

Building capacity for government/business partnerships

Scaling up the Number of Strong, Effective Partnerships

Contact: Dr Darian Stibbe, Development Director (darian.stibbe@iblf.org, +44 20 7467 3613)

Background

Partnerships between and among government, business and civil society are proving to be an effective mechanism towards achieving sustainable development. By bringing together the resources, competencies and constituencies of different partners, partnerships – when they are done well – have the potential to tackle issues in innovative ways, to build buy-in and ownership from stakeholders, to find context-appropriate and sustainable solutions and to influence and benefit society beyond the expected outcomes of the programme.

Nevertheless, partnerships are a long way from achieving their full potential both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity worldwide.

There may be a number of reasons for this. Cross-sector partnerships, if no longer a new concept, are still not seen as a mainstream way to 'do business'. The enabling environment – for example in terms of a supportive legislative framework, flexibility of institutional arrangements and in particular the availability of funding – is rarely encouraging of partnerships.

In addition, there is little systematic fostering of partnerships – partnership often happen haphazardly and emerging partnerships can struggle to find the best-fit partners.

Finally, partnerships are rarely simple and partners require a mindset and a particular skill set to develop and run partnerships effectively. Partnerships, particularly in their early stages, can also benefit tremendously from the advice and knowledge of experienced partnership facilitators or brokers. To date, with the exception of some international initiatives¹, there has been little support in building the capacity of partnership practitioners in country, and the availability of specialist advice is extremely limited².

What is required

The Partnering with Government programme has identified the three key areas necessary to help make partnerships happen:

- **awareness raising** (governments and business need to understand the potential of cross-sector partnerships in order to be invest their time in trying to build them);
- **capacity development at a number of levels** (there needs to be a legal framework which helps to enable partnerships, organisations need the systems and processes in place for partnering, and individuals need the skills to be able to build and run effective partnerships);
- **opportunity building** (there needs to be a systematic way in which the public and private sectors can discuss and develop new partnerships).

The diagram below demonstrates a range of potential activities across all three areas. Many activities can fit into more than one area – for example the development of multi-stakeholder forums raise awareness as well as building opportunities.

Making it happen

The PwG programme has demonstrated the vital importance of having a strong partner in-country to be able to build the necessary connections, coordinate activities, and build the momentum towards the more wide-spread and more effective use of cross-sector partnerships. Certainly an integrated approach is vital – activities in isolation are likely to be unsustainable.

¹ These include the GTZ/IBLF's 'Partnering with Governments' programme, the IBLF's Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS), IBLF's Partners in Action programme with the UNSSC and various ad hoc partnership capacity-building programmes around the world.

² The UNDP Growing Sustainable Business programme is an example of the provision of brokering support and there are multiple examples of PBAS-accredited brokers providing consultancy services to partnerships.

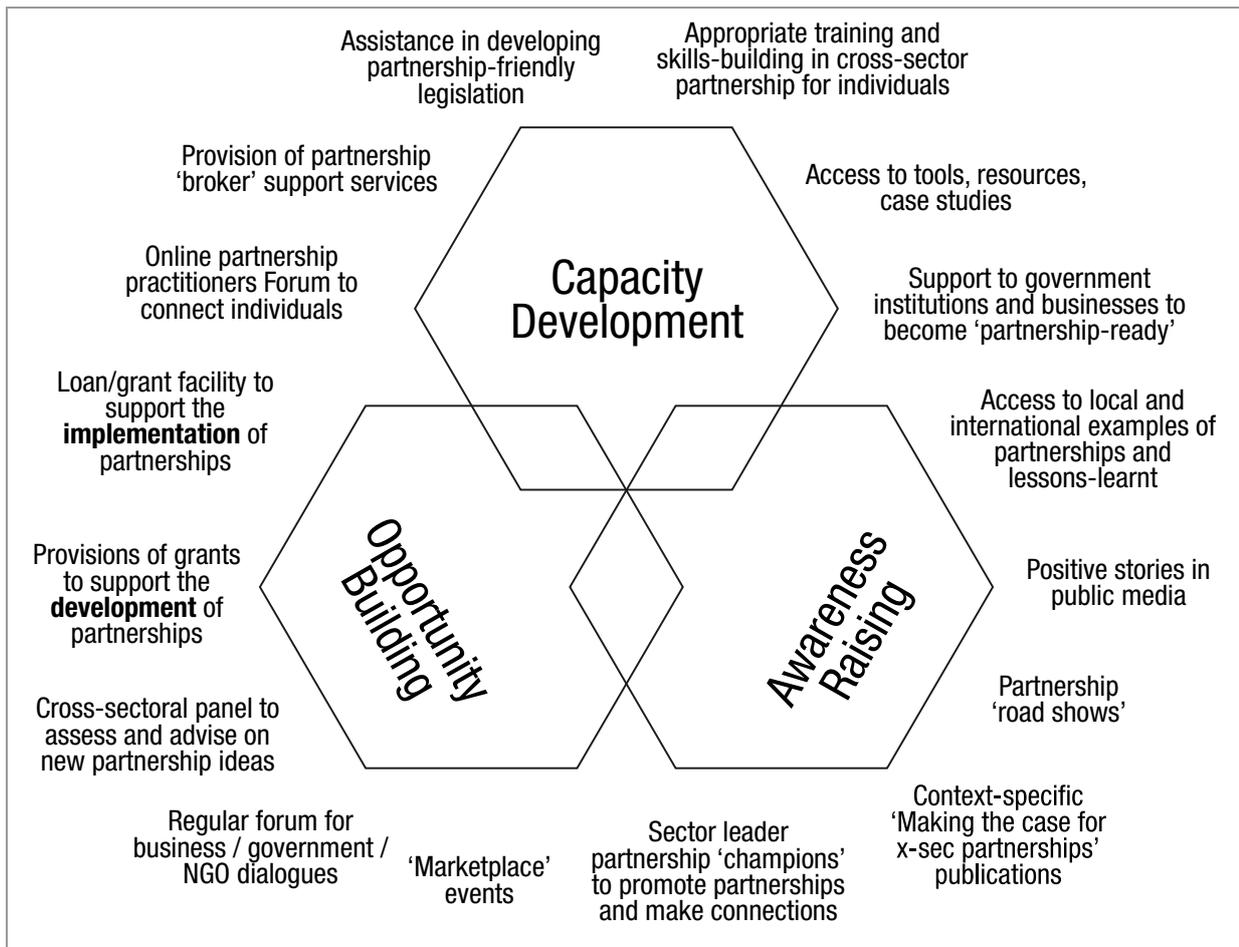


Figure 1: Activities to help make partnerships happen

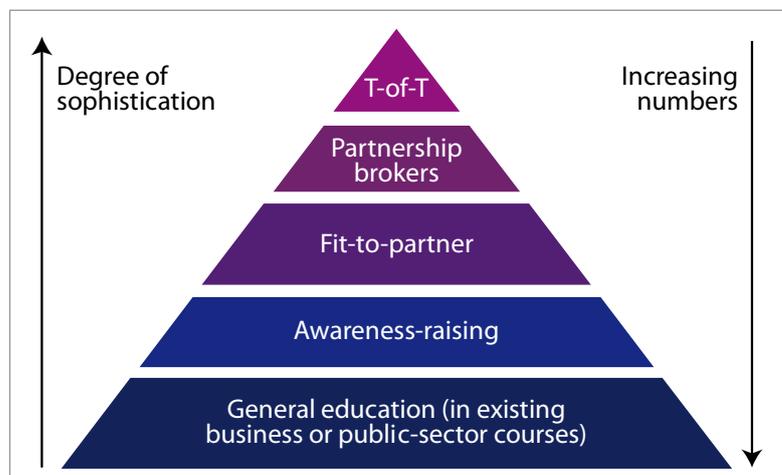
The PwG programme is obviously time-limited and can be seen as a pilot for a more long-term solution: a resource centre dedicated to promoting, supporting and building capacity for cross-sector partnering. Such a centre would be a hub of learning, knowledge and practical expertise providing both a physical and a virtual resource offering access to information, training, tools, case studies and networks. It would also provide a central forum to bring together potential partners and generate new partnership ideas which – where relevant – can put to donors for funding.

The resource centre should itself be cross-sectoral and be established by a cross-donor group, along with relevant governments and key businesses and NGOs.

Courses

A workshop in Pretoria was held which defined a spectrum of courses to provide the most applicable and relevant training at multiple different levels:

- awareness-raising;
- general education through inclusion within tertiary/professional education;
- 'fit to partner' training to help organisations gain the mindset and skillset to be good partners;
- partnership broker/manager training;
- training of trainers who can deliver the courses



For further information see:

- Workshop report and full description of spectrum of courses (SA: Partnership capacity building courses spectrum.pdf)