



POWER SHIFTS WHEN POWER IS SHARED

Re-framing the role of donors in development

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
Section 1. THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE	4
Section 2. FUNDING AND PARTNERING	7
Section 3. DONORS AS PARTNERS	11
Section 4. PARTNERING RE-FRAMED	17
Section 5. POWER SHIFTS WHEN POWER IS SHARED	24
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	27

The Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) is a consortium of donors – Aga Khan Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, USAID – brought together by the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF). GACP’s aim is to advance the practice of community philanthropy and influence international development actors to better understand, support and promote community philanthropy’s role in achieving more lasting development outcomes.

The authors have been prompted and inspired to explore the theme of donors and partnerships by the insights gained, working over a three-year period, to evaluate and support the collaboration element of GACP. However, they take full responsibility for the conclusions they have drawn. All opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors.

The Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) is dedicated to understanding and promoting effective and transformational partnering approaches and is curating a number of cutting edge initiatives designed to challenge and change partnering practice to ensure collaboration really achieves optimum development goals. This publication is part of one such initiative – Working with Donors:

www.workingwithdonors.org

FOREWORD

“Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts”

Albert Einstein

We know from our practical partnering activities in many different contexts and from the experience of those involved in the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) that donors play a critical role in shaping partnering practice. But we wonder whether they realise how critical their role is in shaping partnership as a paradigm?

In a relationship where it is the donors who hold a great deal of power, it is hard for those on the receiving end of financial largesse to see them (donors) as real ‘partners’ – when we take the term ‘partnership’ to mean an equitable relationship in which risks and benefits are shared.

In what scenarios can donors also be partners? What does it take from them, in terms of behaviours, attitudes and approaches to genuinely share power with those individuals and entities they fund? How, for example, can they truly value the non-cash contributions that those they fund bring to the table? And in what circumstances do they allow their own institutions to be challenged and changed by their association with their grantees and other stakeholders?

Our many interactions with donors over 25+ years – whether they are public or private institutions – suggest that many really struggle to understand partnering as a new way of operating and to investigate what it takes from them to support collaborative approaches. To what extent do current funding approaches really help to optimise new forms of multi-stakeholder collaboration? How far are donors willing to go to push partnership as a significantly different paradigm? How often are donors themselves genuinely operating as partners?

The key to going beyond the conventional donor-recipient model lies in understanding and reframing the power dynamics that are at play. Who makes the decisions, on what basis, with what purpose and in whose interest? Finding answers to these questions – and adjusting approaches in the light of those answers – provides a basis for new approaches to resourcing, designing and implementing more effective collaborative arrangements.

The working hypothesis here is that partnering means taking decisions both individually and collectively with a view to achieving both the goals of each entity as well as the goals that have been agreed and adopted by the partnership as a whole.

Partnership has been widely adopted as a key delivery mechanism for some time, but it is relatively recently that partnering has come to be understood as an approach that requires some radical re-thinking and the adoption of new practices if it is to be truly inclusive and inter-dependent. Our exploration to date leads us to believe that shifting power is only possible through really getting to grips with the realities of sharing power.

This publication is intended for donors and for the many stakeholder groups that engage with them. All those, in fact, who are seeking to work out what it means to be an effective and responsible partner, especially in relation to transforming the development sphere by moving beyond business as usual into more uncharted and risk-taking territory. What follows is a ‘think-piece’ based more on observed practice than formal research. It is intended as a contribution to an on-going dialogue not a definitive conclusion.

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Section 1.

THE CHANGING DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

“Community Foundations have been shaped by local context and culture and by individuals often frustrated by the failures of traditional development aid, anxious about the sense of alienation and disenchantment in their communities, and inspired by the belief that without local resources, local leadership and local buy-in, development projects will continue to land like fireworks – to flash spectacularly and then die.”¹

Enabling partnerships and partnering is today at the heart of human development – the aspiration to eliminate poverty, hunger and bring prosperity to all, while safeguarding nature’s life-support processes. The importance and role of partnering is underscored in numerous high-level public policy documents, within international agencies’ strategies and guidelines, and in the myriad of organizations, businesses, civic groups, networks and consortia that operate in the development field. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)² inspired by the UN represent the most prominent articulation of the need for more effective partnering, especially in relation to donors – both public and private - engaging those involved and affected in designing and implementing solutions.

Declarations of commitment to partnering and partnership, however, are not readily reflected in deed and good practice, and in reality, partnering in the development field still tends toward the transactional. That said, whether public or private, many donors³ are trying to contribute more than just funding to support partnership: for example, by increasingly trying to act as partners to other donors, to their grantees, to those affected by disasters, to governments, to civic groups and to other stakeholders. The overarching driver is to do more with less – coupled with a motivation and desire to also do better and to do differently, if necessary.

In the field of humanitarian aid, for example, several initiatives have helped to embed partnership thinking (and some action) into the fabric of emergency response. At the bi-lateral donor level, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative⁴ is notable, as are the individual efforts of a small number of national donors. Numerous efforts within the UN system have found expression in a number of ways, such as through the application of the **UN Principles of Partnership** and, more recently, through a common service initiative aimed at ensuring greater participation by those affected by crisis and disaster where local actors are seen as equal partners to the initiative.

The International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) sector, is perhaps where some of the most innovative and interesting examples lie in the various partnerships and consortia that define the realities of partnering in the development sector. Several have become strong advocates for partnering approaches and are striving to set new standards for partnership practice. Yet partnering

¹ Hodgson, J. (2016) *Community philanthropy: a brave new model for development funding?* Guardian (26th November 2016). Download: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/nov/29/community-philanthropy-a-brave-new-model-for-development-funding>

² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

³ The focus here is primarily on partnering experience of working with bi-lateral development agencies, the UN, and INGO donors (rather than individuals or business) as it is these who set the tone and shape the context or landscape of donor behaviour and relationships in the humanitarian sector.

⁴ <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/best-practices.html>

practice continues to be shaped and influenced largely by donors – both public and private. The results can be characterised as follows:

- A rhetoric or narrative of partnering pervades the development sector;
- There is a proliferation of multi-sectoral and multi—stakeholder partnerships;
- There have been some important investments aimed at advancing partnership action and building relevant capabilities;
- A growing number of bi-lateral donors have come to see their role as enabling more effective collaboration between their grantees and have helped seek synergies and cost-effectiveness by nurturing and supporting INGO partnerships;
- Increased efforts to work with affected populations as co-creators of solutions (i.e. partners) – despite difficulties of putting this into practice;
- Most INGOs are today in some form of collaboration with one another and with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) from the locations in which they operate;
- Donors are increasingly investing in efforts to enable and learn more about ‘collaborative advantage’ and
- International corporations, philanthropic foundations, businesses, diasporas and individuals have become more active as donors, giving new impetus to partnering efforts.

Amid the growing interest in working out ways to make multi-stakeholder collaboration more effective, a group of donors came together as the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) to explore and promote the role of community philanthropy in development both locally and internationally. The idea refers to donors enabling ‘bottom-up’ or community-based initiatives by investing in organisations that are locally-controlled and built upon local resources (assets), local leadership (capacities) and local ownership (trust).⁵

The community philanthropy idea` came to the fore in the 1960s as a development alternative, though the idea of community-based and community-controlled investing has a much longer history. In the US, community foundations with their focus on finances and financing, refers to a group of organisations that share a common interest in issues local financing and fund management. Outside the US, many organisations seen as community foundations, do not refer to themselves as such, and will call themselves ‘environmental funds’, ‘grassroots activists’, ‘local partnerships’, ‘women’s funds’, ‘community-based organisations’ or ‘community philanthropy organisations’, seeing themselves more as change-makers or change agents than funding organisations. They emphasise resourcing as part of an activist agenda that seeks to mobilise people and institutions. The key common feature shared by the US model of community foundations and the looser community philanthropy model is that of local ownership/decision-making and a commitment to sustaining the organisation and its work forever by growing an endowment or financial reserve.

⁵ The ‘assets-capacities-trust’ Framework emerged out of a series of consultations conducted by the Mott Foundation and the Aga Khan Foundation in conjunction with the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF), as part of the planning process for the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP), as well as from indicators used by the GFCF in its grantmaking. The community philanthropy approach works at the grassroots level by looking at local assets – financial and otherwise – and by building capacity and trust for addressing community needs and priorities. It addresses the role that donors can play in a community-driven practice.

See: <https://www.mott.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/WhatDoesCommunityPhilanthropyLookLike.pdf>

The opportunity of community philanthropy is consistent with the view of many practitioners in local and international development, who are convinced that local hands and local voices must be at the heart of developing and delivering the SDG or they will fail. Community philanthropy is relevant because the key feature of the approach is local control. It is also about the 'how' of bringing together local knowledge and understanding of context, relationships and stakeholders and making these 'usable' for revitalising economy and society from the grassroots.

What are the implications of all this for donors?

A recent study⁶ found that 70-80% of partnerships were described by those involved in them as 'donor-driven', suggesting that external donors acting as financial investors play a critical role in shaping both the operations and impact of the partnership. A key issue for all those involved in partnering, therefore, is how to balance the needs of external donors and those of the partners and the partnership. Engaging local communities and affected populations is another ingredient in the mix, which presents both a complication and an opportunity. The opportunity is that engaged local communities are more likely to achieve sustainable development outcomes. The complication is that partnering with communities or local populations is no easy matter, if only because it is often not clear just what constitutes the local community and who represents that community.

Donors tend to pre-determine, shape and control partnerships by requiring beneficiary organisations to adapt to their own funding criteria rather than co-creating a shared focus and innovative response to the challenge being addressed. Specialised reporting frameworks are created, where focus shifts away from what should be done to what is fundable. The emphasis on financial due diligence and reporting on the part of the donor inevitably distorts the effectiveness and impact of a partnership by not taking into account the non-monetary contributions of other partners. As a result, efforts to build a sense of autonomy, integrity and equity of the partnership are undermined.

Experience suggests that when donors engage as partners they can make a positive difference and provide new opportunities for active engagement, accountability and transparency for all concerned. Donors engaging as partners means building the partnership as a collective effort based on sharing costs, risks and benefits, where the ground rules, responsibilities and obligations are worked out jointly. The implication for donors seeking to operate internally to a partnership, means recognising that all those involved are donors even when they contribute non-monetary resources to building the partnership.

In practical terms, this means that donors must adapt their rules and procedures, to the extent that this is possible, to those worked out by the partnership. This might mean for example, not requiring a special or dedicated reporting procedure relating solely to their monetary investment, but adopting new review and reporting approaches that address the partnership as a whole. This is important where the beneficiary of a grant to support the partnership is an organisation that operates on behalf of the partners involved and is held to account by them.

⁶ *Emerging Partnering Lessons from Diverse Contexts*, 2016, published by PBA and PEP (Promoting Effective Partnering) available from www.effectivepartnering.org

Section 2.

FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

“Donors are often seen as signatories of a cheque, who remain in the background with little involvement in how the funding is being utilised. That is not our expectation... we want to be seen as a partner in the process along that journey...”⁷

Donors play a critical role in shaping partnering practice – whether intentionally or unintentionally. As suggested earlier, this comes because of their focus on the financial relationship with those they fund. However, beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries are also somewhat locked into an undue focus on funding in the way they see donors almost exclusively as providers of financial support rather than as partners or potential partners.

The key to going beyond the conventional donor-recipient model lies in understanding and reframing the power dynamics that are at play – who makes the decisions, on what basis, with what purpose and in whose interest?

The public and private donors allied in GACP have focused on creating space for understanding better how donors can support and promote community philanthropy as a development tool, which shifts power to the local.⁸ To be successful in shifting power to local community philanthropy organisations requires donors to invest in three areas:

- **Developing assets** – *“the idea of building local constituencies through local philanthropy, which involves finding new and inventive ways of reconnecting communities with abandoned traditions or establishing new ones and of valuing other kinds of assets beyond just money”*
- **Strengthening capacities** – *“...what really makes a difference to the effectiveness of a community foundation is not the amount of money that it has or gives out, but how it does so. The non-grant-making role, in particular, is central to building trust...”*
- **Building trust** – *“...what really makes community foundations effective is their role as a kind of ‘runny glue’ in building partnerships, connecting different groups in the community, while all the time giving highest priority to accountability to local people”*

A contrasting approach has been taken by the Economic Advancement Programme of the Open Society Foundations (OSF)⁹, which seeks to combat economic disadvantage by supporting collaborative initiatives through grants and social investments that lead to systems solutions. The emphasis here is not on organizations (as in community philanthropy), but on funding collaboration that translates into understanding better complex situations and leads to systemic solutions. The focus is not on financing individuals or organizations, but on resourcing whatever mechanism is most appropriate to bringing about desired systems changed. Where collaborative advantage can be

⁷ Lisa Doherty, Irish Aid, quoted in *Power & Politics – the Consortium-building Story Continues*, 2015 a case study written by PBA commissioned by the Start Network (available from www.startnetwork.org and www.partnershipbrokers.org)

⁸ The Community Foundation Atlas: a snapshot of the global community philanthropy field, north and south.. Download: <http://www.globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/information/category/core-roles-of-community-foundations>

⁹ <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/economic-advancement-program>

gained in solving a development problem, support will be forthcoming. Collaboration per se is not the focus, only where it makes a difference.

The assumption is that there are certain development challenges that can only be solved in this way – linear or piece-meal solutions will not work. An example is the challenge of providing a digital identity to refugees so as to enable them to rebuild their lives economically and socially. Technically, the problem is fairly straight-forward, but solutions require collaborative action based on something more than transaction to get governments, international agencies, businesses and other stakeholders, as well as the refugees themselves to work out a solution that is acceptable to all. A solution that is mandated by the UNHCR¹⁰, the UN agency concerned with refugees, or a software provider or government working in isolation will simply not be adopted. For the OSF, when it comes working out how best to supporting collaborative action, two questions arise:

1. Systems analysis – how can OSF (and other donors) provide funding for initiating, developing maintaining or modifying partnerships so that the partnerships do not reinforce or increase economic oppression directly or indirectly?
2. Beneficiaries as partners – grantees are typically intermediaries and not the ultimate beneficiaries. If beneficiaries are to be involved in co-designing projects and programmes, how can this take place more effectively? How can donors partner effectively with beneficiaries?

The challenge and opportunity is for donors not to operate just in terms of providing funding to initiatives dealing with refugees (in this case), but in terms of working out ways to pool expertise, capacities, experience and resources with other funders, beneficiaries and stakeholders. Collaboration is needed to redefine the ‘refugee problem’ as an opportunity to work with refugees not as ‘objects without identity’ but as people who bring skills, enthusiasm, knowledge and a wide range of competencies to the economy and to wider society.

Achieving better development outcomes requires donors to deploy their financial support as part of a different type of resourcing, that emphasises the value of non-monetary contributions, as well as more effective collaborative arrangements for designing, implementing and evaluating development interventions. This means reframing the interaction between donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in terms of partnering and partnership.

In more collaborative arrangements, in which donors participate as partners, decisions are made collectively rather than by individual entities with a view to achieving the goals of the partnership as a whole. In such arrangements, all partners are donors in the sense that they contribute monetary or non-monetary resources to realising the goals adopted. A key issue for all those involved in partnering, therefore, is how to balance the needs of external donors – undertaking due diligence and financial reporting as required – and those of the partners and the partnership.

How do donors collaborate successfully?

Donors need to work to uncouple money and power. This is potentially an important outcome of effective partnering because the task is to work out ways of not so much shifting power and resources, but about sharing them for the benefit of the development task being addressed.

¹⁰ www.unhcr.org

Effective partnering can reframe the power dynamics of those involved by providing pathways for shifting and sharing power. Unfortunately, partnerships and partnering are often experienced as either ineffective or messy affairs generating costs rather than benefits when it comes to implementation. Partnership brokers, and others whose role is to help partners and partnerships fulfil their potential, are viewed too often as unnecessary additional costs. Such arguments may have some justification, but they are often deployed to distract attention from the status quo which, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, continues to be dominated by top-down, command-and-control approaches. Such approaches perpetuate a belief that there are simple solutions to complex problems, and are increasingly found wanting.

The experience of the Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) with the GACP and other donor collaborations where the donors themselves are seeking to share power through more effective partnering is consistent with the experience of the Packard Foundation, which has proposed 5 ingredients of successful donor collaboration.¹¹ These are reformulated below as good practices for donors seeking to partner with others.

1. **Structure collaboration more purposefully** – typically, donors who have declared a commitment to partnering have not worked out what this might mean in practice. As a result, ad hoc arrangements come into play. Too often these translate into donor staff attending more meetings and dealing with more emails and phone calls leading to frustration. The key thing is to be clear about the objective of the collaboration from the point of view of the donor and how this relates to the needs/roles of other partners – Is the objective to pool funds to achieve greater impact? Or is it about leveraging expertise and knowledge, which is not available in-house? Or is it about innovation – doing different? Collaboration action will be structured differently depending on the objective and focus of the donor and how this relates to the common objective and focus of the partnership. Clarity as to objectives, enables ground rules and governance issues to be addressed in the context of the partnership
2. **Assess collaboration costs and benefits more precisely** – few donors would state that they are not interested in partnering with others. But this is not helpful, as it is sometimes important to say ‘no’ and not be ambiguous about their being external rather than internal to a partnership of interest. The costs of collaboration are real in terms of staff time, brand risk and financial outlay. Consequently, they need to be included in work plans, budgets and strategies. Involving potential partners in helping to assess the costs and benefits of a particular collaboration is often an effective and responsible way of building in-house partnering capability that is essential for successful collaboration
3. **Adapt decision-making processes as necessary** – participating in a partnership as a partner rather than as an external donor does not mean giving up decision-making autonomy. Donors are often also funders of the partnerships in which they seek to participate. A worry is that the monetary financial support awarded will somehow be compromised. Entering into partnering arrangements can/should set out areas and conditions where decisions remain with the donor (e.g. responsibility for evaluating the impact of financing awarded) and are not negotiated or shared with the partnership as a whole. This is a matter of ground rules and governance structures, not sharing in mission and objectives.

¹¹ Will Seldon (2015) Five Guidelines for Successful Funder Collaborations: Lessons from the Packard Foundation on how funders can effectively work together to amplify their resources and impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Download: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/five_guidelines_for_successful_funder_collaborations

4. **Plan collaborations more intentionally** – collaboration should not be treated as informal or ad hoc affairs. Planning goes a long way, but needs to take into account the expectations, needs and opportunities of other partners involved. Involvement of donors, brings with it an expectation of monetary financial support (even if this is not explicitly stated). In such situations, it is important to plan or anticipate future monetary financial support – on what conditions will such support be provided? At what level? One way is to tie financial support to the phases of the partnership cycle. This is also a way of strengthening the partnership culture.
5. **Move on when appropriate** – entering into a partnership does not have to be open-ended nor does it have to be forever. Clarity in this regard is helpful at the outset, especially if money is involved. As with other partners, it is perfectly legitimate (and responsible) to articulate the circumstances or conditions, which would cause the donor to move on from the partnership. These circumstances will inevitably evolve and change, so it is important to treat moving on as an ever-present part of the partnering interaction. It is good to avoid using the language of ‘exiting’, especially in situation such as poverty reduction or combating climate change where the problem or challenge is unlikely to be solved once-and-for-all.



DONORS AS PARTNERS

“It is increasingly clear that there are many ways in which donors can engage more deeply in promoting effective partnerships – over and above providing funding – so that collaboration helps them as well as their grant recipients to achieve their important and ambitious sustainable development goals”¹²

Those who invest in community based development include a diversity of private foundations, bilateral and multi-lateral agencies, INGOs, governments and public agencies, businesses and corporations, faith-based organisations, community philanthropy organisations, as well as individuals. In this paper, we use the term ‘donor’ to cover the financial investment of any type of entity where the motivation and task is to provide financial support to promote progress towards sustainability locally, regionally and internationally.

The donor landscape for sustainable development is becoming ever more diverse, fragmented and complex. It is changing with the advent of new technologies, social networking, more confrontational politics, changing public expectations, cuts in public spending, corporate social responsibility, the emergence of impact investing, social economy thinking, community philanthropy and the proliferation of strong NGOs and other civil society organisations at the local or community level. At the same time, many authoritarian governments are closing down space for independent media and civil society by disrupting or stopping external funding.

Financial resources are increasing in some areas, but shrinking in others. But it is the whole system of philanthropic giving, investment and aid that appears to be shifting, along with a changing of roles away from the traditional donor-beneficiary relationship. For example, some donors no longer focus on civil society or NGOs or other actors, but rather look to financing systems change, investing their funds in new types of businesses or partnerships.

Yet despite an apparently more progressive donor landscape, progress towards sustainability has been disappointingly slow. Inequalities have been growing and planetary life-support systems are under threat due to climate change and biodiversity loss. To draw attention to growing inequalities, one INGO in a recent report asserts that “42 individuals now hold as much wealth as the 3.7 billion who make up the poorest part of the population”.¹³ The numbers are difficult to verify and have been much criticised. However, the point remains valid: that it is the wealthy who have seen their wealth increase spectacularly in recent years. The poorest have seen comparatively less increase in wealth in past years in both developing and developed countries. Inequalities continue to widen despite efforts at the national and international level to narrow them.

The reshuffling of economic resources across the globe, that has facilitated this disproportionate concentration of wealth, is one of the effects of globalisation. Meeting the challenge of the SDG requires that the issue of wealth redistribution be addressed. Further concentration of wealth is

¹² Tennyson & Hundal, *Shifting the Power: How Can Partnering Help?* December, 2016. Available: www.partnershipbrokers.org/learning

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2018/jan/22/inequality-gap-widens-as-42-people-hold-same-wealth-as-37bn-poorest>

likely to be detrimental as more and more people across the globe are left behind or left out altogether from sharing in economic benefits. Partnerships and partnering that enable monetary and non-monetary investment to be deployed to initiate and strengthen projects and programmes that implement the SDG could be a solution. Such partnerships must recognise, however, that non-monetary contributions of knowledge, experience, relationships and expertise are as important to creating value and results as monetary resources. Partnerships can be used to work out new forms of governance, accountability and priority-setting.

The SDG are globally-agreed goals that provide direction for dealing with the development challenges facing our world. They give direction to practical actions aimed at narrowing inequality, safeguarding planetary life-support systems and enabling prosperity for all. With their emphasis on multi-sector partnering (SDG 17 is entitled “*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*”¹⁴), they are a concerted effort to identify priorities and key performance indicators for guiding donors and other contributors, implicitly encouraging them to become partners in implementation. Partnering and partnerships are seen as both a method and philosophy for achieving the SDG. The key targets are articulated as follows:

- 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries;
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

The current UN view is that “*Partnerships as a means of implementation have never before in the history of international cooperation been more important*”.^{15 16}

In the SDG context, a central theme for partnering is not just in improving collaboration between government, multi-laterals and corporations, but also in connecting the global with the local and vice-versa. Other important influences shaping multi-sector partnering in line with the SDG, include:

- The European Union’s commitment to the partnership approach set out in its 2020 Strategy¹⁷, which is reflected in, for example, the Partnership Instrument¹⁸, which provides

¹⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17>

¹⁵ UN-DESA (2015): *Partnerships For Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations. A legacy review towards realizing the 2030 Agenda*. Download: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2257Partnerships%20for%20SDGs%20-%20a%20review%20web.pdf>

¹⁶ In the UN context, the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships is determined, inter alia, by their ability to manage and share knowledge and expertise about the issues, processes and solutions they are promoting. An on-line partnerships for SDG platform has been established, which registers partnership initiatives that meet SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, resource-based with time-based deliverables). Information about partnering connections must be provided. As of August 2017, 3625 partnerships had been registered. The focus tends to be on the deliverables, results and outcomes of partnership action as opposed to the partnering process itself and those who are engaged in that process. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/>

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/what-we-do/partnership_instrument_en.htm

funding for EU cooperation with partners around the world to advance the EU's core interests and to tackle global challenges;

- The Grand Bargain¹⁹ an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. An important focus on using partnering to address the humanitarian financing gap, ensuring greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response;
- The 2016 New York Declaration²⁰ endorsed at the UN General Assembly by 193 member states confirmed the united desire to support refugees and migrants. At the heart of this approach is the idea that refugees should be included in the communities from the very beginning and consistent with the pledge to “*leave no one behind*” in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNHCR is to work with a wide range of partners. These include not just governments, NGOs, refugees and other UN agencies, but also the private sector, international financial institutions and civil society, including think tanks, academia and faith leaders;
- High profile public donors who publicly underscore their commitment to deploying partnering and partnership approaches, including USAID, UK DFID, Sweden's SIDA and others;
- High profile private donors, who publicly focus on partnering as delivery model are growing in importance. When the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation explicitly state that: “*our job is to get results. We know that our results depend on the quality of our partnerships*”, they are fuelling expectations that private donors will be working through partnerships, even though many private donors have been working in partnerships and investing in partnering for many years, such as the Rockefeller Foundations, Packard Foundation, Aga Kahn Development Network, Open Society Foundations and others.

Partnering is seen not just as a method, but also as a philosophy and an operational culture. Partnering is to be the new normal. For sustainable development to succeed, the expectation is that:

- Donors will be more active not just in funding thematic initiatives, projects and programmes, such as education, combating climate change or nutrition, but also in furthering partnering practice locally and globally – that they will be more effective partners in delivering sustainable development and promoters of a partnership culture;
- More means will end up in the hands of local communities, rather than intermediaries. The logic is that locals have the greatest knowledge of the opportunities, circumstances and needs at play, as well as the best access to local resources. Partnership practice requires that locals be seen more as co-creating partners than passive beneficiaries.²¹

¹⁹ <http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>

²⁰ <http://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>

²¹ Governments and multilateral agencies are promoting partnering and local ownership, but at the same time reducing or consolidating funding for development aid. They continue to maintain top-down approaches in the name of greater accountability and control. The result is that very little development aid goes directly to local or grassroots NGOs, especially to those operating in the South. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah (Secretary-General of Civicus, the Global Alliance for Civil Society) puts the figure at less than 1% Official Foreign Aid (even though donors in the humanitarian sector declared a target of 20%!). See: www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/nov/09/five-reasons-donors-give-for-not-funding-local-ngos-directly . The constraints of funding mechanisms on retarding local leadership are also discussed in Lewis, S. with. Buttner, G., Selliah, A., Edussuriya, K., Raharimanana, H. and Y. Orengo (2017) What's it like to

A key challenge thus lies in deploying multi-sectoral partnerships that combine mobilisation of resources at both the global and the local levels – and linking the two levels in new ways to achieve more. This means reframing the interaction between donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in terms of partnering and partnership.

The challenge to donors was articulated at a Round-Table held in London in September 2017²² by a community philanthropy practitioner as follows:

“The majority of our funders support poor or marginalised people. However, this is sometimes compromised by a desire to reach lots of people and support projects that are good value for money, which means the most marginalised people, those who need lots of resources and time are ignored by funders.”

At the same meeting, another participant noted that:

“All donors ask for sustainability, but mostly fund projects with limited outputs/short lifespans, very rarely programmes or core funding that enables grantees to be sustainable or creative within their vision/mission/mandate.”

Another commented:

“The rhetoric will be in line with this but the reality varies immensely. Donor fashion, short term funding cycles, political considerations, over stress on outputs rather than outcomes – all undermine potential for change.”

The kind of sentiments cited above are increasingly common in public debates and critiques of current practice in international development and the contributions of private and public donors. The view is that the rhetoric of ‘localising’ development is increasingly out of sync with the reality, and that as a result, progress towards sustainable development is faltering.

The private and public donors who formed the GACP²³ have been promoting (individually and collectively) innovative community philanthropy approaches across the globe as a development alternative and are themselves a partnership in the making. They have all worked in funding partnerships themselves, pooling, leveraging and deploying funds alongside other donors. They have all invested in community philanthropy, albeit in different ways. Thus, they have a range of experiences in working on partnership initiatives from the perspective of both being donors and being partners (with other donors and, sometimes, with their grantees and other stakeholders). They have come to recognise – as have other donors – that partnering is not easy. Some of the reasons for this have been identified by the PBA in its **Working with Donors** initiative as follows:

be on the receiving end of exit? A partner and country office view. PPA Learning Paper. Bond, London. Download: <https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/PPA-Learning-Paper.The-receiving-end-of-exit.-April-2017.pdf>

²² #ShiftThePower: community philanthropy and people-led development” Roundtable discussion held on September 14th, 2017 in London, UK. Organized by the Global Fund for Community Foundations and the Big Lottery Fund.

²³ Aga Khan Foundation, Ford Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, Global Fund for Community Foundations, C. S. Mott Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, US Aid.

Emerging partnering issues

- **Lack of internal alignment** within partner organisations
- **Lack of coherence of approach** between partners
- **Inter-sector unhelpful assumptions** (about each other)
- **Intra-sector competition** (especially for funds)
- **Paper partnerships** (thrown together just to access funds)
- **Wearing two hats** (eg being both partners and donors)
- **Failure to build** on diversity and genuinely innovate
- **Unwillingness to let go** of a level of sole control
- **Failure to value / leverage** non-financial contributions
- **Held back by a disabling** external partnering environment

An evaluation of the partnering performance of the GACP carried out by the PBA found that the donor collaboration was not just about pooling resources in order to distribute them more effectively. The focus was increasingly on the value of the non-financial contributions that donors can bring to partnering and partnerships as exemplified by the efforts of GACP to promote and enable community philanthropy both among other donors and also among other stakeholders, including community-based organisations operating across the globe.²⁴ The GACP had been formed originally by a group of donors to support the work of the GFCF and to pool and learn from their different experiences with the purpose of engaging other donors in supporting the community philanthropy movement. In this regard, the GACP collaboration has been developing informally in a largely ad hoc way as a learning collaboration that demonstrates how donors can go beyond a focus on pooling their financial resources for bigger impact.

In the case of the GACP, after three years, a recognition has grown that furthering community philanthropy around the globe requires donors not just giving more money, but engaging with their beneficiaries other donors and stakeholders more effectively as partners. In practical terms there appears to be a growing appetite among some of the donors involved to move in a deliberate, intentional and collective way from:

- Alliance to partnership
- Learning and researching to advocacy and outreach
- Supporting to doing

²⁴ The PBA has been contributing to the growth and development of the GACP since 2015 in 2 ways: acting as an external and independent evaluator of partnership performance and as advisor on how to build partnering capability. This work has involved carrying on an annual review based on interviews, reviews of documents, participation and observation. The observations cited here are from the 2017 evaluation of the PBA completed in January 2018.

What does it mean to be a responsible and effective partner? What can donors do to increase partnership impact?

The GACP has inspired a search for possible answers drawing attention to a variety of things donors can be doing in addition to providing financial resources (see below).

12 things donors can do to build partnership impact

1. **Promote** partnering as a delivery mechanism
2. **Provide** funding for partnership-generated projects
3. **Invest** in building partnering capacity and processes
4. **Develop** new ways of fully valuing non-cash contributions
5. **Broker** new partnerships and collaborative models
6. **Engage** as real partners
7. **Model** high standards in partnering practice
8. **Assess** the added value of partnering
9. **Build** constituencies for partnership action
10. **Influence** policy and decision-makers
11. **Share** learning about partnering challenges
12. **Bring** a longer-term perspective to the table



PARTNERING FOR BETTER RESULTS

“In a partnership, it is a basic premise that all partners invest (albeit in different ways) just as all partners seek returns on their investment by achieving their specific individual or organisational goals. Yet only a few donors providing money actually engage with the partnership as genuine partners. This may of itself be at best confusing and at worst destabilizing to effective partnering since donors often expect to have a significant degree of control over the partnership without engaging with it or understanding its complexities and the value of non-monetary investments.”²⁵

It is clear that there is growing interest and appetite for organising and investing in partnering and partnerships as a way of achieving greater impact, transformational change and more sustainable outcomes. But there is comparatively little information, insight and guidance available on how to carry out successful investments to strengthen partnerships and improve partnership practice. Reports on the state of partnerships, such as the US State Department review of ‘on the ground’ collaborations advancing the SDG²⁶ or the UN’s review of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development²⁷ provide many examples of partnership, but have little to say about the investment process in the partnerships described nor about how donors-acting-as-investors impact the process, both positively and negatively.

Defining Partnerships

Taking partnership definitions agreed by the UN General Assembly as a cue, investing in partnering and partnerships must ensure that partnerships are *“..based on the principles of national ownership, mutual trust, transparency and accountability”* and function as *“...voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits”*.

The focus on partnership and partnering stems not just from a recognition that everyone must come together – governments, civil society, business, academia, donors, funders and others – but also from a recognition that responsibilities, costs, risks and benefits must be shared so that no-one gets left

²⁵ PBA’s initiative: www.workingwithdonors.org

²⁶ A review of ‘on the ground’ collaborations advancing the Sustainable Development Goals: The Secretary’s Office of Global Partnerships, US Dept of State (2017) *State of Global Partnerships 2017 report*. Washington, DC: US Dept of State. Download: <https://www.state.gov/s/partnerships/releases/reports/2017/268159.htm>

²⁷ UN-DESA (2016) *PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2016: Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals through Multi-stakeholder partnerships -Ensuring that no one is left behind*. Download: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2329Partnership%20Report%202016%20web.pdf>

behind. Put another way, the need is for reframing both international and local development to accommodate more bottom-up initiative, resourcing and implementation from those who are already paying the costs of poverty, inequality and climate change and doing their best to adapt to changing circumstances.

There appears to be growing recognition that top-down, donor-driven solutions, focused predominantly on money, which treat those affected as passive beneficiaries, will not be sufficient. There is also recognition that donor priorities are aligned to their strategic objectives, which are often not aligned well to what is needed locally. This is an example of a subtle corruption by the power of donors, which involves shifting focus away from what is needed. The fragmentation of the donor sector has created a multitude of donor priorities, drivers, reporting requirements and expectations, has exacerbated the situation further, giving less voice to those who are closest to the problems that need to be resolved.

For sustainable development to succeed, the need and opportunity is for combining non-local investment with more local mobilisation of resources to achieve development that is more locally-owned. Yet despite the many declarations to the contrary, the top-down continues to dominate.

At a Round-Table organized by the GFCF and the Lottery Fund in London²⁸ discussion focused how community philanthropy can shift power.. A key theme was the experience and potential for partnering with donors. In this regard, the results of a qualitative survey of community activists and donors was presented. One of the respondents explained the pervasiveness of the top-down approach as follows:

“Increasingly... donors feel under massive pressure to be able to show value for money, measurable results and the highest international standards of financial management. This makes them both highly risk-adverse and obsessive about linear planning, as if development was primarily a management process. As such, it is hugely challenging for them to work in open-ended, collaborative ways, and, since our biggest source of funding is from these donors, we feel these pressures acutely.”

In the SDG context, many are seeing partnerships and partnering primarily as a mechanism for resource mobilisation and for impacting the trillions of dollars of financial flows and resources shape the international development agenda, often indirectly and inadvertently. This is, of course, important. But narrowing the focus in this way can be counter-productive.

Another dimension is perhaps more significant for partnering impact, if we accept that ‘resourcing’ refers not just to funding, but also to mobilising and sharing knowledge, expertise, reputation, brand, reach, influence and technology. In this thinking, affected local populations can (and must) be seen as a resource for developing and implementing novel and context-appropriate solutions.²⁹

²⁸ “#ShiftThePower: community philanthropy and people-led development” Roundtable discussion held on September 14th, 2017 in London, UK. Organized by the Global Fund for Community Foundations and the Big Lottery Fund.

²⁹ In the UN “Partnerships should be based on the principles of national ownership, mutual trust, transparency and accountability” (UN General Assembly A/RES/69/15 – SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway). “Partnerships are voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits” (UN GA Towards global partnership resolutions 68/234, 66/223, 63/223, 62/211, 60/215, 58/129, 56/76).

In a partnership paradigm, all partners are donors, providing money, services or gifts-in-kind voluntarily to generate a return or pay-off in the form of a social, environmental or economic improvement. It is, therefore helpful to think in terms of all partners contributing to achieve a return on investment (albeit defined more broadly – typically in qualitative terms) rather than in terms of providing grants, with the implication that no return is expected.

Multi-sectoral partnerships offer new potential for engaging with and resourcing local or small CSOs and other stakeholders in a more systematic and strategic way to increase effectiveness and impact of resources from both global and local levels. Increasing effectiveness means extracting the benefits of collaboration for all those involved. Experience³⁰ indicates that collaborative advantage is strongest when the collaboration:

1. Yields benefits that are more than just ‘a deal’ but creates **living systems that evolve progressively in their possibilities**. Beyond the immediate reasons for forming the relationship, collaboration offers those involved an option on the future by opening new doors and creating unforeseen opportunities;
2. Creates **new and additional value** rather than just a return on what you put in;
3. Is not ‘controlled’ by formal systems but works from a **dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures** that enhance learning;
4. No single person, organisation or stakeholder group is ‘in charge’ but rather **costs, risks and benefits are shared**.

To maximise collaborative advantage, the key task is to build partnering capacities and capabilities at both the global and the local/community level – enabling more effective local partners and more effective global partners. This is important because local populations have the biggest stake or interest in achieving tangible results. Yet as local communities, they are often not well-organised, suffer from internal conflict, lack local leadership and have difficulty in identifying and making effective use of local assets. Globally, donors – despite the rhetoric to the contrary – too often seem to act individually rather than in partnership with others.

In practical terms, the task is to develop tools and standards for building better partnerships that are tailored to the specific needs of donors seeking to support such partnerships by bringing together local or community stakeholders. Such approaches need to distinguish between engaging in ways that are embedded within the partnership from arrangements where the donor is external to the partnership.

For example, public and private donors collaborating in the GACP have come to recognise that partnering is not an easy endeavour especially, perhaps, when it comes to working with other donors. In a recent evaluation of their alliance, they underscored the importance of understanding what it means to be a responsible and effective partner. In the case of the GACP, this has not been a matter of rhetoric, but has involved embarking on a journey to understand better the roles, constraints, challenges and opportunities when it comes to investing in new ways to further the cause of community philanthropy. Unfortunately, initiatives which bring together different types of

³⁰ Inspired by: Rosabeth Moss-Kanter, *Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances*, Harvard Business Review

donors, such as the GACP are still the exception rather than the rule, as the stronger force is a divisive one - to work individually whenever possible.

Collaboration can open new opportunities that would not be possible when acting alone or in isolation. Partnering can build better approaches to community investment and may become the norm rather than the exception in coming years.

“...fundors do not spend much time on thinking about differing organisational cultures and how best to align distinct practices, behaviours and cultures.... there is real value in having such conversations ahead of embarking on partnership working.”³¹

Although public donors continue to dominate in terms of money flows, the ascendancy of private-financing is bringing about a different type of narrative and public discourse, with unknown consequences for accountability, public engagement and most importantly for ways of operating on the ground.

New technologies, especially social media, mobile telephones and the internet are also redefining the way donors operate and how they interact with beneficiaries stakeholders and partners involved. What is clear, however, is that the relationships are becoming treated increasingly as investments aimed at achieving social, economic and environmental returns through more effective collaboration.

What are the new opportunities of partnership and partnering for donors?

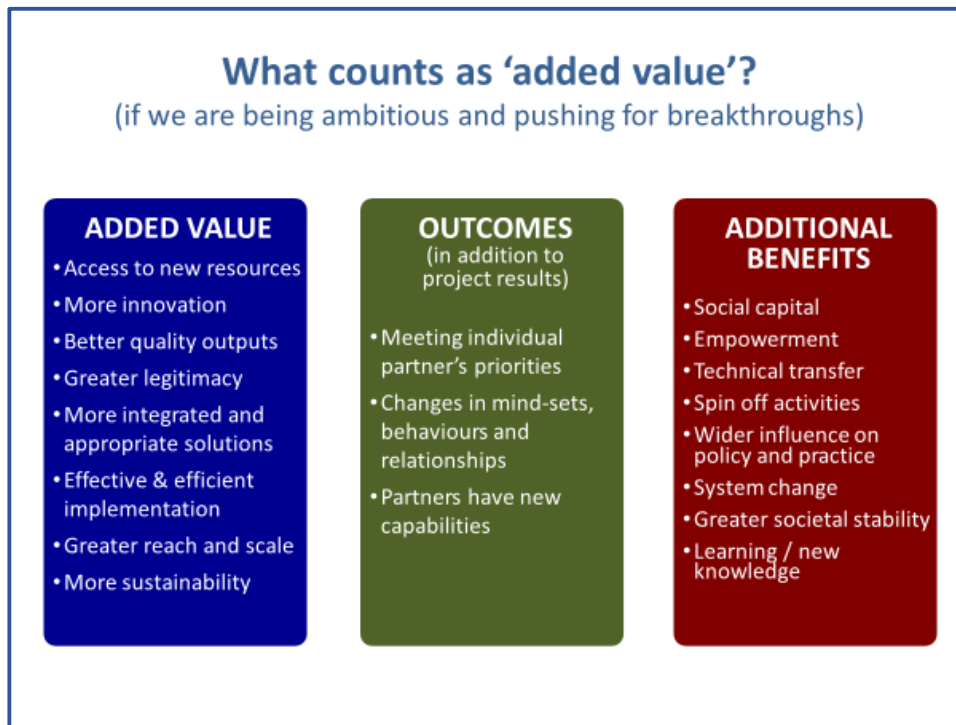
Partners in a collaborative model need to confront these questions and work out possible answers for their particular situation. For the collaboration to work more effectively, it is important for those involved to recognise what constitutes the value of the collaboration, as opposed to simply the value of the funding that made that collaboration possible. This means recognising all the different types of resources that have been deployed to make the collaboration operate and deliver results in terms of added value, additional outcomes and benefits.

For donors, this means being clear as to whether they are internal or external to the partnership they are supporting – and perhaps equally importantly how they are seen in this regard by other partners. Lack of clarity will almost certainly affect partnership performance and impact, especially if the rhetoric of partnering now professed by many donors is not reflected in the realities of practice.

The key thing is to recognise that all partners, including donors, are contributing to and extracting value from the partnership in which they are involved. The opportunity for extracting maximum value from partnering means that partners move beyond thinking of financial contribution and outcomes, to thinking in terms of more complex, longer term intangible value and the impact of investment. Just how value translates into quantitative and qualitative impact indicators is a matter for the partners to negotiate and establish among themselves as part of the partnership building process (see below³²):

³¹ Annabel Davidson Knight and Mary Stevens (2017) *Funder collaboration: unpacking the toolkit. Report from Collaborate for Social Change*. Download: <http://wordpress.collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/Funder-Collaboration-Unpacking-the-Toolkit.pdf>

³² Adapted by PBA from The Partnering Initiative (www.thepartneringinitiative.org)



Investing in making partnerships and partnering better means generating a return in the form of more effective practice, which in turn, translates into more transformational and sustainable outcomes. It means investing in processes rather than products. Many individuals and organizations now acknowledge the need for such investment, but are not clear on how to translate this need into programming partnering capability. In this regard, the PBA offers a multiplicity of tool books, skills training courses, networking opportunities and partnering services.

PBA experience suggest that there are at least 10 attributes of effective partnering³³ - see the box below:

- ### 10 attributes of effective partnering:
1. A **clear understanding** between the partners of the word 'partnership'
 2. Agreement to a **shared vision and common purpose**
 3. Account and allowance being made for **individual partners' interests**
 4. The **co-creation** of design, decisions and solutions
 5. Commitment to **sharing risks as well as benefits**
 6. Every partner **contributes resources** (whether tangible or intangible)
 7. Partners **share decision-making and leadership** responsibilities
 8. Partners commit to **mutual/horizontal accountability**
 9. Partners work together to develop a **principled approach** to their partnering endeavours
 10. Attention is paid to the **partnering process** as well as the partnership's projects

³³ See PBA's Better Partnership Brokering brochure:
<http://partnershipbrokers.org/w/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Brokering-Better-Partnerships-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Gaining an appreciation and self-awareness for these attributes both at the level of individuals and organizational culture goes a long way to increasing partnering capability and performance.

“In every successful partnership, there are those who are always asking questions because they see the partnership as an organizational form or culture, which can be designed and redesigned, adapted, nurtured and developed so as to mobilise resources and enable actions to deal with a development problem. For these partnership brokers, it is the partnership and the dynamic between the partners that matters more than the specific interests or perspective of any one of the collaborating partners”³⁴

Whether donors invest monetary or non-monetary resources in building a partnership for sustainable development, and seek to engage as a partner with that partnership to build additional value, they are also generating risks and liabilities. To generate maximum benefit from partnering in a partnership, while minimising risks and costs, donors need first of all to be explicit about whether they are seeking to remain external to the partnership (i.e. they are not partners, but supporters or advisors) or internal to that partnership (i.e. they co-create the partnership, sharing in the responsibilities along with other partners). For donors, it is common to focus on the potential benefits of partnering in this regard. It is less common to consider the costs and risks involved in external and internal roles in an explicit way.

Treating partnership and partnering as a value means assessing not just the monetary value of the partnership investment, but also the non-monetary investment of partners. This means internalising Albert Einstein’s view that there are many forms of value in human endeavour and that it really matters to understand ‘what counts’. For him *“Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts”*.

A tool for assessing costs and risks of investing through partnerships³⁵

The questions below are designed to help address a number of key issues from the point of view of donors and from the point of view of the partnership as whole, which they are seeking to support and to engage with:

- Is your liability limited to the amount of cash or cash-equivalent you have invested, or could you be on the hook for more if there are losses/lawsuits if things go wrong?
- Are there likely to be future periods where further resourcing might need to be raised? Under what conditions will that be done? How will the dynamics of the partnership change? What are the implications for performance and impact?
- What non-financial obligations are you taking on as a result of your investment? Labour, counsel, facilities, tools, etc? What about your reputation or brand? Are you sure you want to be associated with the partners involved now and those who may be involved in the future?
- How will return on investment be assessed in relation to partnership performance and outcomes/impacts? When will the partnership end? How can terms be modified? How can partnership interests be transferred, if at all? What are the governance arrangements etc?
- Do you share in or respect the values of those you will be partners with? You may be partners for a long time.
- Be ready for the additional complexities, staff time and paper work!

³⁴ Rafal Serafin, PBA Associate.

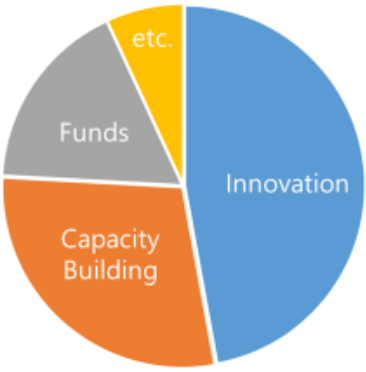
³⁵ Developed by Rafal Serafin, PBA Associate

Partnership brokers have worked out several ways of working with partners to understand and capture the value of a partnership that places monetary contributions in a wider context or framework. Each partnership is different, so working out just how to measure, monitor and assess value of investment, outputs and outcomes requires establishing collaboratively as to what really 'counts'! One example of an approach that helps put monetary value in context is presented below. The tool³⁶ has been used in several NGO-Business partnerships to sort out misunderstandings and misconceptions as how monetary contributions generate the value of the partnership from the perspective of the partners involved and externally in relation to partnership achievements.

Shared or collaborative approaches to deciding upon what matters are at the heart of effective partnering. This is about dealing with the power dynamics at play, which are inevitably reframed as the partnership becomes more important and more 'valuable' to the partners involved. The key questions, which must always be asked a series of power questions relating to the performance and impact of the partnership - Who decides? On what basis? With what purpose? In whose interest?

A tool for helping partners to understand, capture and communicate 'value'

- Ask a group from each individual partner organisations to articulate the range of 'value added' – things that they feel have come from the partnership
- List these
- Allocate a number of points (say, 10) and ask each person to allocate those points according to how important they think each item on the list is
- Add up the points for each item and turn the final numbers into percentages
- Capture as a pie chart – see example



Category	Color	Relative Value
Innovation	Blue	45%
Capacity Building	Orange	30%
Funds	Grey	15%
etc.	Yellow	10%

An indication of progress is when possible answers are framed not just in terms of costs and benefits of individual participating partners (what did we get out of it?), but also in relation to the partnership as a whole (what did we achieve that we could not have achieved acting alone?).

³⁶ Developed by Ros Tennyson when reviewing a multi-year partnership between a mining company and an environmental INGO

POWER SHIFTS WHEN POWER IS SHARED

“A partnering mindset brings a genuine curiosity together with the ability and willingness to explore diverse perspectives and experiences. It establishes equity and respect where little of either may have existed before. It builds openness and enthusiasm for all voices (even those without perceived power) to be heard. It explores and validates both individual and mutual interests. It seeds courage to make a difference on issues that are important to all those involved.”³⁷

Multi-stakeholder partnering coupled with community philanthropy can contribute both to shifting and sharing power in line with the SDG by providing pathways – the ‘how’. This is because they provide the means for moving from a command-and-control model where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, to a partnership model where power is, de facto, shared.

When viewed as a partnership resource, community philanthropy organisations represent an invaluable (but largely unrecognised) contribution for those building partnerships in all 17 SDG. This is because they are by definition partnerships that draw together representatives of different parts of the community and operate collectively to achieve local priorities. They are experiments in sharing power and resources locally. Engaging with or supporting Community Foundations requires an external donor to accept locally-defined terms and priorities.

Skilled process management (whether called ‘partnership brokering’ or not) offers the means for extracting, understanding and making more widely available the lessons that come from day-to-day partnering practice from the field of community philanthropy, but also from other fields, including humanitarian aid, climate change alliances, biodiversity conservation initiatives, education, food security and small-business development. Partnering is a learning process. Partnership brokers can also help donors from across different sectors to work out ways of collaborating with one another more effectively, and in consequence to enable them to participate more as partners in partnerships that deliver better results – more impact, more sustainability.

Donors operating as partners can not only make their resources go further, but also bring about better results on the ground by making their (and others’) non-financial contributions count. A good example in this regard is the advocacy effect or impact of the GACP, which provides legitimacy and attention to the community philanthropy movement in ways that could not be provided by individual donors or other stakeholders acting alone or in isolation.

In the case of the GACP, the advocacy effect emerged from the diversity of donors coming together to look jointly at the development/philanthropy interface. In the space of a few years, an alliance of donors has turned into a more collaborative venture that appears to be creating new value by taking on a more advocacy role. Advocacy is not just about promoting the idea of community philanthropy and its potential for advancing better development outcomes, but also about how donors – public,

³⁷ From: *Shifting the Power: How Can Working in Partnership Help?* Produced by the Partnership Brokers Association for the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy (Johannesburg, December 2016)

private or individual – can ensure practically that their interventions (funding and otherwise) produce results that are owned and directed by the people they are meant to benefit.

One result of this work is a guide entitled: *“How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power: What Donors Can Do To Help Make That Happen.”*³⁸ The guide offers practical advice and examples based on the experiences of a variety of different donors, as well as some thoughts on how donors can do more to share and shift power, while fulfilling their institutional oversight and accountability requirements. For the GACP, it represents potentially a new advocacy direction in its work going forwards – to provide tools and opportunities for donors to engage more effectively with each other and with their beneficiaries and stakeholders – with the objective of advancing the practice of community philanthropy.

Donors seeking to share power through partnering (or as a result of partnering), need first and foremost to internalise the basic premise that all partners contribute (albeit different things) just as all partners benefit (by achieving their specific individual or organisational goals). Partners work together to develop their ‘modus operandi’ and to co-create working arrangements that will be efficient, effective and allow for imaginative and transformational solutions to what appear to be intractable challenges.

When it comes to donors with their focus on financial contributions, it is, of course, true that money does matter. By providing money to initiatives, projects and programmes, private and public donors enable things to get done and challenging situations to improve. To be effective and transformative, partnerships need money to pay for operations and activities, which are often taken for granted or not sufficiently ‘valued’. However, not everything can be achieved or sustained simply by cash injections, however crucial these are. This is because partnerships also rely significantly on the non-financial contributions of partners, other stakeholders and communities. Money is essential, but it is still part of a bigger picture.

For donors, partnering is not an easy option, given the limited time and people resources they have available. Programme officers are typically having to deal with chronic time constraints and see activities that involve going beyond their basic task of screening, awarding, monitoring and assessing monetary grants, as something additional that, even if important, is left for later. This is a serious impediment for donors getting involved as partners and requires donors to recognise that non-monetary values are sometimes of equal or even greater importance also in their own operations. Such challenges are seldom appreciated by those seeking funds and by stakeholders in international and local development who criticize donors for being inflexible, bureaucratic, unwilling to share their power and influence through partnering.

Bringing community philanthropy and partnership brokering more into the mainstream of international development through more effective multi-stakeholder collaboration represents is a potentially an effective and practical way of dealing with power dynamics by reframing these in terms of sharing power rather than shifting or giving up power. Donors can, and many do, play a key role in reframing power dynamics building better interventions and investment through partnering and partnerships that go beyond financial support.

³⁸ GrantCraft Guide (2018) *How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power: What Donors Can Do To Help Make That Happen*. To be published by the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF)/Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP).

A checklist of 12 ways donors can use partnerships to build better interventions and investments by sharing –not just shifting – power in dealing with development challenges is provided below:

12 things that partnering can do to build better investment

1. **Demonstrate** the added value from sharing power
2. **Evolve** innovative ways of valuing non-cash contributions
3. **Broker** new thinking on the meaning of ‘return on investment’
4. **Model** high standards in collaboration good practice
5. **Monitor** the the added value of new resourcing models
6. **Build** more context-appropriate investments
7. **Promote** equity between funders, recipients & beneficiaries
8. **Build** greater partnering capabilities in donor organisations
9. **Challenge** donors to operate as partners
10. **Confront** those locked into an outdated paradigm
11. **Disseminate** learning about new approaches
12. **Share** responsibility for sustaining outcomes

This is a short paper to trigger thinking, dialogue and action. Whether you are reading this as a donor, partner, partnership broker or other stakeholder involved in partnering for sustainable development, we hope that it captures your attention in a way that can help you to help transform the way partnerships are structured and funded. Our closing thought for now is:

“The time is right for donors to play a key role in changing the rules of the game.”



Acknowledgements

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Additional thanks are due to our fellow Associates of the Partnership Brokers Association who provide an invaluable 'community of practice' where we are able to share emerging ideas and to challenge each other's assumptions as we attempt to influence the global partnering movement so it becomes more effective and genuinely transformational.

We are also grateful for the creative contributions of Maria Hayes (PBA's Artist in Residence) for the cover illustration and the reminder that no change occurs without imagination and vision.



PARTNERING AND COLLABORATION FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD.

Working in new ways and bridging traditional boundaries is, however, extremely challenging and often falls far short of the high expectations of all those involved. [Partnership brokering](#) is the term we use for the process of supporting and strengthening partnerships through innovative and skilled management of collaborative processes. [Weaving Threads: How We Work](#) will tell you more about our unique approach to supporting the partnering process.

Partnership brokers can be 'internal' (operating from within one of the partner organisations) or 'external' (called in to provide specialist support when needed). Partnership brokers serve the partners by **helping them to shape their partnership**. For a brief introduction to the topic, see [Brokering Better Partnerships](#).

www.partnershipbrokers.org

