4.3 SUSTAINING OUTCOMES AND MOVING ON

Assessing the situation

USE IT
To take stock of the context and the partnership before deciding how to move on

WHEN
Before moving on decisions, and when the context changes

WHO
Partners together

Partnerships are shaped by the context they operate in, and in turn can have a significant impact on it. Before deciding how to move on, assess the issues at each level that may affect the decision.

Issues that may affect moving on decisions

Global and national context

- [ ] Political situation
- [ ] Economic situation
- [ ] Environmental conditions
- [ ] Social stability
- [ ] Cultural issues and tensions
- [ ] Other

Local context

- [ ] Local engagement with, and perceived need for, the partnership
- [ ] Willingness of others to take over some or all of its functions
- [ ] Stability of local relationships: do key organisations work well together?
- [ ] Effective local public systems to support the work after the partnership
- [ ] Other

The partnership's project

- [ ] Project status: timetable for completion, transfer or expansion
- [ ] Capacity of staff and beneficiaries to carry on the work, in the current structure or a new one
- [ ] Resources or income-generation potential to sustain outcomes
- [ ] Potential for leadership, expansion and sustainability

The partnership's project

Recognition from key stakeholders, influencers and policy makers	☐
Other	☐

The partnership

Quality of partner relationships	☐
Efficiency of management processes	☐
Continuing commitment of partners and key individuals	☐
Sustainability of the partnership for as long as it is needed	☐
An alternative delivery mechanism from a partner or external source, if wanted	☐
Other	☐

Each partner organisation

Level of buy-in	☐
Support from leadership	☐
Satisfaction with the partnership so far	☐
Fit with current and changing priorities	☐
Willingness to keep investing	☐
Other	☐

Three levels of influence

Some of the best partnerships set out to influence organisations, systems and policies so good outcomes last. Consider which level yours has reached.

Level 1: providing

Practical solutions to development challenges. Most partnerships work here, co-creating and delivering projects.

Level 2: influencing

Individuals, organisations and systems. Level 1 partnerships that work well inevitably start to influence more widely.

Level 3: changing

Policy and practice. Even the smallest partnership can inspire significant change in the rules, through policy, legislation and scale.

Moving on without moving away

Partners may be attached to the work, to the experience of working differently, or to each other. If so, they may decide to continue by restructuring or refocusing. Go back to scoping and replan: it is quicker the second time, with relationships and a track record in place. Ask:

- What is the new focus, and what are the new objectives?
- Do operational and management arrangements need to change?
- What resources are needed, and how will they be secured?
- What are the new indicators, benchmarks and review processes?
- Which current partners will be involved, and how?

Example. A multinational company donated products to an international NGO for poor rural communities. The products proved unsuitable, but the NGO, valuing the relationship for other reasons, said nothing. When the company's own review found the partnership out of line with its priorities, both were surprised at how differently they saw its purpose. The company proposed an off-site meeting with a facilitator both accepted; it was careful not to dominate, the NGO was honest about the products, and together they agreed a new partnering agreement with a new focus and shared goals. More attention to the building phase would have saved time, but it is never too late to rebuild a partnership on a stronger foundation.

Choosing who carries the work on

A mainstream system

Often an improved public institution or agency. Start structured contact early so it is ready in capacity, resources and commitment.

One of the partners

It continues the programme as part of its mainstream work, knowing it well and moving in fairly seamlessly.

A new entity

Purpose-built to deliver the work indefinitely: inspired by, but no longer controlled by, the partnership.

Whichever you choose, check: differences in partners' cultures around change or closure; the impact on all stakeholders; sustainability, especially if partners' resources fall; effects on the local economy and society; and an agreed external relations position, since a poorly communicated exit can damage a partnership retrospectively.

Adapted from The Moving On Toolbook (Tool 3). © The Partnering Initiative. More tools at thepartneringinitiative.org/resources/type/tool/