency”, this gives the partners somewhere to start while trust is being built over time.

A skilled broker will see language as a central tool in the partnership-building task.

Professional development

All partnership brokers should assess – and regularly reassess – their professional competencies, using their supervisors, critical friends or mentors to help them, if necessary. Where they uncover a lack of competence or confidence, they can actively seek out opportunities for professional development.

The demand for skilled brokers is growing. A number of individuals around the world are increasingly taking on this role, often having to acquire new skills “on the run” as they struggle to understand and meet the challenges they face. Undoubtedly, a current skills gap exists, but new training opportunities will develop in due course as a response to need and demand. Meanwhile, those who find themselves, perhaps unexpectedly, in the role of partnership broker have three particular options for their professional development:

- Seeking out existing training opportunities to build specific skills.
- Drawing inspiration for their own creative development from a wide range of sources.
- Learning from the practice of other brokers, as well as other professionals.

Seeking out training opportunities

Current course offerings cover some of the specialist topics relevant to a partnership broker, such as facilitation, assertiveness, conflict resolution, negotiation and communications. Others will follow as the needs of brokers become clearer. Brokers may also find it helpful to consider other types of courses – those that develop their imagination and creativity or their analytical and technical skills.

Drawing inspiration from other sources

A good broker will draw inspiration from many sources and look for learning opportunities that will build the requisite skills and competencies while adding to his or her knowledge of the situation. As well as the more formal learning venues (ie, colleges and training centres), museums, art galleries, theatres, public meetings and local community-based events can provide a myriad of invaluable learning opportunities.

Learning from others

Learning from others can take several forms. A broker may arrange to spend time in each of the sectors' work environments. He or she can set up an "internship" with an experienced broker or identify a successful broker as a "mentor" to go to for advice when needed. The broker may also join, or help to create, a physical or electronic network of "critical friends" – people in a similar position with whom he or she can share both difficulties and achievements.

A note of reassurance

A partnership broker may often feel they have an impossible task. What we have characterised thus far is the nature of the role and the range of skills needed to do it well.

But we should not expect the impossible.

At one time or another, we all fall short of our own and others' expectations – and brokers are no exception. To help those brokers who strive for excellence and become despondent when they seem to fall short, we have borrowed a concept developed by the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim in his book *A Good Enough Parent*, to reassure brokers that sometimes it is all right simply to be “good enough”.⁶

Good-enough partnership brokers may lack certain specific skills or relevant experience, and they may make mistakes. If they have certain personal qualities, they can still be highly effective in carrying out this subtle and complicated role (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Personal qualities needed by a partnership broker

- **Trustworthiness and integrity**
- **Willingness to take risks**
- **Equanimity in the face of pressure**
- **Personal modesty**
- **Dedication to the principles of partnership**

The good-enough broker has it within his or her power to contribute creatively to radical and global social change. Brokers are the catalysts of tri-sector partnerships and therefore critical players in steering the societies in which they operate towards a collaborative, rather than a competitive, way of being.

Epilogue

Partnership Brokers: Catalysts for Transformation

“The worst realities of our age are manufactured realities. It is therefore our task, as creative participants in the universe, to re-dream our world. The fact of possessing imagination means that everything can be re-dreamed. Human beings are blessed with the necessity of transformation.”

Ben Okri⁷

At the heart of all tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development lies a process of transformation. Establishing a working relationship between disparate partners always necessitates some change in attitudes, values and behaviour. More often than not, the change is radical and dramatic in character.

Such transformation does not happen by magic – it requires hard work from everyone concerned, particularly from the partnership broker, who has a critical and central responsibility for steering the process of change. The broker invariably takes a lead role in the transformation process – and in so doing, can serve as a model for a new kind of leader.

We can characterise three main styles of traditional leadership:

- Command and control – for example, military leaders in times of war.
- Benevolent dictatorship – for example, industrialists with a social concern or wealthy individuals acting as patrons of the arts or education.
- An independent voice for change – for example, religious leaders or social reformers.

Leaders come from the public sector, from business and from civil society. Each sector has its leaders who exemplify the characteristics of that sector at its best. We can doubtless think of examples where one or other of these leadership styles has been highly appropriate and effective for a particular situation (Joan of Arc, Henry Ford and Nelson Mandela, to name three). Equally, however, each type has its villains – leaders who have been despotic, autocratic or fanatical. Each of us can come up with examples of such “leaders”, depending on our sectoral and cultural backgrounds, as well as our personal values.

One way and another, “leadership” – like “partnership” – has become a buzzword for our times. Perhaps it too needs more precise definition.

Leadership in the 21st century

We can start with a definition of the term “leader” from *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*:

leader \Lead”er\, n. 1. One who, or that which, leads or conducts; a guide; conductor. Especially: (a) One who goes first. (b) One having authority to direct; a chief; a commander. (c) (Mus.) A performer who leads a band or choir in music; also, in an orchestra, the principal violinist; the one who plays at the head of the first violins.⁸

Is this the way the word is actually understood and used?

In the course of writing this book, we asked a number of colleagues what they meant when they used the term “leader” in their day-to-day lives. They gave a surprisingly consistent response – that a leader is a person who:

- Carries final responsibility – “where the buck stops”.
- Starts new activities or initiatives – “makes things happen”.
- Works at all times towards an achievable goal – “is a practical visionary”.
- Provides inspiration – “is a good role model”.

Our discussions also clearly revealed that the attitude to leaders is in many ways ambivalent. On the one hand, we seek out, publicise and applaud successful leaders; on the other hand, we strive to contain their power, are quick to find fault and like to assert our independence from them.

In any event, while we still clearly need leadership, we are less willing to accept our leaders being remote or answerable to no one. Our increasingly transparent world demands greater accountability of business, government and civil society. Likewise, each of us – the sectors’ customers, citizens and members – needs to demonstrate greater independence, vigilance and responsibility in our thinking and actions.

The 21st century demands a new style of leadership, by those who demonstrate:

- Accountability for their decisions and actions.
- A concern with sustainability and cooperation, rather than consumption and competition.
- A desire to bring people together across traditional boundaries – to create new initiatives from their diversity without compromising their strengths and priorities.
- Effectiveness in convincing others to work together for a common purpose, and to build lasting working relationships.

The new leaders do not necessarily lead from a position of public status or externally conferred authority. They are often hidden within organisations, in different guises and at various levels, and may not be immediately identifiable as leaders. We must look closely to see them as such and to understand the nature of the leadership role they are adopting.

Such leaders are recognisable by new and more subtle attributes than those of the styles of “command and control”, “benevolent dictatorship” or “an independent voice for change”. These new attributes include the ability to:

- Take personal and professional risks for the benefit of others, particularly those most at risk.
- Demonstrate personal modesty so that others can flourish.
- Create clarity in the midst of our complex, information-rich, rapidly moving, politically unstable and economically unequal world.
- Inspire others with their vision of a cooperative future.

In the 21st century, it is no longer acceptable for an individual to tell others what to do with the expectation of immediate obedience or conformity. If we refer back to the dictionary definition of the term “leader”, perhaps the concept of leader as “guide”, rather than someone who “goes first” and has the

authority to “conduct” or “direct”, better describes the kind of leader we want and need.

Partnership brokers: new leaders

The previous section outlined how the leadership role is shifting from that of figurehead to that of catalyst. Earlier in the book, we described partnership brokers as “catalysts” (see Chapter 4, page 100). We have also titled our book *The Guiding Hand*. Our considered view is that partnership brokers epitomise the new style of leadership, operating as catalysts for change by “guiding”, rather than “directing”. Note that the personal qualities that a broker needs as outlined in Figure 17 (see Chapter 4, page 100) significantly overlap the attributes of the new leaders described above.

Our view closely parallels the idea of the “servant leader” that Robert Greenleaf developed in his seminal work, *Servant Leadership*.⁹ Essentially, partnership brokers are servants of a task: the task of building, nurturing and ensuring the effectiveness of a tri-sector partnership for sustainable development. The concept of “service” is not a popular one – perhaps it is too strongly associated with “subservience”. However, it need not be so.

As Greenleaf points out, a servant leader cannot operate without a vision:

*“Not much happens without a dream. And for something great to happen, there must be a great dream. Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality; but the dream must be there first.”*¹⁰

Similarly, the partnership broker needs to combine a “great dream” with day-to-day practical implementation. This demonstrates both service and leadership at their best.

Re-dreaming our world

What is our dream for the 21st century and beyond? Do we have one? Do we still know how to dream?

We live in a world where communications systems are more efficient and far-reaching than ever before. These impressive technological advances have, however, taken us no nearer to a shared vision of sustainable global development. We need to delve beneath mechanistic and computer-generated thinking to expand our imaginative capacities, in order to more creatively participate in global development – to “re-dream” our world, as Ben Okri suggests (see page 102).

Kofi Annan also speaks of dreams when he expresses his fear that peace will remain fragile and social justice a “distant dream” unless governments, the private sector and the international community work together as partners (see Chapter 1, page 6).

This book rests on the premise that such tri-sector partnerships are highly – perhaps even totally – dependent on partnership brokers working behind the scenes. For it is the partnership broker who helps establish the partnership, nurtures it to maturity and ensures its long-term effectiveness.

We end with a question.

Are you potentially a partnership broker? Someone who can operate as a catalyst for change by guiding key players from the public sector, business and civil society to collaborate effectively to ensure sustainable development?

If so, perhaps you are one of a new breed of “servant leaders” who can enable us all to re-dream our world and to transform that dream into reality.

Endnotes

References

Resources for the Reader

Acknowledgements

About the Partners in Action Programme

References

- ¹ This picture is one of a series of paintings in the Paint Pals Project. The project was created by an international network of partnership brokers working with tri-sector partnerships in their own countries. The project encourages children in poor communities to produce paintings that express the reality of their daily lives, as well as their vision for the future. Many of the paintings have been exhibited in public centres in conjunction with such events as the Olympic Games in Atlanta and major United Nations conferences in New York.
- ² From UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, 1997.
- ³ From Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "Foreword to the Second Edition" in *Freedom from Fear (And Other Writings)*, by Aung Sang Suu Kyi. Penguin Books, London, 1995.
- ⁴ From *Lao Tsu: Tao Te Ching*. Translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. Wildwood House, London, 1973.
- ⁵ From *A Guide for the Perplexed*, by EF Schumacher. Jonathan Cape, London, 1977.
- ⁶ *A Good Enough Parent*, by Bruno Bettelheim. Thames and Hudson, 1987.
- ⁷ From "The Human Race Is Not Yet Free", in *A Way of Being Free*, by Ben Okri. Phoenix House, London, 1997.
- ⁸ See <http://www.dictionary.com>.
- ⁹ *Servant Leadership*, by Robert K Greenleaf. Paulist Press, New York, 1991.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.

Resources for the Reader

Publications:

Managing Partnerships: Tools for Mobilising the Public Sector, Business and Civil Society as Partners in Development, by Ros Tennyson. Published by The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, London, 1998. Also available in Spanish.

Partnership Alchemy, by Jane Nelson and Simon Zadek. Published by The Copenhagen Centre, Copenhagen, 2000.

The United Nations and Business: a Partnership Recovered, by Sandrine Tesner. To be published by St Martin's Press, New York, in July 2000.

Tools for Brokering Tri-Sector Partnerships, by Mariaelena George, Bérengère Ruchat and Katherine Madden, with Ros Tennyson and Luke Wilde. To be published by the United Nations Staff College, Turin, in October 2000.

Websites:

Business Partners for Development: <http://www.bpdweb.org>

Partners in Action: <http://www.itcilo.it/unpartnership>

Partnership Brokers Resource Bank:

Available from July 2000. Meanwhile, contact via the website for the Resource Centre for the Social Dimensions of Business Practice – see below.

Resource Centre for the Social Dimensions of Business Practice:
<http://www.rc-sdbp.org>

The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum: <http://www.pwblf.org>

United Nations Global Compact: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org>

United Nations Staff College: <http://www.itcilo.it/unscpl>

Acknowledgements

This book is the product of many years of experience, not only of ours as authors but also of our respective organisations. We would like to voice our gratitude to the two chief executives – John Machin (Director, United Nations Staff College) and Robert Davies (Chief Executive, The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum) – without whose leadership the organisations would not be as effective as they are and without whose commitment and support this book would never have been written.

Both organisations are funded from a range of sources. We particularly acknowledge the core funding for the United Nations Staff College (UNSC) from the UK's Department for International Development and the Italian Foreign Ministry, and the continued corporate funding for the work of The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum (BLF).

Will Kennedy and Amir Dossal (United Nations Fund for International Partnerships), and Georg Kell (United Nations Secretary-General's Office) helped to secure funding specifically for the Partners in Action programme (see page 115) through the United Nations Staff College. Over many years, John Senior and more recently other colleagues from Rio Tinto have supported the partnership-building work of The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum. Their funding has covered the costs of designing and editing the book.

Above all, our heartfelt thanks go to our colleagues and friends who formed the team behind *The Guiding Hand*.

Mariaelena George (UNSC), Katherine Madden (BLF) and Walter Simons (consultant) assisted us in brainstorming the subject matter. The work of this group – later joined by Bérengère

Ruchat – has provided the basis for not only this book, but also the partnership brokers' training course (see page 111).

Christopher Woodthorpe from the United Nations Department of Public Information gave us a welcome vote of confidence by agreeing, in advance of seeing the full text, to publish and distribute the book.

Alison Beanland (designer), Guy Venables (illustrator) and Sue McManus (editor) provided limitless professionalism and patience in the final stages of production – particular mention must be made of Sue, whose editing skill is second to none.

Ros Tennyson and Luke Wilde

About the Partners in Action Programme

At the invitation of Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, the International Labor Organization, the United Nations Staff College (UNSC) and The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum (BLF), with the International Organization of Employers, organised two major workshops during 1998 to promote UN/business collaboration. The workshops involved 50 senior executives from UN agencies and international business, and led to the formation of a partnership between the UNSC and the BLF to provide a range of learning and training initiatives on partnerships and partnership building to the UN system and to business.

The United Nations Staff College was created in 1996 to foster a coherent and effective management culture across the UN through shared learning and the development of key competencies, and to meet cross-agency learning and training needs resulting from the Secretary-General's reform programmes.

The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum was established in 1990 with the aim of promoting socially responsible business practice. It does this by working in a number of countries undergoing economic transition, by undertaking communications and capacity-building activities, and by seeking to influence corporate and public policy at national and international levels.

In 1998, the UNSC and the BLF set up the Partners in Action programme. Partners in Action includes country-level dialogues and workshops between UN and business, UN agency-specific capacity-building initiatives and a partnership volunteer scheme. The programme also aims to identify, equip and (where necessary) train an international cadre of "brokers" skilled in brokering tri-sector partnerships. Both organisations believe that brokers are central to building systematic and effective partnerships for sustainable development worldwide. *The Guiding Hand* is the first step in the process. It will be closely followed by a series of training courses, a manual/toolbook and an online resource bank.

For more information please contact:

Partners in Action

Tel: +39 011 693 6111

Project Manager

Fax: +39 011 693 6349

United Nations Staff College

E-mail: UNSC-ERG@itcilo.it

Viale Maestri del Lavoro

Website: www.itcilo.it/unpartnership

10-10127, Turin

Italy

Partners in Action is core funded by the United Nations Foundation.

