

**Partnership in MSiS - A Toolkit  
Guidelines for Partnership Development**

**[Manuscript 2005 - Due to restructuring etc., it was never  
adopted by the then International Department in MS]**

**MS International Department**





## Table of Contents

What is Partnership to MS?.....	7
An Effective and Decent Development Co-operation.....	7
A Definition .....	8
The Partner Portfolio.....	9
The Partnership Process .....	10
Initial Partner Identification .....	13
Contents of the identification talks .....	13
Identification criteria.....	13
Identification methodology .....	15
Early Partnership Documentation .....	16
Early Partnership.....	17
The Long-term Partnership .....	21
The partnership process .....	21
Planning and Learning .....	23
Planning partnership activities .....	23
The Logical Framework Approach (LFA).....	23
The Quarterly Monitoring Chart (QMC) .....	28
Monitoring and Learning from Experience.....	32
The QMC as a monitoring tool .....	32
The Most Significant Changes Approach (MSC).....	34
Monitoring an MS Country/Regional programme .....	36
Evaluation .....	41
What is evaluation?.....	41
Writing ToR for an evaluation .....	41
Glossary and Terms Used .....	43
MS Documents and Recommended Literature .....	45
Annex 1: Guideline and Checklist used for Identification of Partners.....	49
Annex 2: Format for Early Partnership Documentation [Empty Annex] .....	51
Annex 3: Format for Partnership Agreement.....	53
Annex 4: Some Potential Strengths and Common Weaknesses of Local Organisations in Rural Development [Empty Annex].....	59
Annex 5: The Design Workshop Process.....	61
Annex 6: Construction of negotiated indicators in MSiS .....	63
Annex 7: Draft MS Uganda Strategic plan 2005 - 2006.....	65

Annex 8: MSC – the interview as a non-directive dialogue .....	75
Annex 9: Some problems related to "measurement" and PM&E .....	77
Annex 10 MSC Questionnaire .....	80
Annex 11: Terms of Reference for Evaluation .....	83

]



## What is Partnership to MS?

### *An Effective and Decent Development Co-operation*

Since the World Bank adopted “Partnership” in its vocabulary, some observers now see the concept as worn out and serving as an euphemism for unjust inequity between donor and receiver<sup>1</sup>.

However, experience since 1993 has taught MS that it makes sense to strive for partnership as a mode of co-operation with organisations in the South. This tally with the values and policies for MS in the South (MSiS)<sup>2</sup> but we are also convinced that *the community (or its organisations) must own a development initiative if it is to be effective and sustainable*. Development does not come about as a result of transfer, or giving, of leadership and responsibility. It springs from the internal energy and motivation that is already there. Therefore, the leadership and responsibility for the project must be locally rooted from the outset.

Another prerequisite is that the collaboration should reflect the basic values of participation and intercultural co-operation. MS wants the relationship to be egalitarian and reflecting a meeting between equitable organisations or actors.

MS wants to promote *Authentic Partnerships*<sup>3</sup>. In such a relation, both parties will suffer if the relation is broken, and there is a common understanding of unity. The partnership mode demonstrates at least three advantages:

Partnership puts the local partners in focus as the owner, initiator and implementer of its activities. MS is not operational, but is a challenging partner, which inspires, facilitates, and supports.

Another advantage is that partnerships put more emphasis on building capacity to do things than actually doing it. Many MS supported activities in the past have failed in the longer run, because the capacity to sustain them was not attended to. If we can strengthen the capacity of e.g. community based organisations they may not only be able to implement and sustain their immediate activities, but may become vehicles for further development.

Furthermore, experience shows that a partnership approach facilitates linking of the two parts of MS’ work (i.e. local change in the field and advocacy and solidarity work). The impact is greater if we attack root causes of poverty while simultaneously working for specific changes in for poor peoples’ lives.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Fowler, 2000, who in the critical paper identifies at least 5 different types of relationships denoted by the term Partnership.

<sup>2</sup> See policy papers Mellefolkkeligt Samvirke, 2001 and 2005

<sup>3</sup> Fowler, 2000: p.5f.

## ***A Definition***

A Partner is here an organisation or a social grouping that is organised to some extent. The definition below stresses some key concepts that deserve careful attention when we develop a partnership.

A partnership is  
a *long-term* relationship  
in which *two or more* partners  
in *mutual trust*  
share *responsibility*  
for *joining resources*  
to achieve a *common goal*  
for their *mutual benefit*  
and *empowerment*

The list of keywords forms a checklist. Letting it guide the process of partnership development increases chances of it truly becoming a partnership, and not just a funding arrangement between a donor and a receiver. It is crucial that either partner respects the political and cultural values of the other - they should be open for discussion, however.

Partnership is about influencing and being influenced.

*Long-term* is important because:

Sustainable changes take time, and it demands long-term planning. A long-term horizon will not leave partners insecure and in suspense.

*Two or more*:

The relation is not restricted to MS and a partner as several partners as needed to pursue the overall objective agreed on between the parties.

*Mutual trust*:

Without mutual trust/confidence, information sharing will be seen as control.

*Share responsibility*:

It is important to clearly define roles and divide responsibilities and obligations.

*Join resources*:

Both (all) partners contribute with what they can, and both (all) should be acknowledged. In partnership one look for resources that complement each other.

*Common goal* (Overall objective):

Both (all) partners must share a vision, an overall objective and its underlying values. The vision must be jointly developed and have an interest beyond the partnership itself for both (all) parties. If not, the partnership becomes an end in itself

*Mutual benefit*:

Both (all) partners must feel that they benefit directly or indirectly. It should be clear to everybody involved what the benefits are to the partner and to MS respectively.

For MS, the benefits may be inputs to help MS in Denmark achieve its overall aim.



In a longer perspective, this benefits our partners as well; in as far as MS' succeeds in contributing to changes in aid policies, trade relations, debt-rescheduling etc.

*Empowerment:*

Partnerships, which mobilise people at community level, may provide a new route for empowerment. Through empowerment, people can regain the initiative in articulating their own development agenda, while at the same time creating awareness of the external factors influencing it.

Partnership example: YWCA Zambia

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has approached MS-Zambia for a long-term partnership. A design workshop has been held to identify the mutually shared vision and goal. Prior to the contact for an early partnership, MS-Zambia used the YWCA as training partners in Human Rights. YWCA has also shared their reports; the investigation reports on violence against women and other information they thought MS would appreciate with MS-Zambia. Similarly, MS also supported the YWCA without necessarily engaging in a formal agreement. For example, out of mutual interest, MS supported YWCA to attend the Social Summit in Denmark in 1995. YWCA and MS-Zambia have been inviting each other to attend activities such as annual meetings and open day-arrangements. Through the gradual participation in each other's activities, YWCA has developed into a long-term partner with a shared vision of women's empowerment and with clear mutual obligations towards each other clarified. In the joint activities, MS-Zambia and YWCA pulled resources together with a view of both parties benefiting from the process. YWCA will benefit from the financial assistance, utilisation of a development worker, while MS-Zambia will benefit from the south-south and regional exchange and networking. The Executive Director of YWCA is currently the Vice-chairperson of PAB. YWCA is needed as one of the partners which is strong in the area of human rights to try to assist MS in the capacity building for MS partners in the integration of human rights as a cross cutting issue. At the same time, YWCA works with other partners who share a common vision with them. These are for example HIVOS, a Dutch organisation and Irish Aid only to mention but a few. In the process, both YWCA and MS-Zambia seek to empower each other.

***The Partner Portfolio***

Each partnership cannot include all the perspectives an MS country or regional programme pursues. The combination of different types of partners in a network or *partner portfolio* ensures coverage of the programme's policy paper.

Before MS negotiates partnership with any organisation, the CO should ask itself this main question: *Which (type of) organisation is most apt to reach the poor and marginalised in the way that MS' policy paper wants it?*

Having answered the question, the next step is to generate an organisational map covering all potential organisations from the local to the national level<sup>4</sup>.

All country programmes will include a combination of the following types of partners, but the actual composition will depend on the country and the themes adopted in the policy paper.

---

<sup>4</sup> A regional programme should also include regional organisations.

Examples of partners:

- *National* NGOs: the Community Legal Resources and Advice Centre in Lesotho, Kenya Energy and Environment Organisation,
- *Regional* NGOs: Training Association for Participatory Ecological Land Use Management in Eastern and Southern Africa, Tapelumesa, in Zimbabwe,
- *Local* NGOs: Kuleana in Tanzania,
- CBOs (community based organisation): Yatta South Women's Group in Kenya,
- Local Government organisations: the Environmental Office of the City Council of Nampula.

See a list of some typical merit of the different types in Annex 4 (p.59).

MS may get into contact with prospective partners in many different ways. However, a Country Office needs explicit policy criteria (i.e. an organisation map) to decide which organisations it will engage in serious talking.

When identifying partners it is important to keep in mind that a central aspect of MS's work is to strengthen the capacity of private organisations to play a role in the development of civil society. NGOs will therefore always compose a large number of partners in a programme. That may be NGOs at national or regional (district) level acting as intermediaries. Local government organisations can also be partners when these are best at implementing MS's development objectives. Besides, a programme will need partnership with a few thematic organisations pursuing specific themes, as well as a number of CBOs to maintain a direct grassroots contact.

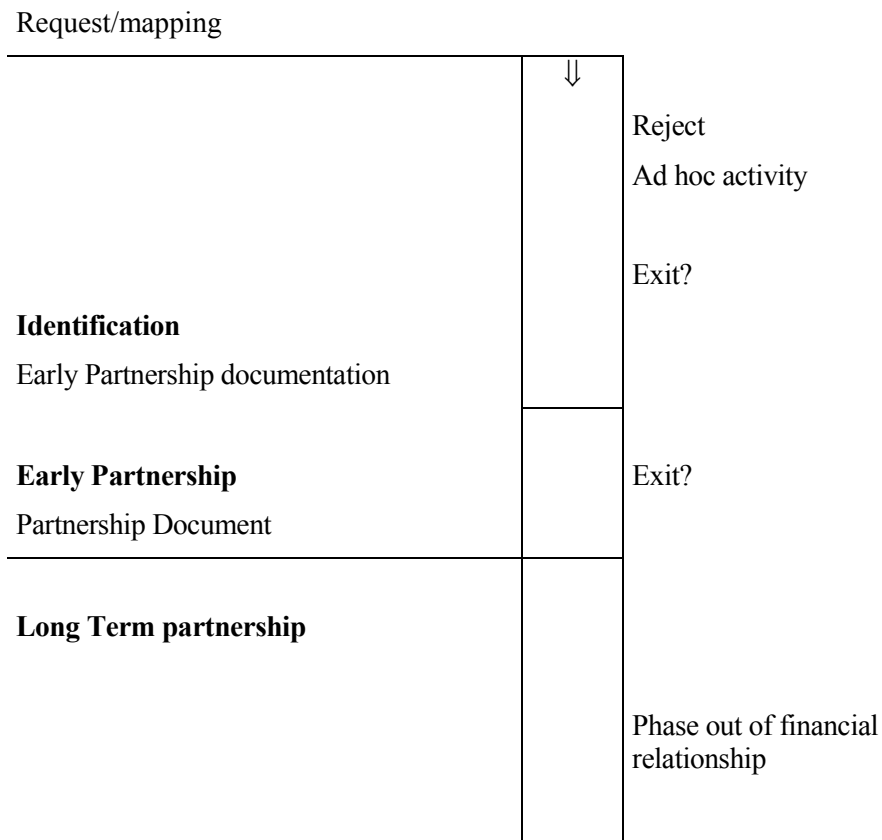
### ***The Partnership Process***

The figure below depicts a typical partnership development process, which starts with mapping and identification of organisations.

There may be variations, but the elements of the process are in most cases present. The three main phases are Identification, Early Partnership, and Long-term Partnership.

Negotiating and writing of partnership documents are part of (and point of entry to) the different stages of the process. See annexes 1-3 for formats for such documents.

**Figure 1: Partnership process**



The parties should plan for phasing out of the funding relationship from the very beginning. The Partnership document could for example outline criteria for bringing funding to a halt. A criterion could be that the partner has developed a capacity to generate funds itself. Another could be that the partnership activities are finished.

The term “phasing out” is a bit strange in a partnership relation. Who phases whom out? Partners sometimes feel reduced to things when being the objects of “outphasing”. The concept has entered the MS vocabulary from project language and it is now difficult to uproot it. However, we should always stress that the term only denotes finishing a funding relationship. The partner and MS may still nurture amicable contacts and co-operation as for example “development allies”.

You will find an elaborate guide on how to go about the delicate process of ending a long-term funding relationship in the MS OCB Guideline<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke, 2002



## Initial Partner Identification

The time scope for the initial partner identification should be short (two to six months) and only serve to assess the potential for a partnership. Through the identification, both parties will know something about each other's identity and what is shared. No substantial support is expected, but ad hoc activities might be attempted.

If the identification process has a positive result, the process will lead to negotiations about an *early partnership* (see the chapter on this topic). MS will document central elements about the partner organisation and the partnership in an *early partnership documentation*. This description should be available for update in any country office, but it will also serve as documentation for MS Denmark's database.

MS and the partner use the early partnership documentation for planning purposes, including joint identification of activities, possible DW jobs, funding, and for making mutual benefits visible.

### *Contents of the identification talks*

During the discussions both parties should understand that partnership is

- not about intervention but *interaction*,
- not about transmission but *exchange* of knowledge and means for change,
- not about telling people what they need but about *listening* others,
- not only about problem solving but also about the *process* used,
- not about donor support but as certainly about *mutual interest* and *solidarity*.

Partnership is a *learning process* and all actors need to perceive it as such.

The process of establishing a partnership takes the prospective partners through a series of consecutive steps. The steps are named in the checklist in Annex 1 (p.49). However, in reality, these steps tend to overlap or unfold simultaneously. The initial step is discussed below.

### *Identification criteria*

#### **Does the organisation focus on priorities of the MS country programme?**

Basis for discussion is the Policy Paper, or preferably a short version. The partner's Policy Paper, if available, might be another source. Other documents are brochures, funding applications, or similar papers providing general information about the partner.

It is not sufficient that only MS learns something. MS should inform the partner about MSiS, our vision; and distinctive features as a development organisation.

The discussion may soon make it clear that collaboration is not relevant or will not work. MS (or the other party for that matter) should then respond with a clear *no* to a continuation of the process. This first level of *exit* in the partnership cycle is easier if the policy paper and national priorities are clear and specific.

After the first screening of how MS and the prospective partner can contribute to each other's policies the discussion evolves into the stages below.

#### **Mutual benefits**

The principle of mutuality should be adhered to in all aspects of the co-operation. It should be demonstrably clear that both participants achieve their common goals and that both benefit.

This is not to say that partnerships take place between equal partners. This is seldom the case, but they enter an *equitable* relationship to which both parties have expectations. However, it must be recognised that some potential partners (and some CO staff) are effectively trained by the prevailing donor-beneficiary relationship. They might express what they know MS would like to hear. If a partner's vision and overall objectives are not clear, it may also find it difficult to express its expectations.

If this is the case and the organisation has potential, MS can propose a facilitator to help its management and staff to formulate their aims and mission in more specific terms.

Some partner requests are fulfilled through activities in combination with some of MS' expectations. Some of MS' expectations could be:

- Partner contributes actively to partner networks in the country or region.
- Partner wants to go along with MS in promoting international exchange.
- Partner is positive towards personnel assistance in the form of long or short-term development workers from the North or the South. The personnel aspect of the MSiS is important as it promotes Intercultural Co-operation as a means for attacking poverty.
- Partner is willing and able to participate in South-South or South-North Networking.
- Partner sees it as important to combine practical development assistance with advocacy and lobby activities.

### **Willingness/ability to address MS principles and policies**

The next step is to establish the willingness or ability of a partner to address MS principles as they are expressed in overall policy papers like *Solidarity through Partnership* (MS 2001) and *Partnership Against Poverty* (MS 2005). Central issues are Poverty orientation, Democratisation, Gender Equity, Working for the Marginalised, Environment, and Sustainability of development. Important means of development work are Intercultural Co-operation, Personnel, and a participatory approach to co-operation.

Does this mean that MS will enter partnership only with those prospective partners who meet all MS requirements?

The answer is no. Probably no single organisation fit all MS policies and MS country programme priorities. The organisation's potential to influence on MS' work and priorities is sufficient.

### **MS and partners identities explained (and explored)**

The process of self-declaration strengthens the prospective partners' identity. Exploring one another's identity as partners is valuable for the several reasons.

Firstly, knowledge of a partner's identity enables recognition and acceptance of each other's similarities and differences. Secondly, knowledge and understanding of partnership identity builds trust and mutual confidence, which is essential for a fruitful partnership. Thirdly, a sense of whom one is dealing with helps partners develop a framework within which to work.

MS and its partners must possess self-knowledge, effective leadership, respect for the people the organisation works with, organisational capacity, and mechanisms for conflict management. Without these, an organisation, community group, or government agency cannot enter into a genuine partnership and function effectively, particularly when the initial power relationships are unequal.

### ***Identification methodology***

The principles guiding partnership identification is used here in the sense: Guiding rule for behaviour. The principles should enable both (all) parties to create a level playing field to counteract the power imbalance of all the stakeholders.

### **Guiding principles**

- **Transparency** is important during this process. Remember that it is a two way process; partners have a right to know about MS, its possibilities and limitations.
- **No hidden agenda**: Make all agendas clear right from the beginning. For example, both parties should be clear about their attitudes to gender and the degree to which these are open to modification from the outset.
- **Do not exercise power** as a programme officer when what you have in mind is partnership.
- In a situation in which one party has more **resources** than another, the weak partner tends to conform its opinion to that of the strongest. Watch out for this flaw and correct it if it exists.
- Avoid just depending on the views of **one charismatic** or committed leader from the partner organisation.
- Demonstrate **patience** and **restraint**. Do not push partners to accept what they do not believe in, e.g. forcing a lobby group to take on an income generating project; or an organisation involved in the promotion of income generating projects to take on lobbying, when it does not have the required resources.
- **Confidentiality** is very important. When a potential partner approaches MS with a problem it is abuse to let the information go any further. However, the principle of transparency often requires that a partner goes public with information hitherto seen as confidential (e.g. aggregated annual accounts and budgets).
- Take a point of departure in the **reality of the prospective partner**. Try to understand the social and cultural dynamics within which the organisation operates.
- By all means **listen** and hear what the prospective partner is telling you. Do not be influenced by immediate impressions or depend on rumours.
- A prospective partner does not react only on what you say but also what you do. The way an approach from a partner is met and **received** can influence what happens thereafter.
- **Flexibility** is required. Do not bureaucratise MSiS work. Try to adjust to specific circumstances. Avoid as much as possible to deal with partners in a standardised way.
- All partnership identification information should be **shared** with other relevant colleagues at the CO to avoid biases, prejudices, nepotism and to share knowledge and risks. Responsibility regarding the final choice or dismissal of a partner should be collective.

- Comply with the **demands** that you put on the other party. If MS talks about community participation without applying the same principles to its own activities; the partner will be disillusioned.

The mutual understanding gained by the identification process facilitates the co-operation between the partners. We find documentation of this understanding in numerous ways, for example in the practical operations, in correspondence, or in detailed minutes of meetings.

### ***Early Partnership Documentation***

This is not a phase, but a description resulting from the identification process. It serves to clarify what and how a country office implements the partnership. MS Denmark should also receive it as documentation and possible basis for recruitment of a Danish DW. See a format for the description in Annex 2 (p.51). The COs use the same format for their continuous update of MS' Partner Database.

*A letter of understanding* is the minimum formal document negotiated by the parties about the joint collaboration. It should include a description of the partner, the vision, objectives, and scope of the partnership, how it fits into the policy paper and relates to MS' principles, reference to meetings, consultations, assessments etc. until now, and a tentative plan for its further development.

As it appears there is not a very sharp line between the identification phase and the early partnership phase. However, if the Early Partnership Documentation naturally leads to negotiation of a more formal partnership (a letter of understanding), the relation goes beyond a more loose, but committed "friendship" or "ad hoc contact."



## Early Partnership

The time scope for an early partnership is from a few months to two years. The result aimed at is a more comprehensive and mutually binding long-term collaboration formalised in a Partnership Agreement. Therefore, the Early Partnership period must not be too long<sup>6</sup>. During this phase the parties try out a limited number of *early partnership activities*, work on establishing a *shared vision*, and make the perception of each other's identity more clear. Sharing of responsibilities and creation of mutual are key issues.

### *Early activities*

The early partnership period aims at identifying a co-operation that suits and is acceptable to both partners, while at the same time building a common vision. It is thus important to discuss future co-operation while it is equally important to address some of the partner's immediate needs very soon. A long period of talks without tangible results will not satisfy the needs, which made the potential partner contact MS in the first place.

### **Address the partner's initial request**

In most cases a potential partner contacts MS with specific proposals for activities and we should be willing to support (at least some of) those fairly soon. It is fair that the early activities correspond to the partner's request but they should also be relevant in the anticipated partnership context.

It is a characteristic of early activities that they do not commit the partners heavily to continued long-term co-operation. Some activities could for example be:

- Placement of short term development workers investigate selected issues or try out one-off training for partner staff, e.g. training in financial management, report writing, proposal writing etc.
- Assistance from MS in the form of payment for office space, equipment such as computer, phone or transport related costs.
- Joint conducting of international youth exchange activities
- Inviting each other to activities such as network meetings and seminars. Exchange of information like policy papers, annual reports and any other interesting information beneficial to MS or the partner.

Even if early partnership activities may be small, it is important to define clear objectives and indicators of achievements for all of them, not least for organisational development and advocacy work.

The trial period will give the parties a unique opportunity to assess each other's capacities. They get knowledge of how their resources supplement each other.

By designing and implementing activities together, the MS and the partner also identify areas for co-operation in a long-term partnership. The partner should get ample opportunities to contact other MS partners and benefit from the country programme network. Much important learning about MS and Partnership is taking place within this group of MS affiliated organisations.

---

<sup>6</sup> The MSiS Revision Review 2000 (MS, 2001a) found a good number of partners that were in the process of being "phased out". They had, however, never been "phased in" and had co-operated with MS for many years under the label "Early partnership".

## **Vision building and design process**

Actors often decided pragmatically on what to do, and they base it on very little systematic planning activities. Therefore we often find that we after some time are in doubt about what it exactly is that we try to achieve. The purpose of individual activities may be clear, but not the overall, organisational objective. An important prerequisite for a partnership is clarity on the *Why?* and *How?* of the joint endeavour.

The process of establishing a common vision differs from partner to partner. A vision is the ultimate reason or goal for the organisation's existence. It is the perceived dream or overall goal of what ought to happen in the future. Every organisation has its own vision and strategy for what will be undertaken to realise the vision. The vision might not be worded in policy papers, but be ideas, which have rought a group of people together.

It is difficult for organisations to work effectively together if they do not pull in the same direction or have a common dream to realise. Their vision need not be identical. Much can actually be gained in creativity if the organisations are different but share only parts of their visions

For MS it is important that the parties envision or dream together while concretely collaborating to solve a task. Slowly as partners work together *and reflect on it*, the visions of each of the parties become clearer and the process leads to mutual agreement on what is important to do together. In short: They own a shared vision.

As part of the planning process, MS often conduct a *design* workshop with a partner. The workshop lays the foundation of the future collaboration. Visioning is only a (flexible and informal) part of the planning process, but it is a necessary part. The design workshop leads to formal agreements with clear roles, obligations, and responsibilities. The plan can be very formalistic and empty if it does not relate to the *Why?* of the partnership

Annex 5 (p.61) describes how to organise and conduct a standard design workshop

In some cases, a partner has already been through a visioning process. Then it suffices with a meeting where representatives of both parties define the role of MS' visions in the partner's priorities.

## **Defining mutual roles is a continuous process**

It may not be possible to define how to share responsibility right away. More likely it will develop during the initial period of co-operation based on practical experience.

A good time to take stock is when the parties develop a *work plan*. The plan should be specific about allocation of responsibility and how to secure accountability (reporting to stakeholders, including "beneficiaries"). The plan should thus answer these questions:

- Who represent the partners in the partnership?
- How to share responsibility so that initiative and leadership remain in the hands of the community?
- Ways of communicating, for instance how are visits and meetings called?
- Who takes care of monitoring - and how?
- Who takes care of accountability - and how?
- How will decisions be made?
- How will conflicts be resolved?

## Identity

As mentioned p.14, identity building is an important part of the partnership process. By engaging in joint activities in the early phase the parties deepen the knowledge of each other's identity. Very tangible elements of the organisational identity are the resources available for the work agreed on. By "resources" we understand any source of support or wealth like:

- **Individual, human resources**  
like motivation, creativity, energy and experience. Human resources also include our wisdom and our relationship, what we bring as participants into a partnership.
- **Material resources**  
Including buildings, tools, cars, equipment and natural resources such as access to land and water.
- **Social resources**  
including organisational resources and management skills, as well as membership in networks. They are about our potential strengths as organisations, our ability to act together towards common objectives.

## Organisational Assessment (OA) and Organisational Development

The initial identification process can only give a very tentative impression of the parties' social resources, their capacity, and capability. During the early partnership, experience from practical daily work will give more impressions and it will be possible to make structured assessments.

Not that MS should make these as an outside observer, or always involve external consultants. It should be a joint task - the process itself helps building mutual confidence.

A first attempt could be to make a SWOC analysis together during a meeting or workshop. The idea of a SWOC analysis is to identify and analyse Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Constraints for an organisation and, based on that, design a plan of action for how to improve the organisation's capability. See Save the Children (1995), p.198f.

The paper *MS Organisational Capacity Building guidelines* (MS 2002) describes an organisational assessment tool that one can use as a self assessment or an outsider like for example an MS Programme Officer can use it. If it is a complex partner organisation or if it is known that there are problems of a sensitive nature (e.g. involving incompetent individuals), it may be more fruitful to let an independent consultant make the OA.

An OA is a rather comprehensive exercise requiring many resources but it can be adapted to any specific situation and made simpler in smaller organisations.

In most cases a Training Needs Assessment will be part of a follow up on an OA as it will disclose training needs for e.g. staff members and board members in the organisation.

However, a good plan for organisational development addresses more issues than just training needs. It is about strengthening all aspects of the organisation's life. Focusing of activities, clarity on vision and objectives, building up a corporate spirit, linking to the context and other organisations – these are some of the aspects to consider.

The vision building process is clearly an organisational development exercise. It ensures that everyone involved has internalised the aims of the organisation. The process will influence team building, and the early partnership in itself also gives access to NGO networks and other societal actors.

## The Long-term Partnership

This chapter is about a framework and methods that also apply to the early partnership period if e.g. scope of activities makes it reasonable to do so.

The parties should not enter into a long-term partnership unless both agree to its character and content after a thorough process of negotiation. In this way confidence is built, the parties may be more prepared to go all out for innovative programmes and tackle sensitive issues in the co-operation. In short, a synergy has hopefully been created that will sustain the partnership.

Central to the long-term co-operation with MS is a thoroughly negotiated and written Partnership Agreement (PA) signed by both parties. This agreement is not the ultimate, final contract. We do not plan all activities in detail, or secure all inputs from the very first beginning. New ideas might appear as results of the ongoing, joint monitoring and organisational learning. The parties will naturally need to re-negotiate the document from time to time.

### *The partnership process*

To sustain a process of mutuality, trust, and capacity building for both organisations, you need to cultivate the partnership by frequent contacts and meaningful interaction. In cases where a DW is placed with the partner, (s)he can play an important role as facilitating the contact.

For the MS office it is difficult to nurture continuous contact to all partners, simply because time is a scarce resource. It may help to make rather fixed plans that indicate when you do the activities together, and when the POs will visit the partner. The plans counteract a tendency for events to depend too much on the individual preferences of e.g. DWs, Programme Officers, and Partner Managers.

However, the plans or the text of the Partnership Agreement should not be strait-jackets. For widening the partnership domain one should seize opportunities when they arise. Monitoring and better attainment of overall goals thrive by political and cultural debates, intensive sharing of ideas, brainstorming, exchange of oral testimonies and knowledge. Furthermore, an authentic partnership displays mutual and honest information about organisational issues like budgets, accounts, and staff changes.

Some central issues to address in the partnership process are:

- Clarity of visions, objectives, and strategies
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities of both parties
- Transparency: procedures for communication and information sharing
- Mechanisms for accountability
- Empowerment.  
What are MS' and the partner's perception of their own empowerment. To what degree have the organisations gained internal confidence, efficiency, creativity, and ability for decision making? Subjective accounts as well as more formal, statistical information can be used as evidence
- Extent to which mutually agreed activities are implemented
- Goal attainment: Does the partnership bring about the foreseen changes?
- The effectiveness of the mechanisms for reviewing the ongoing viability of the partnership
- Joint evaluations using explicit criteria for success.

A sign of a well functioning long-term partnership is that it responds efficiently and effectively to changes within the organisations as well as in the surrounding economic, political, environmental, and cultural context. Another sign is agreement among stakeholders that the collaboration demonstrates sensitivity and trust combined with respect for each other's culture. Both parties demonstrate cultural sensitivity if they appreciate local resources and institutions when talking development.

### **Partnership framework**

For MS, a well-functioning partnership is about much more than carrying through some time bound and delimited project activities. Many of the actions taken in a partnership are far from operational field activities. What MS and the partner do together address issues on many different levels. However, all efforts are central to accomplish the *overall partnership objective*<sup>7</sup>.

It is for example very common that a partnership focuses on organisational capacity building parallel to doing something tangible, project oriented work with people in the field. It was for example not foreseen in the individual partnership documents that MS Uganda and its partners would take their time over several years to discuss an internal "code of conduct." However, the outcome was a successful element in the fight against corruption in Uganda as well as an important experience for all organisations involved.

Within the same partnership we find considerable efforts invested in promoting networks and alliances as well as advocacy and lobbying. All these activities may be well described and planned for, but not necessarily in the form of a traditional "intervention" project having a beginning and a fixed termination.

The co-operation embraces several types of activities each calling for its individual "project cycle". The Partnership Agreement describes the interlinked activities and relates them to the all-encompassing vision. See the format for the Partnership Agreement in Annex 3, p.53. Annotations to the different headlines in the format guide the user in how to complete it.

If there are several major activities ("projects") it is recommended that each "project" gets its own description (project document) and that these plans are kept in an annex to the general Partnership. It will ease management of the diverse activities.

---

<sup>7</sup> MS, 1997 and the Partnership Agreement format from 1997 use the term "Vision" instead of development objectives or "Overall Objective" (Goal) of the Partnership. In the future, MS wants to use "Vision" about an organisation's desires for very general changes. An *Overall Objective* for a partnership is more specific and relates to the co-operation between MS and the partner. We deduce a few, more specific *immediate objectives* from it.

# Planning and Learning

## *Planning partnership activities*

Partnership planning differs qualitatively from that of a technical project. A partnership is a *long-term engagement* much more encompassing than a single project. It is difficult to plan in details for the entire process, as too many unknown factors will influence it. The political and economic context may for example be unstable, or the level of commitment of people may fluctuate.

Therefore, partnership planning is not only a technical enterprise. It is vital that it promotes continuous and joint learning over a great time span.

MS has chosen an *objective oriented planning approach* as suitable for overall as well as more specific planning in the partnership process. To build planning on clear objectives facilitates focused and efficient actions for change, monitoring of the process, and thus learning. Transparency about what MS and the partner do makes it possible for the organisations to be accountable to those they work with and for – the “beneficiaries” and the donors (in MS’ case also a back donor like DANIDA).

Objective oriented planning provides a structure for inventing logical and appropriate interventions (activities) to attain changes that one would like to see happen (objectives). Means link up with ends. It often encourages the participants in the planning to consider crucial and strategic issues. It offers a visualisation of the partnership content and a common language – at least among the professionals working together.

## *The Logical Framework Approach (LFA)*

This is the most frequently applied variant of objective oriented planning approaches<sup>8</sup>. MS has chosen to use a simplified version of the LFA planning in the partnerships and (partly) in planning the country programmes. We call the method the Quarterly Monitoring Chart (see below, p.28).

Other parts of the MS country programmes also use a more elaborate LFA to monitor their policy papers. Therefore, it is important for MS professionals to be conversant with the use of LFA<sup>9</sup>.

LFA depicts a development project as a causally linked, linear sequence of interventions and changes. It boils down the process to a simplistic set of hypotheses:

- If the inputs are available, then the activities will take place.
- If the activities take place, then the results will be produced.
- If the results are produced, then the immediate objectives of the partnership will be achieved.
- In the end this will contribute to the attainment of the overall objective of the partnership.

The planning task is first to identify overall and immediate *objectives*. After this, we specify which long lasting *effects* (outcome) we wish to see happen. We outline appropriate and realistic *activities* that lead to these effects. We list the necessary

---

<sup>8</sup> Other variants include MBO (Management by Objectives), OOIP (Objectives Oriented Intervention Planning), ZOPP (Zielorientierte Projektplanung ≈ Objective Oriented Planning) developed by the German Aid Agency, GTZ,

<sup>9</sup> Everyone should at least know LFA to an extent corresponding to the content of e.g. NORAD, 1992 or Save the Children, 1995

resources (*input*) for these activities to take off, and we list the expected results of the activities (*output*).

The effects should contribute to the overall objective of the partnership.

A very interesting part of the analysis is to assess under which conditions the foreseen events will happen. The analysis of *assumptions*<sup>10</sup> is maybe the most important part of the LFA because it can forecast the probability of success.

One can undertake the LFA process in a participatory way with the aim to define a project that addresses significant societal problems<sup>11</sup>.

Below is a short description adapted from NORAD (1992) about how to go about it. Parts of the techniques are useful also in the partnership negotiations.

### **The 6 steps of the LFA**

Analysing the situation

1. Participation analysis
2. Problem analysis
3. Objectives analysis

Designing the project

4. Project elements
5. Indicators
6. Assumptions

#### **Step 1: Stakeholder Analysis**

The partner organisation operates normally in a given geographical area with many actors. Develop a comprehensive picture of the interest groups, the individuals, and institutions involved. List all parties whose views on problems it is necessary to investigate, including groups that the intended development project will affect. Discuss whose interests one should give priority. When you have selected the most important groups, you can look closer into their main problems, interests, potential, and linkages to other groups.

#### **Step 2: Problem Analysis**

Gather information about the problems that the programme wishes to address. Include relevant information on interest groups, the socio-cultural situation, gender aspects etc. Whenever possible and relevant, intended beneficiaries should participate in collecting or providing information in order to ensure that the planning reflects their expressed needs and priorities. This could be done through community self-surveys, participatory rural appraisal methods (for big surveys) or other suitable data gathering techniques<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> Assumptions: Important events or conditions outside the control of the project management that are necessary for the achievement of the objective.

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately it is rare thing for project managers of the real world to embark on such processes. To make the partnership as viable as possible, MS insists that the planning be as participatory as possible.

<sup>12</sup> Ref. Save the Children, 1995: Tool 1: Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) and Tool 2: Surveys.



Stakeholders (including “beneficiaries”) then discuss and identify the major problems. They reach consensus on a *problem tree* depicting the interdependence of the problems. On basis of this diagram, they agree on a *focal problem*.

### **Step 3: Objectives Analysis**

Here you transform the problems identified in step 2 into objectives, understood as future solutions to the problem

The solution to the focal problem constitutes the overall objective, i.e. the desirable and realistic change, which the programme (partnership) should accomplish. It is not concrete and operational. Rather it provides a clear visualisation of what the programme intends to attain in the end. The subsequent immediate objectives serve to concretise the how to realise the overall objective.

When you establish an overall Programme Matrix<sup>13</sup> (“Log frame”) or a Quarterly Monitoring Chart in a partnership document, the overall objective will thus be of a more encompassing nature. The immediate objectives will be of a more tangible character and seem within reach of the activities. The immediate objectives describe the desired effects (outcome) of these activities.

In a partnership you will normally operate with very few immediate objectives pointing in the direction of one overall objective. Planning and implementation will be difficult with numerous objectives in the LFA. It is furthermore essential to avert internal conflict between objectives.

The objectives should be realistic and attainable within the duration of the partnership. Moreover, one should formulate them clearly and precisely to avoid confusion and misinterpretation among the partners. A precise definition facilitates the subsequent planning. If we know the exact content and character of the objective, then we can better list the activities required for its fulfilment.

Furthermore, formulate the objectives as desired future states, not activities, or processes.<sup>14</sup>

An objective that only formulates a promise to e.g. “conduct training courses for rural women” will not tell us much. It only elicits the technical question “Did we make the training courses or not?” The objective contains no hints giving answers to the Why? Monitoring of effects (outcome) is thus impossible and we will not learn from experiences.

If the objectives are not precisely formulated and specific one can also forget anything about meaningful monitoring of how the programme proceeds in terms of bringing about the desired changes.

Formulation of an objective is a task that takes a lot of discussions and negotiation about proper and specific wording.

A common error is that stakeholders agree on very general formulations. The perceived advantage is that the actors feel free to do whatever they prefer. However, accountability and organisational learning is in danger. No one can later answer the question whether the investments and efforts led to the intended changes.

Another error when negotiating an objective is the tendency to put the cart before the horse. Stakeholders are often interested in just a continuation of firmly established ways of doing things. For example, when negotiating a Partnership Agreement the talks start with the activities (the “means” that are to be funded) as the

---

<sup>13</sup> A diagram describing project elements like activities, expected results, and effects, indicators for success, and assumptions.

<sup>14</sup> Save the Children, 1995: Tool 6: Setting Objectives, pp.199-206.

given. Subsequently the Partner and the PO construct objectives (the “ends”) that cover these activities.

The method is quick but the parties may have overlooked significant problems in the area. It is even more serious that they evade the obligation to look for the best means to attain the objective. Creativity is in danger here.

#### **Step 4: A descriptive project framework**

Here is a list of the main project elements. Once determined, one can enter them in matrix diagram, e.g. an LFA, a Quarterly Monitoring Chart, or another suitable framework.

**Inputs** are e.g. partner staff, DWs, materials, equipment, and funds. Here one finds the resources, which are necessary to carry out the planned partnership activities.

**Activities** are actions taken or work carried out within a partnership in order to produce results. Activities transform inputs into results.

**Results**<sup>15</sup> are concrete achievements or products, which are a direct consequence of the partnership activities.

**Effects**<sup>16</sup> are changes that attributable to the results created. They are relevant in relation to the immediate objectives. As social processes take time to unfold, the effects may occur with a delay.

**Immediate Objectives** are the immediate goals of the partnership. Together they should contribute to the attainment of the overall objective(s) for the programme or partnership.

**Overall Objective** is the overall reason for the programme or partnership, i.e. the purpose. It is less concrete than the immediate objectives; however, it should outline the long lasting impact, which the programme wants to contribute to.

#### **Step 5: Indicators**

A later chapter (p.32) describes monitoring MSiS. Here it is sufficient to point out the need for signs (indicators) that show success or failure if we wish to monitor our endeavour. An indicator is thus a tangible phenomenon or change that we perceive as emerging because we worked to achieve a given objective. We call an indicator for objectively verifiable if different persons using the same measuring process independently of one another obtain the same results.

When defining an indicator we should formulate the indicator in SMART terms. The change that we look for should be:

**Specific** – the change relates (at least partly) to what the activities want to realise.

**Measurable** – it is possible to assess scope and magnitude of the change, in numbers or precise descriptive language

**Attainable** – the indicator is sensitive to changes that the project activities wish to make.

**Relevant** – the indicator should be central to the programme or project.

**Timebound** – the indicator describes when a specified change happens.

---

<sup>15</sup> Result is often called “output” in the literature. To avoid confusion with “outcome”, MS wants to use the term “result”.

<sup>16</sup> Effect is often called “outcome” in the literature. To avoid confusion with “output”, MS wants to use the term “effect”.

In participatory programme designs one finds the idea of *negotiated indicators* meaning that stakeholders in advance discuss and agree on events to look for as indicators of success<sup>17</sup>.

MS uses two monitoring tools, the Quarterly Monitoring Chart (QMC) and the Most Significant Changes Method (MSC) that do not presuppose any *predefined* indicators. The MSC is the most radical; it lets people invent their own indicators that can “prove” that a given change has happened. The QMC can contain predefined (negotiated) indicators but also signs emerging from discussions *after* expected changes have taken place.

The two methods allow for more realism in development work and they allow us to grasp *unforeseen* effects of the activities. An added advantage is that we avoid the risk of being theoretical and over-ambitious because we constructed indicators from the very outset and detached from the day-to-day activities. You find a proposal for a simple method for MSiS to work with negotiated indicators in Annex 6 (p.63).

However, whether we do it before or after action, our professional obligation is to take up the complicated task of defining precise indicators. To ease the burden you can use this rule of thumb: Ask what it would take to convince yourself and others that the partnership activities have achieved the intended objectives; then formulate the answer in SMART terms.

### **Step 6: Assumptions**

Assumptions are conditions or premises that must exist for the partnership or project to succeed, and that the partners cannot control.

Most assumptions relate to external factors like e.g. organisational, political, economic, socio-cultural, and climatic conditions. This is not so strange when thinking of the definition of an Assumption (partners’ lack of control). It is easier to influence the internal than the external forces in an organisation or a project.

Inputs for the partnership are *not* Assumptions. The partners control the Inputs as basis for project activities. Inputs belong to the general preconditions for the partnership.

Partnerships or projects do not go off in a vacuum. It is crucial to discuss and determine the prerequisites of success with the plans. Unfortunately, such assumptions are frequently missing even in elaborate and official logical frameworks<sup>18</sup>. This turns projects into gambles without a realistic assessment of success or failure. A down-to-earth discussion of preconditions for a project also forces partners to gather additional information where they grope in the dark, and to redesign their plans where necessary.

A special case is the *Killer Assumption*. If you identify a condition necessary for success and you realise it as very unlikely to occur, then you know that it undermines the project from the very outset. You have to re-design the project based on more viable assumptions.

---

<sup>17</sup> See Irene Guijt, 2000

<sup>18</sup> This is one of many strong points raised in a severe criticism of the extensive and non-participatory use of LFA by development organisations. Sometimes the frame seems to be “more interesting than the picture (the content)” (Quote from Danish article in Nord Syd, Ibis, DK 2000). A good many of scholars see logical frameworks as “rife with logical confusions.” (Gasper, 1997). Gasper’s article should be a mandatory supplement to the reading of e.g. (NORAD, 1992).

### ***The Quarterly Monitoring Chart (QMC)***

MS' partnership strategy builds on values that demand close interaction, a high level of transparency and participation, and that as many as possible have a say in planning and decision making.

We work against our own values if we use a highly technical planning system that alienates ordinary people from the development process in their own area. The orthodox LFA has proven too complicated for use in the field setting of MSiS. Especially the proper formulation of objectives and the interpretation of a Project Matrix have mystified partners and beneficiaries as well as Programme Officers and Country Directors.

MS has searched for a simple planning tool that promotes a maximum involvement of partners and beneficiaries and thus functions to fortify an integrative process among the partners (including MS). The tool should further an objective oriented approach to planning. It should provide a common frame of reference and leave little space for misinterpretation and confusion. A most important requirement was a tool that encourages programme discussions on all levels, thereby facilitating a meaningful monitoring of the planned process.

A simple tool, the Quarterly Monitoring Chart (QMC), meets all these demands. It consists of a simplified "log frame" that furthermore is open to the public. MS has therefore adopted the QMC as the minimum required for planning of

- long-term partnerships,
- any DW job that may be identified in a partnership,
- implementation of central elements of an individual MS country or regional programme

The central element in the planning exercise for a partnership is the following chart. In the example we have completed the cells about planning for immediate objective 2.

⇒

**QUARTERLY MONITORING CHART (QMC)**  
(*hypothetical case*)

**Overall Objective: Widespread participation of citizens in making decisions concerning their own future**

**Quarter 1 2 3 4 Year 2002**

Immediate Objectives ( <i>Drawn from the P4</i> )	Annual Activities ( <i>From the work plan</i> )	Quarterly Achievements (Results) as per the activities		Effects/Changes noted <i>In relation to immediate objective</i>		COMMENTS ☺ ☹ ... Describe your own expression/assessment of each activity/objective
		Expected (as stated in the plan)	Actual (reality as noted after implementation)	Expected (as stated in the plan)	Actual (reality as noted after implementation)	
<b>Objective 1</b>	Activity 1					
	Activity 2					
	Activity 3					
<b>Objective 2</b> Before end of 2005 people in 42 parishes in the district will voice their opinions more openly at community meetings without fearing intimidation from authorities. ↓	At least two public meetings in each parish per year raising awareness of and giving knowledge on citizens' rights.	One meeting in each parish conducted (total: 42).	Meetings were held in 36 parishes	People voice their opinions without fear	People participated with great interest but expressed fear (based on previous examples)	☹ The target of 42 meetings was not reached, 6 parishes did not succeed in holding meeting. However, the obstacles were only of a practical nature, and the remaining parishes will catch up.  ☹ In 5 parishes, only the followers of the catholic church were invited for meeting. This misunderstanding <i>has</i> been corrected, and substitute meetings for all have been held within the quarter.
	Identify 2 candidates for paralegal training in each parish and train them before end of 2002. Biannual follow-up through small "5- parish meetings" for paralegals over the next three years.	2 candidates in each parish identified by inhabitants in parish. Content and terms of training explained in public.	72 candidates were chosen in the 36 parishes after thorough and public discussion	People go to their local paralegal to get advice and support if they feel intimidated	Not applicable.	☺ The idea of each parish to have one or two paralegals was widely and enthusiastically accepted.

<p><i>(continued)</i> √</p> <p>Before end of 2005 people in 42 parishes in the district will voice their opinions more openly at community meetings without fearing intimidation from authorities.</p>	<p>Involve authorities, not least local politicians, the police and the judiciary, in the campaign by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation in awareness meetings;</li> <li>• participation in paralegal training;</li> <li>• sending reports about progress and invite for discussion.</li> </ul>	<p>Local police commander or judge of X court participates actively in 42 awareness meetings</p> <p>Inform local politicians and ask them to assist in 42 awareness meetings.</p>	<p>Police commander assisted in 25 meetings, judge 30 meetings (25 of them jointly with police).</p> <p>Politician assisted in 10 last meetings held in this series.</p>	<p>Community perceives local authorities and politicians as public servants and office holders.</p> <p>No abuse of power by authorities or politicians will be recorded by paralegals.</p>	<p>The meetings showed that people mistrust authorities and numerous examples of abuse were aired.</p>	<p>⊗ Despite the mistrust expressed, no one challenged the idea that authorities participate in meeting and that the end objective is end of abuse.</p> <p>It was difficult to get politicians to come, but they were convinced after a while when campaign got national attention in media. Authorities are positively interested in participating in the future.</p> <p>There have been no signs of attempts by authorities to co-opt the campaign.</p>
<b>Objective 3</b>	Activity 1					
	Activity 2					
	Activity 3					

*NB: This table should be enlarged to accommodate legible writings inside*

The completed QMC chart represents the result of discussions among as many stakeholders as possible. It can be included in the Partnership Agreement, but most important is that it made public as a poster and put on the wall in e.g. the partner's office.

The partner management agrees on who should fill in the cells and how often they will update it after discussions. Normally the partner will choose quarters as periods, corresponding with the financial reporting for possible MS grants.

However, it may be more reasonable to choose other time intervals. A partner that

works with agricultural activities may for example choose to follow a seasonal cycle.

Since this is intended to be an interactive chart, MS suggests that the people involved in implementation of the activities update it as frequent as practical. It is, however, the users and owners of the QMC, the partners, who decide on this.

In the next chapter, you will read about the partner's continuous use of QMC for monitoring purposes (see p.32).

MS and the partner also use QMC for joint planning of a possible DW job. They turn the

job description into an annual action plan, which is then broken down in quarters. The important thing is also here to outline the expected effects of the DW's work (*why* is the partner having a DW?).

An MS country or regional programme can benefit from using QMC to plan for and monitor how the total programme will accomplish central parts of its policy paper. The exercise will force the PAB and CO to clarify and specify overall and immediate objectives and to search for cost-effective means of attaining them. Moreover, it will be a good experience for partners and others

visiting the office to see a QMC posted there. It demonstrates transparency and that MS swallows the same medicine that it recommends to others. See an example on how a CO uses the QMC in Annex 7 (p.65).

## Monitoring and Learning from Experience

Monitoring is the *systematic* and *continuous* process of *gathering* and *analysing* of information about the progress of the work we are doing and its effects over time.

Monitoring serves the following important purposes, namely to:

- Facilitate organisational learning and development:  
What are the lessons learned? Do our efforts work as expected? Do we need other strategies? Participatory monitoring stimulates joint reflection, analysis, and action.
- Enhance transparency and accountability:  
The people we work with have the right to know how we are doing. We should also be accountable to the donor. Monitoring is a pre-condition for open sharing of results.
- Assess progress:  
Organisations and their members need to know how they are doing. It gives a reassurance to know being on track.
- Furnish us with convincing evidence for use in advocacy and lobbying.

### *The QMC as a monitoring tool*

#### **Quarterly stages**

The first step is that a partner (or an MS CO/regional office) has made its plans visible on a QMC poster. At the end of the quarter, the one responsible completes the empty cells about results and possible effects. This cannot happen without gathering of information, discussions between those involved, interpretation, and analysis.

In practice, a meeting of stakeholders and management critically reflects on the impressions and the progress in the past quarter by asking themselves

What has gone well in the quarter?

What were the challenges and problems encountered?

What do we need to follow up and how can we improve in future?

It is also at this stage that the meeting often make use of indicators. The Partnership Agreement<sup>19</sup> describes some indicators. Others evolve out of the discussions as people are proving their point about perceived effects or progress of the programme. The method forces us to invent clear (and objectively verifiable) indicators for the changes we want to document.

In the beginning we often face some difficulties in relating the objectives to the activities. The stakeholders may also interpret the objectives very differently. The problem stems from too broad and unclear formulation of the objectives or activities described in the Partnership Agreement.

*QMC thus often urges its users to revisit the objectives and activities to make the wording more clear and specific.* We are challenged to reconsider the relationship between objectives, activities, desired results and the signs of change (indicators of effects).

---

<sup>19</sup> Policy Paper in the case of an MS CO/RO



This discussion is summarised in writing and filed in an active file while the chart is kept hanging at the office. Another chart is prepared for the next quarter and posted on the wall.

At the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter a similar reflection takes place on basis of the two charts now hanging on the wall. The session checks issues noted for follow-up as well as the previous minutes. The Partner can use the minutes from this second meeting as the semi-annual report to be shared with MS' CO. The focus of the report is quite clear and informed by the chart. It saves the writer(s) the agony of thinking what happened six months ago.

When MS' Country Office uses QMC to monitor its Policy Paper, the CO or RO can use the charts for the half-annual and the annual report written to MS and to the Annual Meeting in the country programme.

### **QMC and the Annual Partnership Review**

By the time of the annual reviews, a Partner has produced at least three Quarterly Monitoring Charts. The review facilitators paste the posters on the wall for the participants to study and critically reflect on.

The modes of doing the reviews differ from one country to the other, but MS recommends The Quarterly Monitoring Chart as the point of departure in as many as possible partnerships.

The review participants should for example discuss:

- What *trends* or *patterns* do the charts show?
- Which, if any, emerging challenges or issues should we address?
- What is the overall assessment of progress towards the planned objectives?
- How can the lessons learned influence the next work plan?

Since MS CO is also part of the review, the partner can use the review report as its annual report. An annex (a photo snapshot) can show the charts.

The partner keeps the charts as its property. It is important that the material is well stored so that the information is retrievable; for example for use in a later evaluation.

### **Feedback from the country office**

For a functioning monitoring system those receiving information should discuss it with those giving it away. It is important that all actors feel that their efforts contribute to programme development, that the information is used. Therefore, the MS Programme Officers should make it a routine to comment professionally on the reports received from the partners.

Furthermore, when a CO or RO gathers the semi-annual or annual reports from all partners they should interpret the information in relation to each theme in the policy paper of the country programme or regional programme. Again the questions to ask are about *what has gone well, the challenges faced, and the way forward?*

The office then shares the analysis with all the partners in e.g. the newsletter and in the annual meetings. The PAB should likewise discuss the analysis given and advice on the policy implication.

### ***The Most Significant Changes Approach (MSC)***

The Most Significant Changes method is a simple, participatory tool for *monitoring*. It is not suited for evaluations, which normally refer more strictly to objectives set and completed project activities.

The method is an important supplement to MS' other monitoring systems. It looks at what is important to people and places our activities in a wider context. You could say that we *monitor the social environment* within which we operate.

The method does not operate with pre-defined indicators, but allow for people themselves to invent them on basis of the daily realities. It often grasps the unforeseen consequences of our activities.

In its basic form, a partner organisation simply asks a well-informed person to identify changes (for better or worse) in the life of poor people<sup>20</sup>. You also ask about how the change has come about and whether it is attributable to your activity as an organisation. You record *the* change they select as the most important, and *why* they have chosen it.

The partner repeats the procedure regularly, but as a minimum after one year<sup>21</sup>.

The MSC system will thus produce a number of changes written down. Some of them, but not all, relate to MS' or the partners' objectives. By reflecting on the "stories" told, we learn from the realities as people see them.

At the time of writing we still try out the method. However, all country or regional programmes should use it – and use it in the same way - by December 2005.

Annex 10 (p.80) contains a questionnaire for use when you follow the steps explained below. The steps are only about the basic model of the method. However, it becomes an even more vibrant part of an organisation's monitoring, if used in a slightly elaborated way.

Use of trained facilitators or interviewers to gather stories agreed on by groups of people is one option. Another is systematic "verification" where one goes beyond the story told and try to document it in a more detailed and objective way.

Everyone should be familiar with the recent MSC manual (Dart & Davies 2005). It describes a rich variety of ways that different organisations have used the method.

You can use this manual and other material<sup>22</sup> for additional inspiration in your collaboration with the partners or in monitoring aspects of the country programmes.

### **Steps in MSC (basic)**

#### **Step 1: Find an interviewer**

You identify a person (or a small team) in your organisation, who will be responsible for interviewing. The interviews should take place as a minimum once in a year some time before the Annual Review Workshop arranged with MS.

Gather the interviewers and other interested persons at an MS Zonal/Regional or Annual Meeting for a brief session where questions about the MSC methodology

---

<sup>20</sup> The domain of Poverty Orientation is most important to MS. One can add other questions, e.g. about changes brought about by improvement in the partner's "Organisational Performance".

<sup>21</sup> This minimum is valid only during an experimental phase (until 2007). Meaningful monitoring demands more discussion and reflection than what is provoked by only one "story" per year.

<sup>22</sup> See for example Sigsgaard, 2004 and Ringsing, 2003.

can be answered and discussed. You can hold a small "training session" where you try out the questionnaire by interviewing some informants.

### **Step 2: Identify 1-2 informant(s)**

The interviewer identifies one or two persons to interview (informants)<sup>23</sup>. They should be from the area where your organisation works. People should see them as well informed about what is going on in the community. Thus, the chosen woman or man could be anybody who is conversant with positive or negative changes in other people's life.

Experience has shown that extension workers in the area are very good informants. Other good informants are e.g. social workers, local teachers, religious leaders, women group organisers, and the like.

### **Step 3: Questionnaire**

Use the questionnaire found below (p.80). Please note that the interviewer should identify your organisation and the person interviewed. These identifications are important as it makes it easy to interpret the information and to follow up on a few of the more interesting cases.

### **Step 4: Conducting the interview**

The following is addressed to the interviewer:

You arrange for a meeting with the informant(s) and explain the purpose of the exercise. The purpose has to do with your organisation's need for knowledge. It is looking for getting a feeling of the environment in which it operates. In other words: You would like to record positive or negative changes in other peoples' lives.

Then you read aloud the first questions and record the answers. You may need to explain certain parts of the question. By doing this, please try not to influence the answers. You can find some hints about non-directive interviewing in Annex 8 (p.75).

Write down what the informant concluded as a *short* statement formulated as if the informant tells it to us directly in first person.

Do *not* write: Mrs. X said that freedom of expression had improved significantly during the last year.

Rather write: "Today we can criticise our government and chiefs in public when they do not deliver fertiliser in time or give it to their political friends. This was not possible one year ago, at that time we feared prison."

By recording the statements with words as used by the informant, you add life and meaning to what people tell you, and it makes interesting reading later on.

### **Step 5: Making use of the information**

Keep the completed forms in a proper file where it is possible to find them again. If possible, you should also save the material electronically (in Word or RTF format).

---

<sup>23</sup> Here we get information from individuals only. The MSC method can also be used with bigger groups, e.g. in Partnership Review Workshops. In such cases we need an experienced facilitator. The MS Country Office has some descriptions of how to conduct MSC with groups.

Make sure that staff meetings, board meetings or the like discuss the answers. As many as possible should have the opportunity to reflect on the question: *What can we learn from these answers?*

MS asks partners to bring the “stories” recorded to the next Annual Review Workshop. Here programme discussions use the stories of change as point of departure for programme discussions. They put the Quarterly Monitoring Charts (see p.33) into perspective.

MS will collect the stories from all the different Partner Review Workshops and use them; for one thing as material for discussion in the PAB. MS is at present (late 2005) working on an institutionalised system of handling all the stories produced. They constitute good information material besides being well suited for monitoring discussions.

### ***Monitoring an MS Country/Regional programme***

Very few organisations have succeeded to put up elaborate systems for impact monitoring of integrated programmes with many projects and partnerships. Annual reports or the like are good at documenting the issue "What did we do?" but rarely they touch questions like "What came out of all the good things we did?" and "How did it happen?"

Programme monitoring takes a point of departure in effects attained by individual partners and a multitude of project activities. However, what makes it difficult is that a *programme's* total influence may be qualitatively different from a mere summation of its individual parts.

Other obstacles relate to diverse technical issues around measurement and the simplified view of causality that forms the basis of many projects. See for example Annex 9, p.77.

MS has nevertheless decided to try out a very simple monitoring at programme level, just for a start! One endeavour is to develop simple indicators for overall development objectives and cross cutting issues outlined in the policy papers for MS in the South<sup>24</sup>. Another is to develop an elaborate logical framework based on each programmes' policy paper.

### **Development of Programme Indicators**

At the time of writing MS works with the following three very simple programme indicators. It is the idea that we at a later stage develop other indicators – and probably also more sophisticated ones. The three indicators are just made for a start.

#### **1: Democratisation**

"Solidarity through Partnership" (p.17) states that MS promotes democratisation at all levels, within MS itself and in the partnerships. A simple (inadequate, but better than nothing) measure for democratisation in the partnerships is the adherence to formal, democratic rules for representation and accountability. In this case: Conducting regular General Assembly Meetings and election of board members<sup>25</sup>.

Out of the partner portfolio, select those *civic* organisations that have been with MS through 5 years or more. On basis of records in CO or with the partner, look for

---

<sup>24</sup> *Solidarity through Partnership* MS, 2001 and *Partnership Against Poverty* MS, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Such a measure is not applicable in government organisations. For these one has to find other indicators.

changes in the proportion of Annual Meetings actually held, year by year - and assess whether elections for the Board have been duly conducted.

The result of the exercise is put into a table like this one:

### Democratisation

	First half of partnership period	Second half of partnership period	Change noted in observance of democratic principles
<b>Proportion of sample organisations*) conducting Annual General Assembly or the like according to set rules</b>	Insert: Percentage of sample organisations conducting Annual General Assembly or the like according to set rules	Insert: Percentage of sample organisations conducting Annual General Assembly or the like according to set rules	Insert: +/- (written down as a percentage)
<b>Proportion of sample organisations*) conducting election for the board according to set rules</b>	Insert: Percentage of sample organisations conducting elections	Insert: Percentage of sample organisations conducting elections	Insert: +/- (written down as a percentage)

\*) "Sample organisations": Total number of civil society partners that have collaborated with MS in 5 years or more.

Possible qualitative changes are noted down as well. The changes may be a shift in voting procedure from open to secret ballot, a gradually more extensive and open report delivered to the Annual Assembly from the Chairman, voting on major decisions in plenary (e.g. adopting a code of conduct for the organisation).

### Qualitative changes related to Annual Meetings and election of board:

- XXXX
- XXXXX
- XXXXX

The most important is to initiate a broad discussion about the findings in the CO, in the PAB, with the Partners. Part of the discussion will automatically be about how to interpret this very crude measure, how to refine the investigation and make it more rich of relevant content, and how to assess whether the MS partners changed differently from other, comparable organisations<sup>26</sup>.

## 2: Gender equity

In several partnership agreements, Gender equity is mentioned as an objective and a good thing to strive for. In some, indicators have been formulated, e.g. increase in number of women having a seat in decision-making bodies. MS now tries out this rough indicator for all partnerships. The steps are (integrate the first three tasks in the POs' scheduled field visits):

---

<sup>26</sup> One commonly used method is to present the findings to other organisations working with at network of "partners" and ask them whether they have had the same experiences.

- a) In the area visited The PO identifies an informant, who can tell about possible changes in the partner organisations as well as in their surrounding community.
- b) The informant compares the situation today with the situation five years back. (S)he tells the PO about possible changes *in the partner-organisations* with respect to the gender ratio in the decision-making committees and with respect to influential positions held. (S)he likewise compares the situation today with five years ago when looking at committees and positions *in the community*.  
The PO should ask for changes expressed in numbers - and if it is possible, to verify the information. In short: How many men, how many women are in the committees today as compared to five years ago?
- c) The PO writes an extremely brief, precise report on the outcome of the talk. It should include the informant's opinions about *how* and *why* a given change has happened.
- d) The POs' reports are shared at the CO. An overall computation is made. Can one see a tendency towards gender equity in areas influenced by the MS programme? Are changes attributable to partnership activities?
- e) One PO gets the task of writing a short summary of the exercise and its results. The summary is presented to the PAB, which formulates a brief report on changes in gender equity in the given country or regional MS programme.
- f) The newsletter published by the country programme summarises the discussions and the material.
- g) The author of the Annual Report describes the findings in two ways:
  - o The author calculates the *mean gender ratio*\*) for the present year's partner portfolio on basis of the computation (d).
  - o (S)he then compares this fraction with the mean gender ratio for the same group of partners five years earlier (in case you have information for less than five years back you just note the use of this shorter period).

\*) The gender ratio in decision-making bodies is the number of female members divided by the number of male members. Equity is when the vulgar fraction has a value of 1 (same number of female and male members). If the number of female members is 0, then state the value as more than 1.
- h) An ultra-short summary of the newsletter article (f) is added as qualitative assessments, not least about informants' remarks about *how* and *why* a given change has occurred.

### 3: Poverty Reduction

MSiS develops in the right direction on the parameter of Poverty Reduction if partners (as well as MS) increasingly demonstrate a specific wish to reach poor people. Attempts to *identify the poor* indicate such a wish. We may not have information about the partners' efforts to focus on the poor happened in the past, but we can try to make a picture of how the situation is today. This picture can serve as a baseline in later investigations.

We thus choose as indicator the fraction of partners having applied specific methods to identify poor people, who can benefit from their activities. Such methods could for example be: Well Being Ranking<sup>27</sup>, Ordinary wealth ranking, or PRA.

---

<sup>27</sup> Method developed for MS, but not immediately publicly accessible (2007)

Programme Officers know about partners using such methods or not. At a Programme Meeting in the CO, the following table is filled in:

Partner	Has tried out a special method to identify poor groupings?	If yes, which method(s)
Partner name	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
◆		
Partner name	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Total Number of partners: ____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, ____% of partners <input type="checkbox"/> No, ____% of partners	

(The table can be supplemented with a self-assessment of MS: To what extent does MS in the country use specific methods to identify partners that are specifically aware of the existence of poor groupings to target?)

The CO communicates the result and summary of the deliberations to the partners and also includes the summary in the Annual Report. The CO repeats the exercise after one year and note down possible movements.

### Using Logical Framework for MSiS Programmes

International Department has by mid 2005 developed logical frameworks on basis of each country or regional programme's policy paper. You can request an example at your country office and they will also be placed on the MS Intranet. The idea is that the individual programme develops appropriate and specific indicators for the stated objectives and sets a monitoring process in motion.

The task is easy if you combine the forwarded logical framework with Quarterly Monitoring Charts constructed to track the effects of the aggregate MS country or regional programme (see p.30).





# Evaluation

## *What is evaluation?*

Monitoring is a recurrent activity continuously influencing our plans. Evaluations are typically done with long time intervals and on demand. They are often done *after* a given plan has been implemented. Evaluations are comprehensive investigations trying to assess cost effectiveness, effects and impact of the partnership or project. The focus is more strictly on the declared objectives than in monitoring. The question asked is *did the activities produce the anticipated effects?*

In evaluations of MS partnerships one should look at collaboration as a whole. Only assessing success or failure will not suffice if we want to learn something about how and why the partnership led to the present situation.

Evaluations can either be *internal* (e.g. ToR and data collection done by the partners themselves) or *external* (e.g. ToR done by outsiders and implementation by independent consultants). In an MS partnership, the internal evaluation team will often include members from the partner staff, an MS programme officer, and a consultant with special expertise in the partner's field of work. It is often difficult to maintain objectivity in internal evaluations and to catch sight of new angles in the partnership.

In some cases e.g. a donor may require external evaluations assuming that the results will be more trustworthy and objective. This has for example been the case in major evaluations of MS demanded by DANIDA. MS also uses external consultants for the *Country or Regional Programme Reviews* (conducted on a rotational basis) and other major evaluations of MSiS.<sup>28</sup>

Evaluations contain an element of awarding marks. Therefore, there is a risk that beneficiaries, staff, and programme management react with fear. To minimise this understandable reaction the evaluators should put much effort into involving those being evaluated, not least in the planning and writing of Terms of Reference (ToR). This increases the likelihood of all having ownership of the evaluation process itself as well as learning from the results.

## *Writing ToR for an evaluation*

You can find a full description of the different stages in planning for and conducting an evaluation in the literature, e.g. (Save the Children, 1995). Here we only mention the more important issues related to writing Terms of Reference.

As a preparation one must answer the following questions (together with the stakeholders!):

- **Who** wants it?
- **Why** is the evaluation to be carried out? What *effects* do we want it to have?
- **What** should be evaluated?  
Points of departure are the stated objectives, but the investigation should also pay attention to the partnership's *cost-effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability*.

---

<sup>28</sup> See for example the *MSiS Revision Review 2000*, MS, 2001a.

- **What information is needed?**  
Here it is important to be *modest*. Time and money will not allow for collection of more information than the absolutely central and most needed.  
Furthermore, one should assess the *availability* of different sources of information like Policy papers or the partnership document, past QMCs and work plans, MSC “stories” gathered in the past, annual reports, DW reports, reports on earlier reviews or thematic assessments, minutes from Annual Review Workshops.  
These and other documents contain the partnership’s “history” and represent important background material for the evaluation team.
- **Result of the evaluation:** how will findings be reported and presented and to whom, what should be the procedures for follow-up on the results of the evaluation?

The ToR can be build on this information *as a mini-project in itself*, having its own objectives, expected results, and effects. The activities (the methods used) to attain the objectives should be negotiated with the possible consultants or the Teamleader for the evaluation.

See a standard format for ToR in Annex 11 (p.83). You do not have to follow this to the letter, but most ToR should contain information on the issues mentioned.

## Glossary and Terms Used

Activities:	The activities that are planned to producing the partnership results.
Annual partnership report:	A formal report summing up achievements in relation to agreed objectives and lessons learned during the past year. The annual report is primarily used for monitoring of partnership progress.
Assumptions:	External conditions that are necessary for partnership success but are beyond the direct control of the partnership.
Back donor:	The source of a Northern NGO's finance. In MS' case e.g. DANIDA.
Beneficiaries:	The women and men who are supposed to benefit directly from the partnership results.
CBO:	Community Based Organisation.
Early partnership activities:	Small-scale, short term activities through which partners gain the knowledge and experience that will help them enter a long-term partnership.
Effect:	A change attributable to results obtained by the partnership. In LFA language this is often called "outcome."
Effectiveness:	An accurate description or measure of the extent to which a partnership achieves its results and partnership objective.
Efficiency:	An accurate description or measure of the "productivity" of the partnership. How economically are inputs converted into results?
Evaluation:	An assessment at one point in time which concentrates specifically on whether partnership objectives are being achieved and with what impact.
Impact:	The long-term sustainable changes (foreseen or not) that can be attributed to partnership activities.
Indicator:	An accurate description or a measurement, which defines the phenomenon or change that we want to see in order to assess whether a partnership achieves a given result or objective.
Input:	All types of resources necessary to produce planned results e.g. human, material, financial resources.
LFA:	Logical Framework Approach based on objective oriented planning.
Log frame:	A framework ("matrix") organising the information contained in a plan. One uses Logical Framework guidelines and terms in writing up the matrix.
Monitoring:	A continuous and systematic surveillance of partnership progress towards achieving planned results and objectives.

Immediate objective:	The immediate, specific reason for a partnership. The objective will outline the direct effect or impact which the partnership is expected to achieve if completed successfully.
Overall objective:	A general statement of the broad changes that partners want to contribute to. The overall objective reflects the common vision. The immediate objectives are deduced from the overall objective. See also “Problem analysis” below.
Objective oriented planning:	A planning tool that ensures coherence and a logical connection between vision, objectives, results, activities and inputs.
Outcome	See Effect.
Participation analysis:	An analysis of the various interest groups, individuals, organisations and institutions that in one way or the other will be affected by the partnership activities.
Participatory internal review workshop:	An annual workshop in which people affected by the partnership activities and the partner staff discuss the past year’s achievements and problems, and propose possible changes for the coming year
Partner:	The organisation or group that will co-operate with MS in a partnership.
Partnership:	A formal co-operation between MS and one or more partners where resources are put together to achieve a common objective.
Partnership Agreement (PA):	A formal document outlining the details of the partnership co-operation and the connection between vision, objectives, results, activities and inputs.
Partnership document:	See Partnership Agreement.
Partnership elements:	Partnership objectives, effects, results, activities and inputs.
Problem analysis:	An analysis of what should be the focal problem of the partnership, which will lead to defining the overall partnership objective.
Relevance:	The degree to which the activities, results and objectives are and remain realistic, pertinent and worthwhile to the identified priority needs and concerns of the “beneficiaries.
Results:	The direct output from conducted partnership activities.
Vision:	A shared image or dream of the future which shall guide the partnership efforts.
Work plan:	A detailed document stating which activities will be conducted, when and how it will happen, and how these activities relate to defined results and objectives.

## MS Documents and Recommended Literature

Author	Title and Publisher	Link (MS Intranet or a homepage)
Bakewell, O. et al., 2003	Sharpening the Development Process, INTRAC, Praxis Guide No. 1,  Oxford, U.K., 2003	
DANIDA, 2003	MS at the Crossroads, Copenhagen 2003/04	<a href="http://www.um.dk/en/menu/DevelopmentPolicy/Evaluations/ReportsByYear/2003/DanEvalMS04.htm">http://www.um.dk/en/menu/DevelopmentPolicy/Evaluations/ReportsByYear/2003/DanEvalMS04.htm</a>
Dart, J & Davies, R. (2005)	The 'Most significant Change' (MSC) Technique, A Guide to Its Use	
Davies, R., 2001	Does Empowerment Start At Home? And If So How will We Recognise It?  <i>in</i> Peter Oakley, P. (ed.): Evaluating Empowerment; Reviewing the Concept and Practice, INTRAC, Oxford 2001), p.128ff	
Fowler, A., 2000	Partnerships: Negotiating Relationships. A Resource for Non-governmental Development Organisations  INTRAC Occasional Papers Series Number 32, Oxford, March 2000	
Fowler, A., 2001	NGDOs, Aid and the Partnership Approach to Development: Past, Present and Future perspectives  Paper for Symposium MS TCDC, Tanzania, November 2001	
Gasper, D., 1997	'Logical Frameworks': A Critical Assessment, Managerial Theory, Pluralistic Practice  Working Paper Series No. 264. Institute of Social Studies. The Hague, The Netherlands., 1997	

Gasper, D., 2000	Evaluating the 'Logical Frameworks Approach' - Towards Learning-Oriented Development Evaluation. <i>In:</i> Public Administration and Development. 17-28, John Wiley & Sons Ltd. England 2000	
Gasper, D., 2000	"Logical Frameworks": Problems and Potentials. Unpublished Paper. Institute of Social Studies. The Hague, The Netherlands	<a href="http://winelands.sun.ac.za/2001/Papers/Gasper,%20Des.htm">http://winelands.sun.ac.za/2001/Papers/Gasper,%20Des.htm</a>
Guijt, I., 2000	Methodological Issues in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation <i>in</i> Estrella, Marisol et. al. (eds.): Learning From Change, , U.K. 2000, pp. 201-216	
Mebrahtu, E., 2004	Putting Policy into Practice. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation in Ethiopia, INTRAC, Oxford, U.K., 2004	
Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, 2001	Solidarity through Partnership, Copenhagen 2001	<a href="http://www.ms.dk/graphics/Ms.dk/Om%20MS/Politik-papirer/PP_2001_solidarity_partnership.doc">http://www.ms.dk/graphics/Ms.dk/Om%20MS/Politik-papirer/PP_2001_solidarity_partnership.doc</a>
Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, 2001a	MS in the South Revision Review 2000 Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, Copenhagen 2001	
Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, 2002	MS OCB Guideline, Copenhagen (Intranet, archived 2006), 2002	Not available
Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, 2005	Partnership Against Poverty, Copenhagen 2005	<a href="http://217.145.50.22/Event-est/docdir/051221104014PAP_FINAL_VERSION.pdf">http://217.145.50.22/Event-est/docdir/051221104014PAP_FINAL_VERSION.pdf</a>
Mikkelsen, B., 1995	Methods for Development Work and Research - A Guide for Practitioners	

	Sage, New Delhi/London 1995	
MS, 1997	Partnership in Development Toolkit. MS in the South, A Guide to Partnership Planning Monitoring and Evaluation. Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke, Copenhagen 1997	
NORAD, 1992	The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) – Handbook For Objectives-Oriented Planning NORAD, Norway, 2 <sup>nd</sup> . edition. 1992	
Ringsing, B., 2003	Learning about advocacy. Monitoring as a tool for learning in Ibis South America, MSc Thesis, The Netherlands, August 2003	
Roche, C., 1999	Impact Assessment for Development Agencies Oxfam, Oxford, U.K., 1999	
Save the Children, 1995	Toolkits - a practical guide to assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation. Development Manual 5, London, 1995	
Sigsgaard, P., 2004	Doing Away With Predetermined Indicators: Monitoring using the Most Significant Changes Approach <i>in</i> Earle, Lucy (ed.): Creativity and Constraint. Grassroots Monitoring and Evaluation and the International Aid Arena, INTRAC, Oxford, U.K., 2004	





## Annex 1: Guideline and Checklist used for Identification of Partners

All questions below might not be relevant at the initial stage of identification, some might be used during the early partnership phase that follows identification.

In the interest of Mutuality, the partner should be encouraged to produce a similar list about MS. It may be of interest for the partner to assess for example MS' "willingness to address Partner principles and priorities."

1. Does the partner address MS country programme policy and priorities?
  - Partner characteristics: Convictions, principles, basically what makes an organisation what it is. Is it in line with the Policy Paper?
  - Target group for activities (Gender, Age, Profession etc.)? Beneficiaries among the poor and marginalised? Who benefits most (e.g. women or men)?
  
2. Identification of mutual benefits
  - What type of assistance does the partner expect from MS?
  - What does the partner hope to offer MS: personnel placement? Information work? South-South/South-North exchange? Workcamps?
  
3. Ability and willingness to address MS general principles?
  - Poverty orientation: to what extent is the organisation committed to poverty reduction? Alleviation?
  - Democratisation and Participatory Approach in development work. Who is involved in running the organisation? One person, membership, people's participation?
  - Gender: consideration of both women and men in the access to and control of the development processes and results?
  - Environment: consideration of effect on environment when undertaking various development interventions? Appropriateness of interventions to the context/environment?
  - Sustainability: Consideration of continuity? Adaptability? Measures to reduce dependency on external factors?
  
4. MS and partner identities
  - Organisational coverage of development issues in the area.
  - Socio-economic/political systems in the area which could influence the development of the organisation (e.g. how the organisation is seen politically and culturally by the community).
  - The background of the organisation, the work, the challenges, practices, achievements (expected results).
  - Why the organisation was initially formed, what the organisation hopes to achieve in the long run (vision).

- Who created it, length of period organisation has been in operation.
- Organisational structure - membership, staff, leadership and their participation in decision-making.
- Relationship between this organisation and other groupings working in the area.
- Current and planned activities.

Resources: source, funding, annual budget, personnel: who has contributed what?

## **Annex 2: Format for Early Partnership Documentation [Empty Annex]**



## Annex 3: Format for Partnership Agreement

**[Format should be seen as a tested proposal]**

**The Partnership Agreement contains the following sections:**

Front Page

Preamble

Brief description of Partners

Partnership justification

Common Vision

Duration of Partnership

Partnership Objectives

Results/Outputs, Short-term Effects, and Assumptions

Activities

Roles and Responsibilities

Resource inputs

Sustainability

Phase Out strategy

Annex 1. Budget and plan of action

Annex 2. Accounting procedures

Annex 3. Monitoring and Evaluation procedures

Annex 4. Properties

Annex 5. Mediation and Arbitration procedures

The following pages describe the contents of each section. Descriptions are marked by [ ]



## **Format for Partnership Agreement**

Annotated outline

### **Front Page:**

[ To be developed by each CO. The partnership period and name/address of both organisations should be written on the front page]

### **Preamble**

[MS [country/region] and [Partner] have entered this Partnership Agreement under the MS in the South programme governed by the spirit of co-operation to fulfil the Common Vision, Objectives, and Activities as outlined in this document and its annexes]

### **Brief description of Partners**

[Brief description of MS [country/region] and [Partner]: History, legal status, objectives, and scope/type of activities. The description should reflect what has been discussed during the initial talks and which is considered now to be common knowledge among the negotiating parties]

### **Partnership justification**

[In this section, the parties describe in overall, precise terms what each of them expects to gain from the partnership.

Include a brief description of the experiences with the co-operation so far.

The parties also describe analytically the key development problems that they have chosen to address. The development issues should be described in relation to the groups of people that the parties want to work with]

### **Common Vision**

[A vision describes the general, long-term, and overall goal, which we hope to achieve in future.

Common Vision giving impetus and governing the partnership arrangement. What do both parties dream of contributing to by working together?

Issues pertaining to Intercultural Co-operation and Enhancing International Solidarity (e.g. influencing public opinion through information work) could also be considered as part of the common vision]

### **Duration of Partnership**

[The period covered by the present agreement and its annexes.

MS [country/region] should state the reservation that a possible agreed framework for funding is subject to expected availability of grants from MS Denmark.

Additionally, an outline of the present thoughts about a possible need for extension of the agreement, procedures for re-negotiation, and possible later substitution of a funding relationship with another kind of partnership co-operation]

## Partnership Objectives

[Preferably only one overall objectives described as concretely as possible. The overall objective denotes wished for changes to which the joint effort can contribute.

As the overall objective cover a broad field, it may not be possible to specify them in a rigid, SMART format (see below).

From the overall objective, a small number of immediate objectives are deduced. These are about expected changes brought about directly by the partnership efforts. Immediate objectives should be formulated in a SMART language: Specific, Measurable (not necessarily in numerical terms), Accurate, Relevant, and Time-bound.

One important specification of the objective has to do with answering the question: Who will benefit from the changes. In other words: The immediate objective should be “target group” oriented]

## Results/Outputs, Short-term Effects, and Assumptions

[Here the parties outline the results of the joint activities. The results will contribute to attaining the immediate objective. Describe these results in specified and precise qualitative or quantitative terms.

Short-term effects are about changes that are foreseen to happen (for whom?) if the targets are met. Effects are answers to the question: What will change in people’s lives after we have done what we planned to do?

When describing the effects, one or maximum two indicator(s) of each type of change should be specified.

The partners decide on such verifiable indicators by answering the question: How do we prove that the desired change has happened?

Care should be taken to select indicators that can be managed: It should be easy for the partner to gather and analyse plausible information about the change in question.

Finally, the parties should identify and write down assumptions for each result. The assumptions are the necessary prerequisites for expected success (for results to bring the desired changes into being).

Assumptions should add to our understanding of the context that we operate within. (Therefore, one should avoid circular logic like e.g. “Women are trained in bee-keeping with the aim that they will produce honey for sale and thereby raise their income. An assumption is that the women will adopt bee-keeping.” This statement merely says that a prerequisite for women adopting bee keeping is that they adopt bee keeping.)

Some of these preconditions can be created or influenced by MS or the partner, others are outside their control. If a central, non-controllable precondition is missing and it is not likely that it will be seen in a foreseeable future – then we have a killer assumption. Other strategies for the effort must be invented]

## Activities

[MS [country/region] and [Partner] have agreed to undertake a number of activities. In this section is given a broad outline of the nature (typology) of these activities. They should relate clearly to the immediate objectives.

A detailed specification of activities is placed in Annex 1 of this agreement]



### **Roles and Responsibilities**

[The Partner's obligations and responsibilities in relation to the partnership process, planning, and the carrying out of activities.

MS [country/Region]'s obligations and responsibilities in relation to the partnership process and non-financial support to the planning/implementation of activities.

If applicable, both parties declare their joint responsibility in relation to the placement of a DW]

### **Resource inputs**

[By [Partner]

By MS [country/Region] – including Danish Development Worker (DW) support. The parties bring here forward the arguments for assigning a possible Danish Development Worker. The justification is quoted in the resulting job description for the DW]

### **Sustainability**

[How will sustainability be achieved?

The section should cover different aspects like economic/financial, environmental, and organisational sustainability.

The measure of sustainability that the parties expect at the end of the partnership period should be clearly defined. One or two realistic, manageable indicators should be agreed on]

### **Phase Out strategy**

[Phasing out the partnership is about terminating a relationship based on funding and joint planning of activities. The process may lead to some other type of co-operation. One can for example think of the parties being allies, participants in same networks, or just acquaintances (cf. point 4).

In this section is described how and when the parties envisage such a transformation to take place.

The joint decision to extend or end the present type of co-operation is normally based on an evaluation (See Annex 3 of this agreement).

The informal exit whereby both parties fail to agree on the execution of the partnership activities is catered for in Annex 5 of this agreement]

**Signed by:** [date] **Partner** [date] **MS** [Country/Region]

### **Annex 1. Budget and plan of action**

[Budget-frame and a general plan of action for the entire partnership period. The budget should show the size of the MS input compared to the total budget of the Partner

Detailed budget and plan of action for the first year.

Budget and work plan should be revisited and adjusted every year, often in connection with a Partnership Review Workshop. The Plan of Action specifies when possible Partnership Review Workshops will be held.

The agreed plan of action should be realistic]

### **Annex 2. Accounting procedures**

[Agreed procedures and deadlines for financial and narrative reporting, and formats for such reports.

[Partner]'s reporting to members or the people that the organisation work with.

[Partner]'s reporting to MS [Country/Region]

MS [Country/Region]'s reporting and reporting back to Partner]

### **Annex 3. Monitoring and Evaluation procedures**

[Description of general monitoring procedures used in the programme. Additionally, procedures specific to the individual partnership (including self-monitoring) are outlined.

If applicable, the Partnership Review Workshop gets a special paragraph (agreed expectations about participants, contents, and follow-up).

Normally, the parties will also agree to conduct an evaluation at the end of the partnership period to determine whether expected results have been attained. The nature of such an evaluation is described (external/internal, scope, methodology etc.)]

### **Annex 4. Properties**

[A list of property generated by the partnership and an agreement on ownership once the partnership period has ended]

### **Annex 5. Mediation and Arbitration procedures**

[Outline here the procedures in case of unexpected termination.

Here is also included a list of actions (or failures to act) that justify one of the parties to terminate the partnership. It should be made clear, that the present partnership agreement is not binding in a legal sense.

Procedures in case of disagreement.

The parties have agreed to follow a certain mediation procedure. This normally consists of presenting the case to an outside, trusted arbitrator whose decision both parties will follow. The identity of this person (or in some cases: council) is stated here]

## **Annex 4: Some Potential Strengths and Common Weaknesses of Local Organisations in Rural Development [Empty Annex]**

Source: The National State and NGOs in Local Development, Draft for MS Annual Policy Meeting 1996, prepared by Neil Webster

[paper not quoted in this manuscript]



## Annex 5: The Design Workshop Process

### Why is the design workshop necessary?

- to try to concretise the visions and strategies that have been rather ad hoc in the early partnership process.
- it is aimed also at systematising the mutually perceived visions and areas of interest.
- it is helpful in moving towards a more objective oriented partnership development.

### What to take care of during the design workshop.

- In the designing workshop both parties should agree on whether or not to engage an external facilitator or to use the existing resource persons from both parties to facilitate the design workshop.
- Try to cover **concrete areas** of work topics.
- In some cases it is important to translate the guidelines for and conduct in **local language**. During the workshop itself, interpretation may be necessary.
- Other practicalities include preparation of a **budget** to enable everybody involved in attending the workshop. MS may have to pay for the workshop. Transport, fees for resource persons, for accommodation, food, stationery, allowances may be such items that may be included in the budget.
- Choice of the design workshop **venue** sometimes matters. Generally, a feeling of ownership of the process is enhanced if the designing process is undertaken at the partner's premises or context.

### Issues covered in the design process

- What is the **common** vision, objectives, and strategies of the two parties?
- Which specific issue/problem within the vision should the two parties seek to address?
- What specific strategies should the two parties seek to utilise to realise the common vision (e.g. Information, Capacity building, and Phase out strategy)?
- What will be the time frame for the partnership?
- What should be the resource requirements necessary to realise/fulfil the common vision?
- Who has which capacity in the process of partnership?
- What will be the obligations of each of the parties in the process?
- Which other parties should be involved in the partnership? Any linkages: locally, regionally and internationally?
- What are the major assumptions regarding the partnership development? Assumptions about preconditions, external factors etc.

- What is the impact expected?
- What will be the mutually agreed upon monitoring and evaluation strategies?

### **Design workshop process**

- 1 The persons responsible for policy making as well as programme staff and representatives of partner beneficiaries usually participate in the design workshop. These could be committee members of community-based partners, boards for intermediary NGOs, managers, co-ordinators or executive directors and independent professionals in the potential area of partnership. Other like-minded organisations or other partners working with a potential partner may be invited. It is important that both women and men are represented. Representatives should have the mandate to officially commit a partner.
- 2 Ensure from the outset that there is agreement on the objectives of the design workshop and the roles of each party in the workshop. For example, each of the parties is expected to present a profile about their organisation including the vision, goals, objectives, activities (SWOC analysis) etc.
- 3 Promote a critique of each organisational vision with a view to establishing a common vision. Make a case for why it is important to have a common vision.
- 4 Spell out and agree on the common vision. Only common elements should be identified as the basis for generating common strategies, objectives, activities, monitoring, expected effects, and strategies.
- 5 Spell out gender sensitive strategies to achieve a common vision.
- 6 Spell out the expected effects, negotiate and agree on possible indicators.
- 7 Spell out mutual obligations, responsibilities and commitments.
- 8 Spell out how the partnership will be monitored and evaluated and stress the issue of accountability. Emphasise mutual roles in M&E. Indicate tools such as Quarterly Monitoring Charts, Most Significant Changes approach, the Annual Review Workshop, and the diverse narrative and financial reports.
- 9 Estimate resources for joint activities: personnel, transport, funding etc. Prepare the budget. Indicate where resources will come from: from MS? Partner? Other donors?
- 10 Draft the partnership agreement, which should be signed later. The drafting can be done by one party or jointly. Indicate who officially represents the parties (chairperson, director, others). Include arbitration procedures. Ensure that the partnership document clearly states how women and men will participate in each activity. Prepare a project document (use objective oriented planning, see NORAD, 1992).

## Annex 6: Construction of negotiated indicators in MSiS

Many think of indicators as being developed by experts and initiated from the desk of a project office. However, it is well in line with the MSiS policy to integrate *participatory* monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) in the day-to-day activities. An advantage among many others is that we do not have to invent the indicators ourselves and on beforehand. We can, for example, rely on *negotiated indicators*.

The country and regional MS programmes can try out this process in different ways according to how the CO or a facilitator finds it best.

1. CO-staff and PAB identify two objectives that are seen as central to the country or regional programme. You find the objectives in the programme's policy paper and its logical framework.
2. CO-staff and PAB discuss and agree on how they understand the objectives in very concrete terms. The discussion ends up with an answer to the question: "What are the most significant changes (one short-term and one long-term) that we expect to see as a result of our work with attaining this objective?"
3. Having agreed, the actors move on to answer these question:
  - "How can we - taking our limited resources into account - prove to the outside world that the expected changes have indeed taken place?"
  - "If we note that a real change has indeed taken place, how can we - with our limited resources - assess its scope or significance?"
  - "How can we 'prove' or make it plausible that the change is attributable to interventions initiated or supported by the MS country programme seen as a totality?"
4. A set of very few, simple, qualitative and quantitative indicators (and a justification for them) should now be the outcome. The CO takes upon itself to collect data (and eventually construct baselines) related to the indicators. The indicators can also be noted under "Comments" in the respective cells of a Quarterly Monitoring Chart.
5. After data collection and analysis the CO presents the results to a PAB meeting. The indicators' validity and usefulness is discussed. This discussion may lead to revision of the negotiated indicators. The discussion will also raise more *new* questions. In short: The monitoring process is under way!
6. Some of the results - and some of the deliberations that the discussions have set in motion - are reflected in the Annual Report of the country programme.





## Annex 7: Draft MS Uganda Strategic plan 2005 - 2006

(Revision of Policy Paper goals)

<b>GOAL 1: Capacity building for partners in advocacy and community development initiatives to reduce poverty</b>				
Objectives	Activities	Achievements	Effects/changes	Indicators
<p>1. Empowered civil society sustainable influencing pro-poor policies and development processes in their communities by 2006</p>	<p>1.1. Facilitate dialogue workshops between CSO &amp; local govt. at sub-county level to work together within the decentralisation framework</p>	<p>1.1 At least two dialogues supported per year at sub-county level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible participation of CSOs in planning and budgeting at sub-county level</li> </ul>	<p>1.1 Number of CBOs who sit in sub-county community planning committees, 2. Number of CBOs and sub-county committees sharing their budgets. 3. % of community budget channelled through partners</p>

	<p>1.2. Facilitate alliance &amp; network building of CSOs at national, district &amp; sub country level</p> <p>1.3. Support advocacy initiatives aimed at developing &amp; implementing national &amp; international gender sensitive policies for poverty reduction, i.e. aid, trade, etc.</p>	<p>1.2 Three active networks established</p> <p>1.3 Three active networks supported Indicator: Partners in possession of popular versions of government PEAP policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three networks have engaged in planning, implementation and monitoring of pro poor policies in Koboko, Apac and Kampala.</li> <li>• Number of advocacy campaigns to see that PMA, Nads, Health Strategy, Micro Finance are benefiting the active poor</li> <li>• Number of CSOs present at policy review meetings</li> </ul>	<p>1.2 That the networks and district leadership are familiar with government policies</p> <p>1.3 As above</p>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>2. Improved income and food security of partner organisations' members and their beneficiaries</p>	<p>2.1 Capacity building of farmers for increased production and market access</p>	<p>2.1.1 Number of women and men trained in improved agricultural practices</p> <p>2.1.2 Number of farm families accessing extension services</p> <p>2.1.3 Collective marketing of produce established</p> <p>2.1.4 Number of groups able to enter savings schemes and co-operatives</p> <p>2.2 Number of boys and girls trained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased production and income</li> <li>• Improved well being</li> </ul>	<p>2.1 People's savings, 2. status of house, % sending children to secondary education, 3. Number of meals a day/number of times they are able to eat meat/fish/enough food to take the family through the year.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p>2.2 Capacity building of vocational schools for effective management and skills training</p> <p>2.3 Train partners in gender mainstreaming their programmes and develop gender sensitive indicators for poverty monitoring at programme level in consultation with partners</p>	<p>2.3 Gender sensitive poverty indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys and girls acquire skills for self-reliance</li> <li>• Management functioning, funds raised and sustainability secured for three vocational schools in Koboko, Gulu and Masindi by 2007</li> <li>• MS Uganda can document that it is becoming more poverty focused by 2006</li> </ul>	
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<b>GOAL 2: Strengthen the capacity of CSOs to practice and demand for good governance in their communities</b>			
<p>3. Strengthened CS able to demand for equitable allocation of resources and challenge undemocratic and corrupt practices</p>	<p>3.1 Increase support for the development and dissemination of publications / materials. in co-operation with partners., i.e. peace building, good governance, democratisation and anti-corruption by 2006.</p>	<p>3.1 Three publication developed and disseminated, namely: Peace building booklet, anti-corruption booklet and democratisation guidelines for (5) different categorises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local authorities more accountable to the public in the utilization of public resources</li> <li>• More corruption cases registered</li> <li>• Partners openly interacting with state organs in ways that expand space for democracy and improved power relations – ability to question, participate and to influence development</li> <li>• Open communication and exchange of information</li> <li>• Participation in planning meeting that secure poor considerations</li> <li>• More corruption cases registered</li> </ul>
			<p>Information accessible. Number of CSOs that have demanded for display and checked and monitored spending of public funds. Number of malpractice cases reported on tendering and awarding of contracts and reported to MPs, PAC, IGG and others for follow up. Articles published by partners</p>

	<p>3.2 Support the establishment of tripartite collaboration among local govt., NGO district forum and MS Uganda in Apac and Koboko</p> <p>3.3 Support conducive environment by supporting resource centre where information is accessible and training takes place</p> <p>3.4 Increase support to build the capacity and link two partners engaged in anti corruption activities at local levels and national level by</p>	<p>3.2 Two collaborations established by 2006</p> <p>3.3 Resource centres accessible and training taking place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSO input visible and influencing the policy developments in the area of access to information, NGO bill, social sector, the media</li> </ul>	
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

	<p>2006</p> <p>3.5 Increased support to advocacy initiatives related to access to information, NGO bill, Social sector reforms, and the media by using rights based approach.</p> <p>3.5 Support youth initiatives that promote peace full co-existence and inter-cultural understanding.</p>	<p>3.4.1 Increased support to the two anti-corruption initiatives at district/sub-county level in Koboko and Apac and links supported to ACCU</p> <p>3.5 Two partner orgs. Supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth actively participate in leadership and development processes in their communities.</li> </ul>	
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<p>4.MS Uganda and partners have democratic structures and are accountable to their constituencies / stakeholders</p>	<p>4.1 Capacity building in leadership, organisational management, fundraising, gender equity, legal documents, availing and sharing information, transfer of power , rights of members and transparency</p>	<p>3.5.1 Four partner organisations supported</p> <p>3.5.2 At least three work camps supported per year.</p> <p>3.5.3 At least one Youth exchange facilitated once a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adherence to the governance documents, code of conduct,</li> <li>• members hold leaders accountable, quality AGMs,</li> <li>• able to fundraise and increase in their funding, improvement in work plans and budgets efficiency</li> </ul>	<p>By 2007 70% of partners have internal democracy</p> <p>AGM agendas and audited accounts distributed ahead of meeting</p>
		<p>4.1.1 All partner properly registered, existence of management manuals / policies</p> <p>4.1.2 Number of partners accessing resources from other sources besides MS</p>		



	<p>4.2 Joint (MS &amp; partners) development and dissemination of organisational good governance. Avail resources for dissemination of studies done on CSO functioning</p> <p>4.3. Make regular annual OD assessment.</p>	<p>4.1.3 Number of partners with an adapted gender policy</p> <p>4.1.4 Number of leaders willing to step down at AGMs</p> <p>4.2.1 Good governance handbooks produced and disseminated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------	--



## Annex 8: MSC – the interview as a non-directive dialogue

The interview is not a classroom examination. Try to make it as relaxed as possible and give it a character of a dialogue. If you have two informants, then let them discuss and agree to one joint statement.

Be careful to stress that we are after perceptions of changes in other peoples' lives in general, not the personal experience of the informant. And try to get the stories as specific as possible. You often have to probe and ask for examples:

*Informant:* "There are signs that now harmony is bigger in the families."

*Interviewer:* "Signs? What do you mean by signs, which signs?"

*Informant:* "Now many wives discuss family-budgets with their husbands, and they can even dispose of money that the husband has earned. This is because of the work done by the Women's Group in this community."

The above example can be extended with the Interviewer asking: How many are "many Wives?"

The informant will often answer by mentioning activities and all the nice things that the organisation has done. Here you also have to probe:

*Informant:* It is a change that XX has conducted training for members of the community.

*Interviewer:* Yes, I understand that there has been some training, but what has changed in peoples' lives because of that?

Sometimes, it is discussed what counts as a change. A change can be big or small, positive or negative, and could affect a single individual, a small group, or an entire organisation: the point is that it is seen as a long-term, sustainable change rather than a one-off thing. In a few cases, a 'change' may be something that stays the same – for example; something continues which would most likely have stopped otherwise.

Does the change have to be about work objectives of the partner?

No. We anticipate that many change stories would be directly connected with the work of the partner; however, if the most significant change is to do with other things that have happened, for example, in the local community, that is fine.

If the informant says that there has been no change whatsoever, you may respond that this cannot simply be true. There are always changes, they may be small, but nothing is like it was a few minutes ago - then ask for the most significant change among the tiny ones.

In a few cases a delicate situation may occur. If the informant is employed by the partner organisation, (s)he may be hesitant to talk about negative changes under the heading "Organisational Performance." Whether it occurs depends very much of general leadership style and "climate" in the organisation. If you sense such hesitation, you can skip the question, but please write a note about it in the form.

When a change "story" has been formulated, you may need to ask the informant to summarise the central content in a few sentences. In the pilot test, we often used this question to elicit a summary:

*Interviewer:* If you were to tell this story to a journalist of CNN and want it to make headlines, what would you say?



## Annex 9: Some problems related to "measurement" and PM&E

We often debate a number of methodological questions that relate to monitoring of social processes. The point of the following is that we do not have to be very rigid or ambitious in our endeavour to overcome technical or methodological problem. In practice, we can allow ourselves to be flexible.

### Quantitative and/or qualitative data?

We are looking for information that we safely can interpret as a sign that a change did take place (and often we ask the additional questions of why? or how?). It is unfortunate that the term "measurement" is often used when talking about M&E, as it leads us to believe that the information gathered *has* to be quantitative<sup>29</sup>. This is far from the way we verify our everyday experiences. Meticulous descriptions of social processes are often more precise than *pseudo-objective*, imprecise number fabrication.

There exists a wealth of qualitative information, which can be used and contribute to insight, organisational learning, and documentation. The difficult task is to *systematically* collect and interpret the data and use the information beyond a mere listing of imprecise anecdotes<sup>30</sup>.

Often, qualitative data contain not very exact, quantitative statements ("Many people around here now eat chicken", "Nowadays we hear more shots in the night"). When collecting the information, one should therefore probe for exact specification, or try to verify it quantitatively.

We should not, however, strive for an ultrahigh precision, which will only contribute to an illusion of objectivity. *In reality, a margin of error of 15-25% is always to be expected when one is counting elements of shady social concepts in a developing country.*

### Whose norms count?

We want our M&E work accepted as rigorously conducted, based on credible, valid, and reliable data.

In our Western culture, the norms of an academic, scholarly culture permeates the practice of M&E. This may be the reason why Log frames and seemingly "objective" and "statistical" ways of depicting development work are so often (unsuccessfully?) attempted.

The issue of trustworthiness is at stake here. Partners and people with experiences from other cultures may have quite different standards for what makes up a credible

---

<sup>29</sup> The term "measurable" is often misunderstood to be about describing the phenomenon in numbers only. It has even – quite wrongly - been said that a numerical description is more objective (less prone to differing interpretations among observers) than other types of descriptions. See for example MS, 1997: p.58.

<sup>30</sup> Collection and interpretation of quantitative data are, by the way, also difficult.

A good example of how qualitative data can be used to monitor the fuzzy concept "Empowerment," see: Rick Davies: Does Empowerment Start At Home? And If So How will We Recognise It? In: Peter Oakley (2001), p.128ff

information and interpretation<sup>31</sup>. The partnership approach requires that MS allows itself to be influenced by such standards.

In other words: MS' monitoring practice should be based on a clear position on whom we are primarily accountable to. The level of local involvement and participation, of types of data collected, of choice of language and presentation depends very much on that.

This being said we must also accept that MS in Denmark increasingly is asked for documentation that follows more rigid and traditional formats of presentation. MS thus finds itself being accountable to two very different audiences.

### **Attribution - a question about humility**

MS is not initiating or *doing* development. We participate in and support processes of change that are already there. Change is brought about by a multitude of factors, and MS' contribution to broad, societal change may be small. We will thus rarely experience cases where an MS-intervention has caused observable change in a region or the society as a whole. The causal relationship represented by the logical framework is not that direct.

This being the case, we should be content with demonstrating that a given change is *attributable* to activities supported by MS. This means that programme monitoring should include a search for perceived or "objective" links between its activities and an observed change.

*An example: In the MSC-pilot conducted last year in Zambia, some informants agreed that people now knew their rights and as a consequence dared to speak up and confront the authorities. They said that this had happened because "foreign" organisations had conducted civic training for people. MS and partners had supported such training.*

*It is safe to conclude that MS Zambia has played a role in bringing about the perceived change as related by the informants.*

The example may sound trivial, but the point is that it may fit well into an annual report, a stock taking on strategies and activities, or as a basis for further investigation (Did they in fact speak up? Who did? How many did? Did it influence the range of options that people have in their daily life?). Very few of such stories find their way to e.g. Annual Reports.

### **Objectives are not specific enough**

At programme level, we have to do with objectives and aims that are very general in character. This is natural for policy statements, but they are not immediately suitable for "measurement" purposes. A task ahead is to operationalise (specify) what the broad concepts and the possible indicators entail.

One way of doing this is to set the PM&E in motion, to let "local" definitions influence the process and to construct *negotiated indicators* together with central stakeholders (PAB). See a proposal for such a process p.63.

### **PM&E takes time**

Indicators are often decided and revised together with central stakeholders. This takes time. It is a general experience that many organisations give up introducing PM&E because it was planned far too complicated and ambitious: Too many peo-

---

31 During a recent evaluation of a refugee-project, the well-meaning, European project manager advised the review team like this: "Don't ask questions to the refugees. They are so awfully subjective!"

ple discussed too many and too complicated hierarchies of objectives within too tight timeframes. Negotiation ended up in confusion.

The remedy is *start simple!*

Select one or two areas in the programme to begin with. Do not involve too many from the very start - and make sure that these stakeholders accept and are interested in the task.

Spend the necessary *minimum* of time on the issue and build it into M&E activities that are already taking place at programme level, e.g. Annual Review Workshops or Most Significant Changes exercises.

It may be comforting that the time is not wasted. *Participatory handling of programme matters is part of the MSiS identity and the ongoing, mutual capacity building that is taking place.*

Finally, if you find that PM&E is too time-consuming, then it is still possible to conduct meaningful monitoring of the type depicted by the foregoing, illustrative examples.

### **The question of a missing baseline**

It is difficult to assess change if baseline data are not there. It is safe to say that very few country programmes or partners have immediate access to such information within their areas of activities. The quality of existing data may also be a problem.

There are, however good sources from which to extract information about the past. Programme Officers may have the data in their heads, extension officers may keep their own systems like diaries, official statistics and records are often available when you ask for it, key persons in communities have more or less rosy memories etc. Other organisations often possess a rich material that can be used for monitoring purposes (evaluations, review-reports, appraisals, mapping of social conditions in diverse areas etc. etc.).

It is, however, an immeasurable task to construct baselines if one does not know what to ask for. Therefore, it is better to look for suitable data after one or two simple indicators have been constructed.

If you do not have easy access to a relevant baseline, make sure that the first monitoring assessment within a given field is duly recorded, stored, and remembered in order to serve as a baseline for future investigations.

## Annex 10 MSC Questionnaire

[delete this heading if you copy the form]

### MSC Questionnaire Most Significant Changes

<b>MS Partner name:</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b>	
<b>Who was interviewed?</b> Name and position of person in relation to community or area where you work.(This information is given to characterise the source)	
<b>Question 1:</b> <i>Thinking back through the last year, what do you think has been the <b>most</b> significant change (for better or for worse) in the lives of poor people in this area? Give at least <u>two examples</u> that illustrate the change.</i>	
<i>Why do you find especially this change is the <b>most</b> significant?</i>	



**Question 2:**

*What has made this change that you mention come about?*

[If no mentioning of your organisation has been made, pose this question:]

*Is there any change in the life of poor people that can be attributed to what my organisation [name] has done here?*

*Illustrate with examples.*



## Annex 11: Terms of Reference for Evaluation

This standard format applies especially for evaluations of partnerships

### BACKGROUND

Brief description of the partnership's current situation and why an evaluation will be carried out.

### MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

What are the main objectives *of the evaluation*?

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

A point-by-point elaboration of the main *evaluation objectives*.

What do we try to accomplish with this exercise?

Which issues should the evaluation pay special attention to?

### EVALUATION METHOD

A brief description of which methods should be used to conduct the evaluation e.g. Participatory Evaluation Procedures, gender sensitive approach, workshops, questionnaires, interviews, observations, etc.

### PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP

What format or procedure should be used for reporting back the results of the evaluation. To whom should the results be presented, in which form, how will follow-up on the results be ensured?

### THE COMPOSITION OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

Who will take part in the evaluation?

Secure Gender balance.

### EVALUATION PERIOD

The amount of time the evaluation team has for the assignment, how should this time be prioritised?

### ANNEXES

Partnership document, previous work plans and annual reports, minutes from internal review workshops and any other relevant information.

Proposed evaluation programme and people to be met.

Attached budget.