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## Lessons on the Effectiveness of Development Partnerships

An Evaluation Synthesis

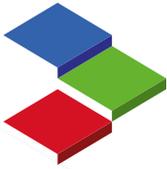


AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

November 2019

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November 2019

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#### **Lessons on the Effectiveness of Development Partnerships - An Evaluation Synthesis**

An IDEV Evaluation Synthesis, November 2019

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The overarching objective of the African Development Bank Group is to spur sustainable economic development and social progress in its regional member countries (RMCs), thus contributing to poverty reduction. The Bank Group achieves this objective by mobilizing and allocating resources for investment in RMCs and providing policy advice and technical assistance to support development efforts.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ADF</b>	African Development Fund	<b>KASP</b>	Knowledge and Advisory Services Partnership
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank Group	<b>LIC</b>	Low Income Country
<b>AsDB</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>MDB</b>	Multilateral Development Bank
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>MIC</b>	Middle Income Country
<b>C&amp;C</b>	Coordination and Cooperation	<b>MTR</b>	Mid-Term Review
<b>CEDR</b>	Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results	<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>CFR</b>	Country Factor Review	<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>PAIDA</b>	Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda
<b>CSPE</b>	Country Strategy & Program Evaluation	<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnership
<b>DP</b>	Development Partnership	<b>PPV</b>	Public Private Partnership
<b>ESP</b>	Evaluation Synthesis on Partnerships	<b>RMC</b>	Regional Member Country
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>FIF</b>	Financial Intermediary Fund	<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility	<b>TF</b>	Trust Fund
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association	<b>TFP</b>	Technical and Financial Partner
<b>IDEV</b>	Independent Development Evaluation	<b>TYS</b>	Ten-Year Strategy of the African Development Bank
<b>IEG</b>	Independent Evaluation Group (of the World Bank)	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development	<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institution		



# Executive Summary

**This Evaluation Synthesis on Partnerships (ESP) was prepared by Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) as the first phase of a comprehensive evaluation of partnerships at the African Development Bank Group (“AfDB” or “the Bank”).** The purpose of the ESP is to facilitate learning, both within and outside the AfDB, by identifying lessons on the development effectiveness of partnership arrangements and donor coordination activities.

**Development partnerships (DPs) play a critical role in international development.** Through the use of DPs, development organizations are able to leverage traditional and non-traditional financial and non-financial resources to enhance specialization and deliver improved development results. While the importance of DPs is widely acknowledged by actors in the development space, their definition and application vary across a broad spectrum, given their diverse and overarching nature. As a result, the development impact of DPs is often not systematically captured.

**The AfDB plays a fundamental role in promoting partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders to eradicate poverty, and promote inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa.** As the continent’s premier development finance institution, the Bank considers the development and support of partnerships a key ingredient in its long-term operational strategy, enabling the Bank to become a reliable partner of choice and voice for development in Africa (TYS, 2013-2022).

## Objectives

The ESP aims to: (i) generate an overall picture of the performance of DPs; (ii) identify lessons relevant to the improvement of DPs going forward; and (iii) inform the ongoing

**comprehensive evaluation of the AfDB’s partnerships.** The partnership themes assessed by this synthesis range from the relevance and effectiveness of partnerships to their use as vehicles for resource mobilization and knowledge creation within international financial institutions (IFIs) and client countries. The findings from the ESP provide broad knowledge on partnerships, as well as practical lessons that could be useful for different partnership arrangements across the development community.

**The ESP brings together evaluative evidence and research from 38 studies on partnerships at the global, corporate, country and project levels in IFIs with similar partnership objectives and institutional processes** (Annex 1). Specifically, the evaluation synthesis focuses on the use of partnerships at: the AfDB; the Asian Development Bank (AsDB); the World Bank Group (WBG); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and the European Union (EU).

## Conceptualizing Development Partnerships

**There is no single definition of “partnership” in the international development space.** However, from the evidence studied we can conclude that partnerships are generally seen as arrangements for collective action between legally autonomous organizations that typically involve dedicated funding and common objectives, and can have a global, regional or single-country focus. Development partnerships are usually tailored to the organizational objectives and business model of development institutions. In general, DPs describe collaborative relationships toward mutually agreed objectives involving shared responsibility for outcomes.

**Three main objectives of partnerships can be distinguished in IFIs, namely: (i) financial leverage; (ii) knowledge and policy dialogue; and (iii) coordination and cooperation.** The evaluation synthesis also reveals a fourth theme, namely capacity-building, technical assistance and advisory services. The extent of formality differs across these four categories, with partnerships involving the leveraging of financial resources being the most formalized.

**Most IFIs, including the AfDB, make a clear distinction between partnerships that involve financial commitments, and hence require legal agreements, and those that do not.** This distinction is made regardless of whether a partnership that leverages financial resources is used for a lending or non-lending purpose. DPs that leverage financial resources can be further divided into: (i) co-financing and (ii) trust funds. In the former, partners agree to jointly finance a program (or project), while also using their respective technical expertise and experience in the agreed activity. Co-financing agreements between partners can be executed jointly or in parallel, whereby partners agree to finance sub-components of a project. Trust funds, on the other hand, are financial agreements between IFIs and one or more legal entity, such as a bilateral or multilateral agency or private foundation.

**Partnerships that do not involve financial leverage are usually strategic relationships to bridge capacity gaps.** Broadly speaking, non-financing partnerships can be further divided into coordination and cooperation (C&C), and knowledge and advisory services partnerships (KASPs). These types of DP use either formal or informal mechanisms set up in client countries to improve aid effectiveness, or share knowledge and innovation in specific sectors or thematic areas.

## Main Findings

**The evidence reviewed by this ESP shows that DPs are relevant for development institutions.**

The synthesis found that, for most IFIs and other technical and financial partners (TFPs), partnerships provide an effective strategic and operational solution to their ever-growing mandates and activities, especially in the context of the post-2015 development era. Similarly, pressing global challenges have strengthened the relevance and use of partnerships at the global level. This growing importance is captured in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was put forward to improve aid effectiveness and partnerships among TFPs, including the private sector. That said, the relevance of partnerships is dependent on country contexts. In fragile contexts, for example, partnerships and the convening role of individual TFPs are much stronger for overall development issues, while they are largely thematic and sector-oriented in middle-income countries (MICs).

**Choosing a partner that is fit for purpose is a key issue for most IFIs.** The evaluations reviewed underline the importance of choosing the right partner in improving partnership outcomes. In some organizations, approval and quality assurance processes are required before developing new partnerships. In the absence of a formal process, partnerships tend to develop in an ad-hoc manner, with some offering only limited benefits. Thus, to engage in effective DPs, development organizations should consider the following factors: (i) the choice of partner and areas of collaboration; (ii) realism in the scope of the engagement; (iii) alignment of strategic priorities with the organization; (iv) a long-term approach to the partnership; and (v) the analytical capacity of the partner. Ensuring clarity on these five factors can significantly improve the relevance and performance of partnerships.

**Financing partnerships have demonstrated some level of effectiveness, especially as they leverage partners' resources and reduce the transaction costs from jointly implemented projects/activities.** Evidence from the synthesis indicates that effective partnerships contribute to improving the development effectiveness. Partnerships generate different outcomes given

their diverse and overarching nature. Evidence from the ESP indicates that the performance of co-financing partnerships largely depends on the country context. For instance, the evidence shows that co-financing partnerships perform relatively better in MICs where there is greater state capacity than in low-income countries (LICs) with more limited capacity. However, financing partnerships can lead to inadequate accounting for partners' contributions within program and project documents, thus limiting the scope for continued collaboration.

**Trust funds play a critical role in the ability of IFIs to achieve development effectiveness, from capacity-building and project preparation to knowledge creation and policy coordination.**

The evaluations of trust funds across IFIs clearly show that the financial partnerships deliver their expected outputs through projects and activities by providing coordinated grant financing, and by promoting key global and thematic agendas, such as climate change and environmental sustainability. Trust funds provide resources to support sectors in which countries have either little interest in investing their own resources, or lack the necessary technical capacity and knowledge to invest.

**Notwithstanding their importance and additionality, persistent challenges in the governance and administration of trust funds have been reported.**

The synthesis reveals that institution-wide reporting on trust funds has been difficult, especially due to the decentralized management of trust funds, together with the multiple indicators and reporting formats, including a reliance on piecemeal information from various trust funds in operational activities. Furthermore, their complex administrative modalities, significant implementation delays, and poor oversight make it difficult to integrate trust fund-supported programs and interventions into the regular work program of other TFPs and client countries.

**Non-financing partnerships play a vital role in country and regional-level policy dialogues**

**and aid effectiveness.** The synthesis shows that knowledge, advisory services partnerships (KASPs) are effective in promoting policy engagement in client countries, while coordination and cooperation (C&C) is also vital in ensuring aid effectiveness. The finding on KASPs and C&C from evaluation reports point to the fact that their effectiveness largely depends on country context, with the most successful cases found in those countries where government leadership in ensuring coordination among donors is strongest.

**All evaluations have reported, to varying degrees, three key issues that need to be addressed to make TFs more effective:** (i) the misalignment between the multitude of TFs and core programs of the organizations; (ii) the weak corporate oversight and coordination; and (iii) the disparate monitoring and evaluation, and reporting systems. Of key concern is the fact that TFs often lack sufficient recipient participation in their initiatives and their proliferation leads to a duplicity of the governance and accountability structure in organizations since they are typically not included in the budget approved by the Board and are thus even more likely to have a weak alignment with the main strategic focus of the organization.

**The level of efficiency in financial and non-financial resources (i.e., staff time) required to manage and implement DPs is considered average, albeit with variations across development institutions.**

Across IFIs, partnerships are still constrained by cumbersome and inflexible bureaucratic procedures, insufficient staff resources, and poorly aligned procurement and disbursement procedures. Moreover, statutory structures for the management of partnerships are often fragmented and overlapping, causing duplication in the use of scarce resources. Some notable areas of concern relating to the efficiency of partnerships include: (i) delays in processing projects, including at the design and approval stages; (ii) inter-organizational differences in processes, such as financial reporting and procurement systems; and (iii) time-consuming requirements and approvals that slow down

disbursements. In sum, streamlining and improving the governance of partnerships would help to provide the level of pro-activeness required to achieve efficiency gains.

**Findings from the evaluation synthesis point to weaknesses in the sustainability of DPs.**

Partnerships are considered sustainable if they combine the right mix of institutional, financial and project-level resources to maintain expected outcomes over time. In practice, however, the development results from partnerships are often threatened by weak resource mobilization strategies, poor governance and management, and challenges in keeping pace with global, regional, and country contexts and priorities. Often the level of technical capacity required to sustain partnership results is weak or missing. Moreover, the lack of clear-cut exit strategies for partnerships, especially at the project level, reduces the likelihood of sustaining results beyond the project cycle.

## Main Lessons

**Successful partnerships are strategically anchored and well-coordinated.** They work best when partners are adaptive and able to respond to partnership opportunities arising from a client's needs and priorities. Business management processes should be flexible enough to allow for a degree of decentralized delegation of authority.

**Stronger organizational capacities enable delivery on partnerships' objectives.** Given the complexity of the current international development agenda and changing global, regional and national institutional structures, the demand for (and supply of) partnerships is likely to grow rapidly in the future. As such, IFIs will face increasing complexity

in their partnership operations, characterized by an expansion of collaboration instruments. New management approaches, as well as staff skills, will be required to cope with this increasing level of complexity.

**Development partnerships that are mainstreamed are more likely to realize their full potential.**

In the past, IFIs and other TFPs prioritized their own operations over partnership arrangements. This resulted in relatively weak and fragmented business and management structures, and sub-optimal delivery support and staff incentives, as well as considerable duplication of responsibilities.

**Selectivity and good management contribute to value addition and the attractiveness of an organization for new partnerships.**

Many IFI partnerships have been ineffective owing to inadequate management, poor prioritization and a lack of attention to risk factors. Where they have been effective, prior to embarking on partnerships, they have been subjected to rigorous assessment, with their value-added needs assessed in advance, including transaction costs (notably administration fees) and risks attached to the planned interventions carefully analyzed, thus emphasizing the importance of a greater selectivity.

**Weak monitoring and evaluation systems, and reporting requirements have hampered the performance of DPs.**

There are few consolidated data on partnerships across IFIs and other TFPs, making it difficult to assess their results, value-added and true costs. The solution lies in the regular collection of quality data as part of partnership design. Moreover, it is important to define key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect the development results and value addition of partnerships on which future evaluations can be based.

# Introduction

This Evaluation Synthesis on Partnerships (ESP) constitutes the first phase of a comprehensive thematic evaluation of the partnerships of the African Development Bank (AfDB) conducted by IDEV. The purpose of the ESP is to facilitate learning, both within and outside the AfDB, by broadly assessing the knowledge that has been accumulated in recent years on the development effectiveness of partnerships and donor coordination activities.

By mandate, the AfDB has a fundamental role as a multi-lateral agency for deepening Regional Member Country (RMC) and non-RMC partnerships in Africa, and promoting economic and social progress on the continent. For this reason, the Bank considers the development and support of partnerships to be a key ingredient in its operational strategy, enabling the Bank to become a reliable partner of choice and voice for development in Africa (TYS, 2013-2022).

Development partnerships (DPs) play a central role for all technical and financial partners (TFPs). Globally, partnerships constitute a vital instrument in the international development architecture. This stems from the realization that to succeed development efforts require effective cooperation across institutions: governments, international agencies, the private sector and civil society.

As vehicles for resource mobilization and development cooperation, partnerships have played a prominent role in recent years among traditional and non-traditional donors. While the importance of partnerships for development is well understood, their definition and application vary across a broad spectrum and, given their variety and nature, their impact on development is not systematically captured.

At the AfDB, no comprehensive evaluation of the performance of partnerships has ever been undertaken. Earlier evaluations touching on aspects of partnerships, such as the evaluation of Trust Fund Management (TFM) and the Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results (CEDR), highlighted the need to conduct a specific assessment of the Bank's effectiveness in this domain. These recommendations are also supported by a growing demand from the governing bodies of the Bank to understand the Bank's performance on issues regarding trust funds, co-financing, and policy dialogues, etc. These are all linked to the Bank's ability to be a partner of choice, thereby justifying the need to use knowledge and the lessons learned of other development organizations.

The report presents a synthetic view of the concept of partnership, discusses the main findings by evaluation criteria and presents key lessons.



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# Methodology

The specific objectives of this ESP are: (i) to generate an overall picture of the performance of DPs; (ii) to identify lessons relevant to the improvement of DPs going forward; and (iii) to inform the forthcoming evaluation of the Bank's partnerships.

The ESP was undertaken in three phases, each leading to a specific deliverable: (i) the scoping phase led to the preparation of an inception report; (ii) data gathering and analysis resulted in a draft technical report; and (iii) a review, triangulation and learning phase, including a workshop on emerging findings, led to the final synthesis report.

The ESP focused on key evaluation questions under the standard evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and, to a lesser extent, sustainability) (Figure 1 and Annex 2). To respond to these questions, the ESP conducted a desk study of 38 DP evaluations and studies from different development organizations (see Annex 1). As part of the quality assurance process, an internal and an external independent peer reviewer have reviewed the ESP.

The synthesis covers research, reviews, and evaluation knowledge relating to partnerships at the

global, corporate, country and project levels. Across all evaluation reports it examines the differences in DPs, including their performance, outcomes, management, efficiency, resource mobilization, coordination, leverage, co-financing, knowledge creation, technical assistance and cooperation in both RMCs and non-RMCs.

This evaluation synthesis is based on the experiences of various TFPs, including the AfDB, the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), the World Bank Group (WBG), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the European Union (EU). However, the scope of the synthesis was limited to international financial institutions (IFIs) with similar partnership objectives, institutional processes and clientele. For the AfDB, in lieu of a comprehensive evaluation of partnerships, information was obtained from Country Factor Reviews (CFRs) prepared in the context of the Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results (CEDR), where the issue of partnerships was analyzed.

The ESP was conducted by applying an iterative searching and screening to identify sources of information based mainly on the similarities of types of partnerships' organizational models and approaches. A systematic desk-based review of the

**Figure 1:** Key evaluation questions

Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Lessons
To what extent are partnerships relevant and what partnership instruments are most relevant to achieve development goals ?	To what extent have partnerships delivered on their intended outcomes and added value?	How efficiently are partnerships performing to justify their value addition?	What are the main drivers of partnerships' sustainability ?	What are the main lessons to improve partnerships' performance?

documentation was used in addition to the generation of analytical themes. A validation workshop was also organized with internal Bank staff to discuss the preliminary conclusions.

The ESP has some limitations. For example, development organizations define partnerships based on their organizational objectives, without a common approach. This creates conceptual and analytical difficulties in categorizing and mapping

DPs across multilateral and bilateral institutions. Information on efficiency and sustainability was also limited, and not consistent across all reports.

To balance these limitations, the ESP focuses on obtaining broad knowledge applicable to the context of development organizations, as well as practical lessons that might be useful for all types of partnerships.

# Understanding the Concept of Partnerships for Development

In general, DPs describe collaborative relationships that are targeted toward mutually agreed objectives and involve shared responsibility for outcomes (Picciotto, 2004). They can also be defined as “an arrangement for collective action between legally autonomous organizations that typically involve dedicated funding and common objectives, and can have a global, regional, or single-country focus.” (IEG 2016, see Box 1.)

The evaluation synthesis found no uniform definition of partnerships across the international development community. Often, partnerships are tailored to the business models and needs of IFIs. In view of this, some IFIs focus on aspects of partnership, such as collaboration and equity (balanced responsibility), that are most relevant

to their own objectives. Others focus on the extent to which the utility of a partnership promotes the attainment of their organizational goals (see Annex 3).

Partnerships are distinct from other forms of inter-organizational relationship in several fundamental ways. In the thematic Evaluation Study of the effectiveness of Asian Development Bank Partnerships from February 2018, mutuality and organizational identity are highlighted as distinctive factors. Specifically, while mutuality means horizontal coordination, accountability among partners and equality in decision-making, organizational identity refers to the ability of each partner to maintain its core values and constituencies over time.

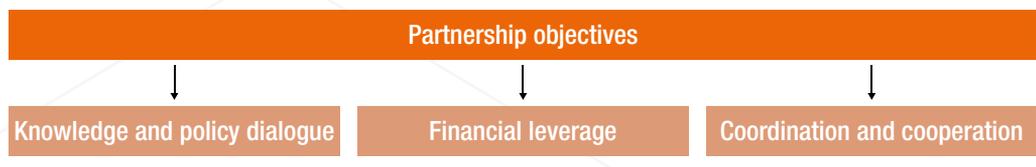
## Box 1: Toward a common definition of partnership programs

The IEG workshop on “Using evaluation evidence to improve the effectiveness of partnership programs” in March 2016 (Washington, D.C., United States) noted the need for a shared definition of partnership programs, with some participants calling for greater clarity in the terminology used in partnerships, including the word “partner” itself.

A presentation by IEG at the workshop suggested a generic definition for partnerships: “An arrangement for collective action between legally autonomous organizations that typically involve dedicated funding and common objectives, and can have global, regional, or single country focus.” According to the IEG presentation, three different categories can be distinguished:

1. **Transaction type** - involves contractual arrangements (e.g., many trust-funded programs, project co-financing).
2. **Network type** - involves loose connections between organizations, often emphasizing information sharing, light coordination (many knowledge networks).
3. **Collaboration type** - involves some formalization of activities and joint decision-making (e.g. global and regional partnership programs, many large multi-donor trust funds, and financial intermediary funds).

Source: IEG 2016.

**Figure 2:** Main objectives of partnerships

There are different ways to categorize partnerships. One way is according to the partnerships' objectives (Figure 2). There is a common understanding across IFIs of three broad objectives of partnerships, namely: (i) financial leverage; (ii) knowledge and policy dialogue; and (iii) coordination and cooperation, including the full exploitation of complementarities and synergies. In exploiting the complementarities and synergies generated from partnerships, some institutions expect a broader set of results, such as achieving policy influence, and scaling-up and mainstreaming programs, as well as using knowledge and learning for innovations. In addition, evidence from various reports included in the synthesis shows a fourth main partnership theme, namely capacity-building, technical assistance and advisory services. On this fourth theme, IFIs' understanding varies significantly across institutions.

Secondly, the review identified three generic categories of partnerships according to institutional arrangements: (i) transaction-type contractual arrangements (e.g., trust-fund programs, and loan and grant co-financing); (ii) network-type connections between organizations, often emphasizing information sharing and research in areas of mutual interest, but only requiring light coordination; and (iii) formal collaboration on activities and joint decision-making (e.g., global and regional partnership programs, multi-donor trust funds for capacity building, and financial intermediary funds) (Figure 3).

Thirdly, multilateral institutions such as the AfDB make a distinction between partnerships that involve financial commitments, irrespective of whether they are for lending or non-lending purposes, and hence require legal agreements, and those that do not. Partnerships that involve financing often

have a leverage or resource-mobilization objective in mind. Financing partnerships support mutual development efforts at the national or regional levels. Two main instruments found under financing partnerships are co-financing agreements and trust funds.

Co-financing (CF) is an agreement whereby partners jointly finance a program or project by bringing together their comparative advantages, thus leveraging funding, knowledge and expertise for the successful implementation of the project. CF can be an ad-hoc activity, or developed within an agreed framework or memorandum of understanding. CF agreements are often implemented by two or more partners under two main modalities: (i) joint financing, whereby donors fund a project together under the rules and systems of only one of the donors and (ii) parallel financing, whereby each donor funds a component of the project using its own rules and processes. Other specific arrangements found include blending financing and provisions of mix of resources such as funding and technical expertise.

A trust fund (TF) represents a legal entity that holds property or assets on behalf of another person, group or organization. In development, TFs constitute a special kind of partnership with donors. They are financial agreements between a development organization and one or more entities (private, or bilateral). TFs are also instrumental and designed to bring various partners together, particularly in multi-donor TFs. However, they also serve as channels of funding to support, directly and indirectly, a wide range of activities and many intended partnership outcomes, such as leverage, knowledge exchange and coordination.

**Figure 3:** Partnerships' common approaches

On the other hand, non-financing partnerships seek influence and aim to boost organizations' internal capacities. They refer to tactical or strategic relationships, with TFPs focused on furthering corporate, regional and country objectives, aside from (but often working in connection with) financial partnerships. The two main types of non-financing partnerships are coordination and cooperation (C&C) partnerships, and knowledge and advisory services partnerships (KASPs).

C&C partnerships relate to different forms of tactical or strategic relationships with TFPs, to further support an institution in implementing its corporate, regional and country objectives and strategies, aside from (or sometimes together with) financing partnerships. Examples include participation in donor cooperation groups at the country level and coordination in the design of country assistance strategies, project preparation, policy dialogue, etc. C&C partnerships refer to three dimensions at national or sector levels: (i) aid

coordination: the formal or informal mechanisms set up at the country level between the government and donors to ensure aid effectiveness; (ii) donor coordination: the arrangements within the donor community to improve the effectiveness of their interventions; and (iii) development coordination, which is the combination of relationships between aid coordination and national government systems (policy-making and implementation, governance, accountability, etc.).

KASPs are a special form of partnership. They are alliances and networks (platforms) that focus on generating and transferring knowledge and innovations in a particular sector or theme, and also focus on learning and applying this knowledge in operations and harmonizing approaches. KASPs sometimes involve finance and technical assistance, particularly through grants, and can also be provided through a TF or constitute a fund in themselves.



# Main Findings

## Relevance

Relevance of partnerships relates to the main considerations concerning why organizations initiate and engage in them, both at the global and local levels, as well as the approach to engaging in and designing such initiatives. The evaluation synthesis examined the question: To what extent are partnerships relevant and what partnership instruments are most relevant to achieve development goals?

### *Justification for partnerships*

Most evaluations examined by the synthesis conclude that partnerships play an essential role in organizations for implementing their operations and achieving their corporate mandates. The role of DPs has increased in recent years, as a result of the expanding scale and ambition of the global development agenda and the growing role of non-state actors in development, such as the private sector, CSOs, philanthropic foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).

For most organizations, partnerships also provide an effective strategic and operational solution to help implement their ever-growing mandates and activities. While having supported resource mobilization for a long time, it appears from a number of the reviewed cases that the recourse to partnership instruments has helped organizations to respond to clients' demands in the context of declining Official Development Assistance (ODA).

At a global level, partnerships are seen as being relevant in supporting various development goals. In addition, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness puts partnership principles for

improved aid effectiveness at the center of the global development agenda. DPs are therefore considered essential in achieving development agendas when they support the implementation of such commitments as country ownership, donor harmonization and alignment with country strategies. In addition, changes in the development landscape have contributed to the momentum toward partnerships. New donors and changing business models require greater coordination and collaboration. In this context, DPs should develop a stronger strategic focus and play an increasingly catalytic role, especially given that most development organizations support the same client countries.

There is complementarity between the relevance of partnerships at a global or regional level, and partnerships at the country level. For most organizations at the global level, partnerships remain highly important and relevant to boost stakeholder engagement and to support the promotion of global development agendas. At the country level, the focus is increasingly on identifying the best partners to achieve various outcomes, such as effective implementation, policy influence, capacity-building, and knowledge and learning, as well as synergies with other TFPs, including non-state actors.

Addressing global issues usually strengthens the relevance of partnerships. This review has noted the growing use of global partnerships by development institutions to tackle global vulnerabilities, ranging from climate change to public health threats. As an illustration of this interest, the GEF, a multi-donor fund that protects the future of the planet and human well-being, has leveraged financial resources from close to 30 countries amounting to USD 4.1 billion as at the end of May 2019.

The relevance of partnerships is also dependent on country context. In fragile contexts, for example, partnerships and the convening role of individual TFPs are much more prominent for overall development issues, while they are largely thematic and sector-oriented in middle-income countries (MICs).

Partnerships are also instrumental in the innovative mobilization of resources. For multilateral development banks (MDBs), DPs have become increasingly central in ensuring resource mobilization and in the building of strategic, long-term cooperation. Financing gaps are very significant and increase the need for financial leverage through partnerships. For example, since 2015, the AfDB's focus on promoting energy partnerships has been aimed at leveraging about USD 50 billion in public and private financing for energy projects to complement its own planned investment of about USD 12 billion between 2016 and 2020.

### ***Partnership frameworks and selectivity***

The review showed that all organizations have some form of policy or strategy in place to guide partnerships. However, they do not always cover all the categories and types of partnerships, and may focus on TFs, resource mobilization, or co-financing. It has been noted, however, that due to the increasing number of partnerships in recent years, most organizations have set up specific partnership frameworks. Their role is to define guidelines for entering into partnerships, ensuring good design of partnership agreements, prioritizing and approving partnerships, and monitoring commitments.

Partnership framework models are, however, diverse, with differing degrees of centralization and levels of approval. These largely depend on the financial implications of the partnerships for the organization and the business model of the organization.

Organizations with sufficient financial resources of their own and an adequate presence in the field tend to see partnerships as an additional instrument. For example, the World Bank has the largest set of partners among MDBs. Its partnerships are mainstreamed throughout its operations, and supported by TFs and global partnerships (financial intermediary funds). Meanwhile, organizations that rely on DPs and donors to mobilize resources for their operations also tend to have well-developed strategic frameworks that outline the role of partnerships. For example, the GEF's business model discusses in some detail the implications of partnerships for decision-making, priority-setting and program implementation. The same applies to IFAD, which relies on various partners for its operations in countries.

How to choose a partner that is fit for purpose is a key issue for most IFIs. All the evaluations reviewed underline the importance of choosing a suitable partner, as this has a great bearing on partnership outcomes. In some organizations, an approval and quality assurance process is required prior to the development of new partnerships. In the absence of a formal process, partnerships tend to develop in an ad-hoc manner, with some of them offering only limited benefits. A comparison at the AsDB indicates that formal partnerships are more often deemed effective (82 percent) than informal ones (63 percent).<sup>3</sup>

Despite the large number of DPs in the international development community and the costs attached, few organizations have undertaken programmatic or partnership-specific assessments, including cost-benefit analyses, of their utility and impact.

The evaluations included in this synthesis suggest that in establishing DPs the following factors should be considered: (i) strategic choice of partners and areas for collaboration; (ii) simple and clear visions; (iii) realistic scope of engagement; (iv) long-term approaches; (v) enhanced analytical capacity; and (vi) alignment with the strategic priorities of the organization. Box 2 presents the four most important factors that make partnerships work in practice.

### Box 2: The four most important factors for partnerships to work in practice

1. **Importance of the attractor:** Partners need to develop a shared vision or interest, and be committed to dedicate the necessary resources to the partnership. Ensuring some level of balance of power between the partners is crucial to ensure the pursuit of the common agenda. The shared partnership vision and interest should permeate all levels of the organization.
2. **Realism and responsibility:** Realism should guide the design of the partnership and its contractual arrangements. All partners should be proportionally responsible for the success of the partnership.
3. **Dynamism and conflict resolution:** Staff must be well equipped to deal with issues arising from shared responsibilities and partnership management. Conflict resolution should be geared toward ensuring optimal effectiveness of the partnership.
4. **Continuous flexibility.** Business processes need to encourage a certain level of decentralized flexibility during the course of the work.

### Design of partnerships

Partnerships are designed as platforms to ensure complementarity between the organizations' respective mandates, objectives, comparative advantages and resources. While this strengthens their relevance, it has been found in the review that formats of DPs range from very specific agreements with detailed objectives and commitments to rather simple memorandums of understanding with no clear framework or timeline.

By design, partnerships are increasingly moving from being opportunistic to becoming strategic. This can be explained by various factors, including (i) the entry of new actors in the field of development; (ii) the call for improved development effectiveness and economies of scale; and (iii) for countries, the growing need for domestic resource mobilization to bridge financing gaps in a context of reduced aid resources. Similarly, with a growing number of self-imposed countries borrowing limits (to maintain debt sustainability), there is an increasing focus on knowledge and coordination partnerships.

At the project level, a review of project design assessments reveals that projects financed through partnerships generally tend to be well designed. However, the quality in design, as shown by some studies, shows no significant difference with traditional projects. A comparison between projects funded through CF or TFs with projects

funded from organizations' core resources shows that the design of projects funded through various DP modalities ranked on average no better and no worse in terms of design quality. Multi-donor TF projects performed somewhat better than the rest, but the difference is not significant enough to draw any conclusion.

The review identified four main challenges that are potentially detrimental to the relevance of partnerships in organizations. These challenges are encountered both at the global and local levels.

- i. **Proliferation and complexity:** Streamlining and harmonizing the growing number of global and local partnerships is required to mitigate their increasing complexity. Despite the stronger expectations by donors and recipient countries of better integration of the various agendas, priorities and themes in policies and across countries, harmonization with national development plans is often arduous, complex and resource-consuming.
- ii. **Political will:** TFPs often face challenges in collaborating with beneficiary governments. Some governments still lack the political commitment to participate in policy dialogue with development organizations without clear-cut incentives (such as budget support), or to engage with non-traditional partners.

- iii. **Quality at entry:** Several evaluations point to issues regarding design quality and the consequent lack of focus on the results of partnerships. Many global partnership programs lack clear objectives, results frameworks, and adequate monitoring and evaluation systems. They also suffer from poor resource allocation and the fragmentation of systems, as well as parallel budgeting and approval processes. These issues are detrimental to the design of good projects and activities that are linked to the core business of the organizations, thus reducing their likelihood of success.
- iv. **Transparency and accessibility:** Existing communication and feedback channels are inefficient. Most global partnerships and their operational activities in countries and regions are not listed on accessible databases. This deficiency potentially limits the coherence of partnerships and leads to duplication that renders some partnerships irrelevant.

## Effectiveness

Effective DPs at global, regional, and country levels are intended to deliver public goods and services that contribute to the well-being or capacity of targeted beneficiaries. The synthesis examined the question: To what extent have partnerships delivered on their intended outcomes and added value?

The results of DPs and their value addition to organizations' traditional operations are central to development effectiveness. While some DPs deliver easily measurable results, such as financial leverage (additionality) and effectiveness, the results from others, such as knowledge and policy dialogue partnerships (policy influence), are more difficult to quantify. As a result, this synthesis

examined the effectiveness of different types of partnerships according to their objectives, namely: (i) financial leverage; (ii) knowledge and policy dialogue; and (iii) coordination and cooperation.

### *Financial leverage partnerships*

The ESP examined the effectiveness of financial leverage partnerships under their two main forms: co-financing and trust funds.

#### Co-financing

All reviewed cases point to the conclusion that CF partnerships are one of the most effective types of partnership. This is due to their capacity to leverage significant partner resources and reduce transaction costs when covered by an agreement.

At one end of the spectrum, public CF agreements are very successful in mobilizing high levels of resources, both financial and technical, for sovereign (i.e., public sector) projects in sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture. Private CF and public-private partnerships (PPPs), at the other end, leverage financial resources for private sector projects, but can also contribute to country risk mitigation for the partnering organizations (Boxes 3 and 4).

All IFIs' reviewed evaluations report a steady increase in CF activities over recent years, with the inclusion of various forms of innovative finance, such as variants of parallel project component financing by other donors and commercial CF categories. It has also been found that context-wise, CF activities generally perform better in MICs, where government and executing agencies have adequate capacities to manage projects involving multiple donor processes, than in LICs.

### Box 3: A case of co-financing at the AfDB: The Enhanced Private Sector Assistance (EPSA)

The Enhanced Private Sector Assistance (EPSA) initiative is a multi-component, multi-donor framework for resource mobilization and development partnership to support implementation of the AfDB's Strategy for Private Sector Development. Established in 2005 in partnership with the Government of Japan, the EPSA consists of: (i) the Accelerated Co-financing Facility for Africa (ACFA) (ii) non-sovereign loans (NSLs) and (3) the Fund for African Private Sector Assistance (FAPA).

ACFA is a sovereign co-financing arrangement between the AfDB and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). By 2016, there had been 21 projects approved totaling more than USD 1.4 billion from JICA, USD 3.3 billion from the AfDB and a total project cost of USD 6 billion mainly in the transportation and energy sectors.

NSL is a line of credit from JICA to the Bank on concessional terms for financing the Bank's private sector operations. So far, there have been six NSLs, totaling USD 1.2 billion equivalent, starting from NSL1 in 2007 to NSL6 in 2015. Thus far, 33 projects totaling USD 1.8 billion of AfDB approvals have been endorsed, with total project cost of more than USD 7 billion. Major projects include credit lines and equity to regional DFIs, private equity funds, and project finance for infrastructure PPPs, etc.

FAPA is a multi-donor Trust Fund for technical assistance and capacity building for the Bank's public and private sector clients. The current volume of the fund is USD 72 million. By 2016, 62 projects had been approved, bringing the total FAPA commitments to USD 52 million. FAPA projects support implementation of the three key pillars of the AfDB's private sector development strategy: (i) improving the investment and business climate; (ii) provision of social and economic infrastructure; and (iii) enterprise development.

Source: EPSA report 2005-2016 (2016).

The findings highlight that CF projects have delivered expected outputs by a high margin. However, the achievement of outcomes is nonetheless debatable due to the limited availability of information. In most instances, CF facilitated coordination and ultimately led to improved project results by contributing to national development outcomes through complementarities and policy engagement. Other positive outcomes of CF arrangements highlighted by the evaluation include the strengthening of relationships with partners, capacity-building across different agencies, and increased accountability.

However, one of the objectives of CF is usually to mobilize additional funding from other entities that are not part of the agreement (leverage). This is based on the assumption that, by putting their resources together, the partners in an agreement (usually IFIs and bilateral partners) should be able to attract additional funding from other sources. This objective is not achieved in the case of most IFIs. Evidence shows that opportunities for additional leverage outside the agreement are usually not sufficiently pursued by partners. In all cases, for both MDBs and bilateral partners, CF in projects and Program-Based Operations in general is not

sufficiently oriented toward mobilizing additional resources, but more oriented toward filling funding gaps. This indicates that leveraging was more ad-hoc than driven by strategic goals. This weakness can be explained by the fact that few organizations determine clear strategic goals in this domain.

However, even under supportive and favorable circumstances, CF can be complicated. Challenges to the effectiveness of CF are in many cases due to complexities in administration, reporting and partner relations management. These challenges are usually acute in the case of joint financing and when agreements failed to assess the processes of both donors sufficiently to ensure smooth management of the agreements.

A common challenge is the inadequate accounting for partner contributions within program and project documents. Some evaluations have pointed to cases where technical expertise and administrative costs borne by a single partner have not been properly accounted for, giving rise to a common cause of disaffection and slow program implementation. This is caused by the inadequacy of financial reporting systems and difficulties in reporting value addition, such as for policy influence and scaling up.

#### Box 4: Lessons and best practices on PPPs from an IEG evaluation (World Bank)

The IEG 2015 evaluation on Support for Public-Private Partnerships attributes their success to being dependent on the enabling environment, in which they are embedded, and the role and capacity of the public sector for reform and support. The four main lessons from IEG's PPP evaluation are as follows:

1. Upstream work aimed at sector reform failed in almost half of the cases because of the complexity and political implications of the reform processes. At the project level, contingent liabilities for governments that emerge from PPPs are rarely fully quantified, although project design tends to give attention to ensuring adequate risk sharing.
2. Strong government commitment and the availability of a government champion to promote the PPP agenda and ensure inter-ministerial coordination were the most important drivers of success for upstream work. Countries need to be sufficiently mature and ready to apply the concept of PPPs well.
3. Capacity building for PPPs, and building the legal and institutional framework were found to be the second most frequently addressed enabling factor.
4. The market structure of a sector needs to create conditions for the private sector to operate, and regulatory bodies should be competent and protect operators from political interference. Frequent stakeholder consultation and active involvement of local staff likewise contributed to the success of policy reform. Staying engaged beyond financial closure of a PPP is a strategic necessity.

Source: World Bank Group Support to Public-Private Partnerships: Lessons from Experience in Client Countries, FY02–12.

#### Trust funds

All donors clearly recognize the importance of trust funds (TFs) and their contribution to the funding of development interventions, most notably in knowledge, policy discussions, coordination and capacity development.

Operations in the vast majority of cases deliver their expected outputs by providing coordinated grant financing, and promoting key global and thematic agendas. This occurs through the provision of resources to support sectors where countries might see little interest in investing their own resources.

Multi-donor trust funds ranked first in terms of effectiveness, while other types of TFs, such as bilateral or country-specific TFs, are also effective in delivering outputs, albeit to a lesser extent. This trend applies to various organizations but the underlying reasons are not always systematically explored. Box 5 shows an overview of TF assessments at the World Bank.

Information on the achievement of outcomes for TFs is difficult to find. However, from the evaluations reviewed, the team concluded that in all MDBs' cases, TFs provided considerable support for innovation, studies, conferences and operations, and were key in improving the analytical work and identification of bankable projects, while also ensuring high visibility for the institutions. For more specialized institutions, the synthesis found that TFs are critical for effective partnerships, in particular knowledge partnerships

Despite the positive uptake of TFs, all evaluations focus mainly on the hindrances to their effectiveness, mainly in terms of management. Although they have experienced strengthened fiduciary accountability in recent years thanks to reforms, TFs often still face problems that affect their performance.

All evaluations have reported, to varying degrees, three key issues that need to be addressed to make TFs more effective: (i) the misalignment between the multitude of TFs and core programs of the organizations; (ii) weak corporate oversight and coordination; and (iii) the disparate monitoring and evaluation, and reporting systems.

### Box 5: Trust Funds and Financial Intermediary Funds at the World Bank

A 2011 evaluation of the trust fund portfolio at the World Bank Group (IEG, 2011) showed that, while trust funds do not demonstrably provide additional resources at the global level, their value-added is more evident when they support global public goods than when they are used merely to supplement national development efforts.

In a 2015 review of the World Bank's global trust funded partnership programs (financial intermediary funds, or FIFs), IEG identified four major problems: (i) risk of proliferation of uncoordinated partnership initiatives with inappropriate earmarking, and parallel budgeting and approval processes; (ii) missed opportunities to link up with the WBG mainstream work and particularly its country programs; (iii) poor oversight and accountability; and (iv) lack of clear goals, indicators and independent evaluations in many of these programs.

The WBG's trust funds and FIFs are important sources of development financing. They form a significant part of the resource envelope of the WBG and provide predictable multi-year funding, with USD 31.6 billion funds held in trust as of end-financial year 2017.

Sources: Trust Fund Support for Development: An Evaluation of the World Bank's Trust Fund Portfolio, IEG (2011, 2015), Trust Fund Annual report (World Bank, 2017).

Especially for IFIs, the review points out that TFs are often not optimally aligned with organizations' strategic priorities, as illustrated by the case of the WBG in Box 5. In addition, there is overlap and duplication in the management of TFs. Complex administrative modalities, serious implementation delays, and poor oversight and accountability make it difficult to integrate TF-supported programs and interventions into the regular work program of partners and governments.

Of key concern is the fact that TFs often lack sufficient recipient participation in their initiatives and rarely subscribe to the aid effectiveness principles of ownership, harmonization and coordination. Coordination problems relate, among others, to missing links between the strategic priorities and country programs of the individual IFI, as well as to differences in project approval and reporting requirements. Of key concern, the proliferation of TFs leads to a duplicity of the governance and accountability structure in organizations since they are typically not included in the budget approved by the Board and are thus even more likely to have a weak alignment with the main strategic focus of the organization.

Corporate-wide oversight and reporting of TFs has been difficult due to decentralized management, together with multiple indicators and reporting formats. Aggregate reporting on results and utilization of enhanced TF performance indicators is not evident.

### *Knowledge and advisory services partnerships*

Knowledge, advisory services partnerships (KASPs) play a critical role in policy influence, advisory services, and engagement with the private sector and civil society. Experience gathered from all evaluations indicates that knowledge partnerships are very effective in promoting policy engagement. At the same time, despite some success stories, in practice the quality and effectiveness of knowledge partnerships vary widely across institutions. Shortcoming identified by the team include poor design and focus, underfunding, and insufficient linkage with operations (Box 6).

The evaluations of the different KASPs show that they work best when knowledge is generated directly from programs and projects in which a range of partners have taken part, and can hence leverage the gathered experience. Knowledge partnerships that included civil society were found to be particularly effective in reaching vulnerable groups in-country, disseminating best practices and informing policies at the local level. Other best practices include the building of large alliances and networks with MDBs and UN agencies to disseminate knowledge, thus widening the base for learning.

Review of evaluations from MDBs and specialized IFIs indicates a surge in the funding of knowledge work over the past decade, having a positive impact on KASPs. Large organizations in particular have

made knowledge management a key element of their advisory and lending services, especially in MICs, and use knowledge products to influence the development agenda and shape the international debate on key development issues. This sharp increase in spending for knowledge is a trend seen in all organizations.

However, despite this significant increase in knowledge generation activities among MDBs, these partnership activities still take a backseat compared with lending operations. In all cases, insufficient resourcing was considered the major obstacle.

Other limitations stem from the general lack of awareness by countries of the available opportunities offered by these partnerships and the limited success of these institutions in creating synergies between KASPs, other partnerships and lending activities. While the value addition of KASPs and their products is not in dispute, all evaluations highlight the lack of in-depth analysis and the need for more studies on their impact and performance.

### ***Coordination and cooperation partnerships***

The importance of coordination and cooperation (C&C) partnerships cannot be over emphasized, as they constitute the ground mechanisms to ensure aid effectiveness.

C&C partnerships operate better when the three dimensions of coordination are effective. Donor coordination and aid coordination need to be in place, and strengthened by the initiative of a government taking the driver's seat in policy and implementation.

All reviewed cases point to an improved C&C partnership performance over the years, in line with the aid effectiveness principles. But C&C partnerships are still too often focused on donor coordination, namely the division of labor between partners, the avoidance of overlaps, etc., rather than on developing and exploiting synergies and complementarities (Box 7).

In this context, C&C partnership performance differs significantly depending on the country context, with the most successful cases found in countries where government leadership in ensuring coordination among donors is strongest. The review shows that in the context where there is strong government leadership of development coordination, and adequate mechanisms for harmonization and alignment to hold donors accountable, donors' engagement and coordination have significantly improved. Conversely, some countries that do not have such a high level of leadership, or do not have an interest in coordination, perform poorly. The same applies within a country at the sector level, depending on the leadership and arrangements in place.

#### **Box 6: Knowledge partnerships at the Asian Development Bank**

Knowledge partnerships in AsDB take a large share of the Bank's corporate partnerships portfolio (62 percent), and the number doubled between 2009 and 2015. However, the quality of these knowledge partnerships is often deemed problematic, lacking clear results frameworks, and revealing poor reporting and dispersed management. For instance, **introducing knowledge hubs proved mostly unsuccessful due to poor design and focus, under-funding and a lack of linkages with AsDB technical staff.**

In contrast, effective knowledge partnership in AsDB consisted of collaboration on specific initiatives that led to more systematic and joint project preparation and implementation, engagement of high-level individuals in conferences and policy dialogue, and the completion of a series of publications or events, often with joint funding (OECD and World Wildlife Fund). In sum, what worked in AsDB was to **avoid vagueness and to link up knowledge partnerships with AsDB's technical expertise, project preparation and high-profile engagement.**

Source: Evaluation of the effectiveness of Partnerships of the Asian Development Bank, (AsDB, February 2016).

### Box 7: Assessment of coordination and cooperation at the AfDB (2004-13)

The CEDR assessed the performance of the AfDB in C&C partnerships over a decade in 14 countries. It concluded that the Bank paid attention to C&C partnerships at the strategic level. In rare cases, the Bank even operated under the umbrella of a joint assistance strategy, for example in Tanzania (CSP 2006-10) and in Zambia, where the Bank did not create a separate CSP from the 2007-10 Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia.

Overall, the Bank's efforts did not fully translate into an alignment of priorities and operational coordination. Other than some joint budget-support operations, there was only limited synergy with the operations of other development partners. Lack of harmonized procedures often prevented participation in joint mechanisms, triggering delays and transaction costs. Fragility was a compounding factor for operational coordination.

Despite efforts to structure cooperation in these contexts, effective partnerships were hampered by a lack of government leadership and national institutions that were sub-optimal in their functioning (often leading to bilateral and informal dialogue).

The assessment indicated that difficulties could still be overcome, even in challenging conditions. Positive findings emerged about the Bank's role in partner coordination in different contexts, as in Tunisia following the 2011 crisis. Also, the presence of a country office can have a positive influence on the Bank's ability to establish and maintain formal and informal partnerships, and work effectively with government bodies and development partners.

Source: Comprehensive Evaluation of the Development Results of the African Development Bank Group 2004-2013, IDEV (2016).

C&C partnerships are also important in fragile contexts, conflict and crisis situations, or where government capacity is weak. Partnerships in fragile contexts help donors to leverage each other's comparative advantages. Fragile state operations are found to be relatively well-coordinated at the regional and sector levels, as opposed to the national level.

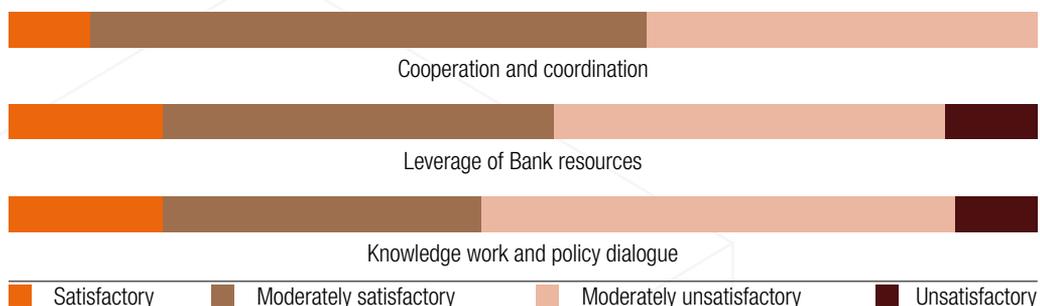
In the CEDR, the CFRs of 14 countries where the AfDB operated between 2004 and 2015 provide the comparative ratings for each of the partnership dimensions (Figure 4). They indicate that C&C partnerships were often rated slightly better than leverage, knowledge and policy dialogue. The countries where partnership dimensions were rated satisfactory were Tunisia and Zambia (for knowledge and policy dialogue), Zambia and Senegal (for financial leverage) and Morocco (for C&C). Knowledge and policy dialogue were rated unsatisfactory in Mozambique and financial leverage was rated unsatisfactory in Cameroon.

Nevertheless, as much as partnerships are regarded as vital strategic tools in conflict regions, their effectiveness was found to be generally limited, particularly in MICs, due to their fragmentation and low interest in coordinating aid interventions.

In addition, ownership of partnerships by countries and other relevant partners is a critical determinant of success. It was found in the CSO engagement evaluations of the AsDB and IFAD that most partnership projects involving NGOs show convincing results, suggesting that these organizations can play a greater role in poverty reduction efforts when ownership is ensured through: (i) full delegation of project design and management by donors; (ii) providing executing agencies with clearer and more user-friendly operational guidance; and (iii) implementation flexibility to manage conditions beyond the control of project management. Moreover, partnership projects involving NGOs have also performed well, suggesting that they too can play an effective role in poverty reduction efforts.

### Efficiency

While examining how efficiently partnerships are performing to justify their value addition, the ESP identified three main aspects relevant for the efficiency of partnerships: (i) partnership administration that entails aspects of management processes and administrative costs; (ii) project processing and implementation; and (iii) staff incentives at the project or country levels.

**Figure 4:** Comparative effectiveness ratings of partnership activities in 14 AfDB country strategy evaluations

### **Partnership administration**

The synthesis found that the efficiency of partnerships is largely in line with, if slightly lower than, the managing organizations' level of performance. They are assessed to be on a par with MDBs' less efficient operational activities. Rapid growth in the number of partnerships is a significant challenge to their governance, with the main obstacles emanating from the differences in mandates, operational practices, and monitoring and information systems.

Organizational structures of partnerships usually evolve organically, rather than by design. As a result, they are often poorly adapted to existing business processes, procurement rules and organizational structures on both sides. Especially for multilaterals, partnerships are still constrained by cumbersome and inflexible procedures, insufficient staffing resources, and poorly aligned procurement and disbursement procedures. Typically, partnership management structures are fragmented, causing overlaps and duplication with respect to partner-government relations, management of TFs, programming and disbursement.

Most reviewed evaluations identified process reforms that have been initiated. Despite recorded progress, the evaluations note the persistence of cumbersome systems and procedures, whether actual or perceived by stakeholders. The issues are further aggravated by challenges such as inadequate staffing for the management of partnerships.

Regarding the cost of running partnerships, the analysis indicates that organizations have significantly improved their capacity, thus reducing the costs of partnership management. On average, operating costs range between 5 and 10 percent of a partnership's total resources. Practices range from charging a service fee for administration to having a full cost recovery system. When a partnership has dedicated staff, these costs are likely to be higher. Recently, most organizations have been putting in place shared platform services as a solution to improve administration and operating costs.

The main concerns relating to the efficiency of partnerships are: (i) delays in processing of projects, including design and approval; (ii) redundancies between processes, either within the organization or with partners' organizations; (iii) differences in reporting systems; (iv) lack of appropriate communication, sometimes due to cultural differences; and (v) slow disbursement. Most evaluations report that the perception of inefficiencies in the administration of partnerships does not constitute a major impediment to their operations and is sometimes explained by the high expectations of the partners, given that these partnerships on average do not perform any better or worse than normal operations. Moreover, weaknesses in administrative issues are only to be expected in the early years of these partnerships and tend to be resolved or minimized over the long run. Partners have also learned that it is good practice to undertake periodic reviews and instigate reforms of partnership practices.

Insufficient partnership assessments can have significant management and transaction cost implications. The reviews indicated some cases where partners had problems utilizing the financing, and other resources made available to them, in a timely manner, pointing more broadly at high risks of default. Some of these transaction costs and reputational risks can be reduced through the establishment of longer-term relationships and embarking on trust-building efforts. The reviews indicated that when embarking on partnerships, notably PPPs, it was important not to lose sight of the organization's core values.

Looking ahead, improving the governance of partnerships will require strategies to address not only their multiplicity but also how to evaluate their results. The latter will require strengthening of resource frameworks and M&E procedures that go well beyond programmatic concerns and cover a longer-term horizon. Moreover, better-designed and more accessible corporate partnership indicators, as well as regular evaluation of critical global partnerships, will greatly enhance the accountability of partnerships.

### ***Project processing and implementation***

Efficiency is largely covered by assessing project cycle activities, such as design, approval, disbursement, procurement and implementation time. In general, performance in these areas is found to be lower for projects funded through a partnership.

The evidence gathered suggests that disbursement speeds are on average slower. Disbursement delays and cumbersome procurement processes are cited

as key issues of disaffection among partners. Based on the recommendations of several evaluations, processes could be significantly improved through simplification, without affecting the quality of projects and their successful implementation.

Efficiency in implementation time also appears to be an important concern. Projects funded by partnerships tend to require more implementation time. Differences are generally found between loan operations and grants, with grants generally recording longer implementation delays.

An important aspect in ensuring efficiency is the incentives that are in place for the effective implementation of partnership projects. The success of partnerships requires well-aligned staff incentives for engagement and promotion. For example, the efficiency of partnerships at the country level is closely related to the number and seniority of staff, and how long they occupy their posts. In cases of rapid staff turnover and limited time for engagement, partnerships are unlikely to achieve a satisfactory level of efficiency.

The evaluations found that the most important elements for partnership building and results in countries are partner-country presence, and the government's capacity and interest. A country office with staff possessing good technical and communication skills was found to be critical for partnership efficiency.

Adding departmental results framework targets for various types of partnerships may provide special incentives to staff to go the extra mile (e.g., extra time to process, extra mission resources, and extra recognition for staff).

## Sustainability

In terms of partnerships, sustainability refers to the likelihood that: (i) institutional (ii) financial and (iii) project-level resources are sufficient to maintain the envisaged outcomes over time. The synthesis examined the question: What are the main drivers of partnerships' sustainability? It found that sustainability depends not only on the program or partnership itself, but also on the complementary activities of partners and the building of institutional and human capacities in recipient countries.

Overall, the reviews indicated that sustainability of DPs was generally weak, mainly because they were not well integrated into program design. The sustainability of many partnerships and the benefits they generate are threatened by weak resource mobilization strategies, poor governance and management, an inability to keep pace with the changing global and regional context, and the challenges of achieving concrete results.

### *Institutional sustainability*

Institutional sustainability refers to the sustainability of the partnership itself or whether the various partners can maintain and manage appropriate relationships to continue the partnership and/or attract new partners. The ESP found that partnerships have largely been sustainable. The reviewed cases show that institutional sustainability is more likely where partnerships have delivered positive results or outputs. It is also likely that a partnership between institutions is sustained when partners are building on their comparative advantages and each holds a strategic position.

For example, a bilateral partner is more likely to partner and continue to partner with a multilateral to build on the latter's ability to manage projects in a significantly greater number of countries and regions than a bilateral can handle with its own network. However, competition still plays an important role and the default of a partner or its inability to deliver effective projects is likely to lead to the termination of the partnership, or its non-renewal.

### *Financial sustainability*

Financial sustainability relates to the likelihood of ensuring continuous and predictable funding for the partnership over time. For financial sustainability, it is important to ensure that partners' actual contributions correspond to their commitments, and to assess whether there is a need for new financing in the medium to longer term.

Financial resource availability is often the main challenge in a context of declining aid resources. The unpredictability of contributions to established partnerships is of the utmost concern to all organizations.

This aspect is often assessed through partner perceptions of the predictability of future allocations. Considering the complex decision-making processes involved in these financing commitments, this predictability has been mixed in recent years. However, there is no uniformity in this assessment, as partnerships have different replenishment and renewal processes, and considerations may diverge for each partner. As indicated above, the likelihood of financial sustainability is also dependent on the partnership's actual performance and its perceived geostrategic importance.

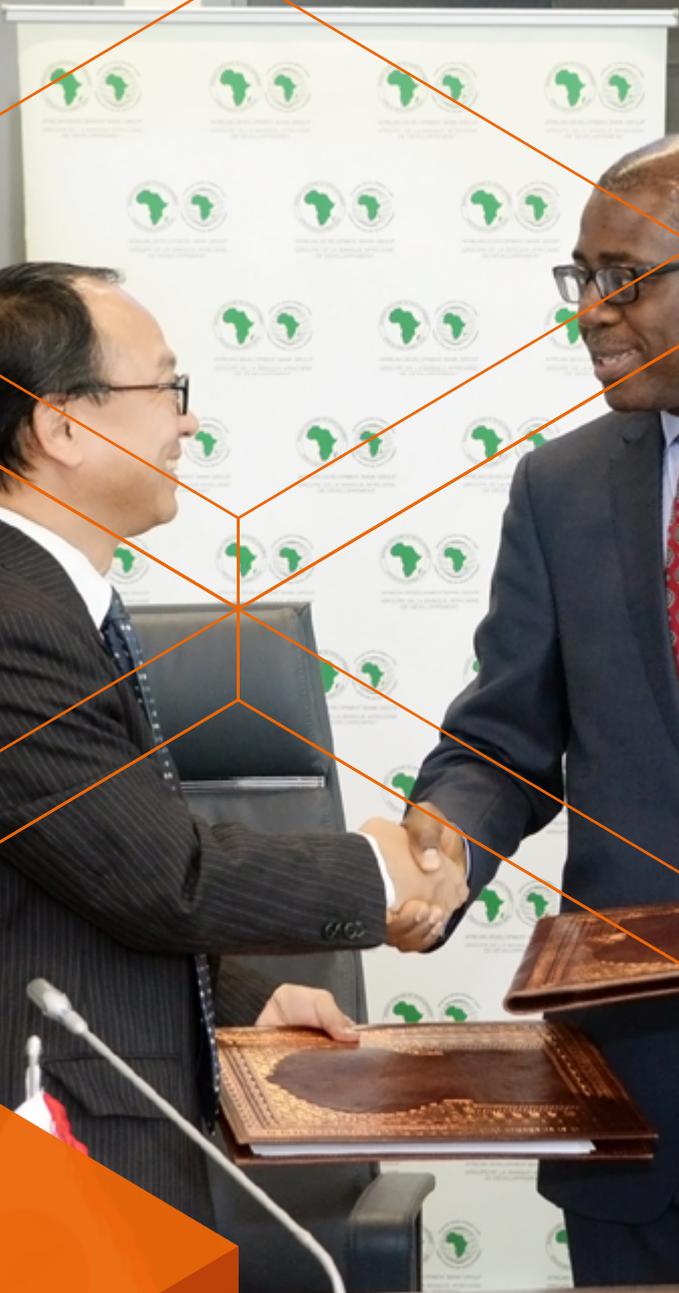
### ***Project-level sustainability***

Project-level sustainability is related to the likelihood that project outcomes are sustained after project completion. Results from different evaluations show a mixed picture. When results are achieved, the sustainability of their benefits can be low when partners are not sufficiently involved in project implementation. This can sometimes be low due to the lack of a financing plan after program completion and an over-reliance on public debt or aid as the main source of financing.

Evidence suggests that there may be weaknesses in the sustainability of projects funded through partnerships. However, there is no evidence that this sustainability is lower than in other projects.

It was noted in some cases that inadequate attention to capacity-building and risk management have significantly reduced the likelihood of continued benefits. These cases found that it is critical that risks to sustainability are identified from the outset, both at the strategic and project levels, and options for mitigating them are well defined. Sustainability cannot be addressed through remedial project measures alone.

In terms of the sustainability of benefits, the key message is that it is important to focus on long-term capacity-building, and support complementary activities, as well as placing an emphasis on decentralization activities. Moreover, it is important to define exit strategies, even when the need for continued partnership is indisputable.



**YUKUO MURATA**  
TO THE REPUBLIC OF COTE D'IVOIRE

# Lessons Learned and Conclusion

## Lessons Learned

From the analysis above, the ESP draws the following major lessons to be considered for future DPs:

- **Successful DPs are strategically anchored and well-coordinated.** Partnerships work best when partners are adaptive and able to respond to opportunities arising out of evolving country or regional circumstances. The partnership vision of the institution should be shared with, and allowed to permeate, all levels of the organization. Staff should be well-equipped to deal with issues arising from shared responsibilities. Business management processes need to be flexible enough to allow for a degree of decentralized delegation of authority.
- **It is important to strengthen organizational capacity to deliver on partnerships' objectives.** Given the increased complexity of the current international development agenda and changing global, regional and national institutional structures, the demand for (and supply of) partnerships is certain to grow rapidly in the future. IFIs will face increasing complexity in their partnership operations, characterized by expanded partnering and blending of financing instruments. New management approaches, as well as staff skills, will be required. However, the complexity will also have to be addressed by reforms targeted at simplifying business processes, exploiting parallel operations, enhancing technical capacity development, and promoting country leadership. It will also be important to give some thought to the selection of partner roles, i.e., senior or junior, outsourcing of responsibilities, and developing good partnership principles. Partnerships require specialized skills, including the capacity for

policy dialogue, communication and teamwork, and these skills will need to be reflected in the recruitment of partnership staff and consultants.

- **Partnerships that are mainstreamed are more likely to realize their full potential.** IFIs in the past have tended to give partnerships a lower priority than their own operations, resulting in relatively weak and fragmented business and management structures, sub-optimal delivery support and staff incentives, and considerable role duplication. The emerging partnership environment, with its multiple manifestations, will require better operational and business processes, as well as mainstreaming within IFI structures. Mainstreaming is effective when organizations apply a decentralized approach with appropriate coordination, information systems and incentives to promote collaborating at all levels.

- **Selectivity and good management contribute to value addition and the attractiveness of an organization for new partnerships.** Many IFI partnerships have been ineffective owing to inadequate management, poor prioritization and lack of attention to risk factors. Where they have been effective, prior to embarking on partnerships, they have been subjected to rigorous assessment, with their valued-added needs assessed in advance, including transaction costs (notably administration fees), and risks attached to the planned interventions carefully analyzed. Good IFI partnerships are not accidental; they are buttressed by the availability of internal institutional capacity to provide the requisite support, and link departments and other levels of the organization in pursuit of corporate goals. To the extent possible, country and regional partnership priorities, notably the allocation of

resources between operations, and knowledge and advisory services, should be aligned with those of the partner headquarters.

- **Weak monitoring and evaluation systems and reporting requirements have hampered the performance of DPs, and need to be improved.** There are few consolidated data on partnerships in IFIs, making it difficult to assess their results, value-added and true costs. The remedy to this situation lies in the regular collection of quality data as part of the partnership design. Moreover, it is important to define KPIs that reflect the results and value addition of partnerships, on which future evaluations can be based.

## Conclusion

Partnerships have the potential to contribute to long-term development impact. The reviews and evaluations included in this synthesis indicate that successful partnerships have the potential to improve the impact and effectiveness of development interventions through a more efficient use of resources and the promotion of innovation and strong commitment.

At the strategic level, it is important to have an effective policy to promote partnerships firmly anchored in the core activities of the partner agencies and not seen as peripheral to corporate goals. Partnership policies should also be accompanied by well-defined objectives, a common approach, agreed estimates of the resources available, and a reliable monitoring mechanism, with evidence-based outcome indicators.

To date, there are significant gaps in international development cooperation between what is planned with respect to partnerships and what has been implemented so far. This points to problems in the implementation of partnerships and a much slower-than-expected capacity to learn from experience.

Improving the success of partnership operations will require not only improved design and implementation of partner-funded projects, but also a change in institutional mindsets, demonstrated by the adoption of good practices and techniques of development collaboration.

Looking ahead, success will require the establishment of, and adherence to, basic rules of the game, whose ingredients include: political will, adequate resources, and a consequential, well-designed and executed partnership strategy.



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# Annex 1: Evaluations and literature included in the synthesis

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## Annex 2: Methodology

To respond to these questions, the ESP conducted a desk study of the 38 DP evaluations and studies listed in Annex 1.

It applied an iterative searching and screening to identify sources of information based mainly on the similarities of types of partnerships' organizational models and approaches. A systematic desk-based review of the documentation was used in addition to the generation of analytical themes.

A validation workshop was also organized with internal Bank staff to discuss the preliminary conclusions. As part of the quality assurance process, the ESP has been reviewed by an internal and an external independent peer reviewer.

The matrix below details the evaluation questions that guided the synthesis work.

Key questions	Sub-questions
<b>Relevance: What partnerships and partnership instruments are most relevant?</b>	
<b>How are partnerships understood and defined?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are the most important partnership categories, instruments and mechanisms?</li> </ul>
<b>How are the responsibilities for partnerships shared across institutions?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is the role and mandate of partnerships departments?</li> <li>■ How are responsibilities shared?</li> <li>■ How is the framework for the management of partnership designed?</li> <li>■ To what extent is staff informed and empowered to develop partnerships?</li> </ul>
<b>How selective are IFIs in entering into partnerships?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are the criteria of partnership selection? How do partnerships come about?</li> <li>■ Are selected partnerships the most appropriate ones in service of a particular partnership goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness: To what extent have partnerships delivered on their intended outcomes and added value?</b>	
<b>What are the overall results and effectiveness of partnerships?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are the main overall results for different partnership categories and mechanisms, in particularly vis-à-vis the various partnership goals?</li> <li>■ To what extent have co-financed projects achieved their expected results?</li> <li>■ To what extent have trust funds and other strategic partnerships helped to facilitate the preparation of projects; knowledge work and capacity-building?</li> </ul>
<b>Which partnerships work, for whom, how and under which circumstances: Who benefits and why?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What differences in results exist across partnership categories and mechanisms and why?</li> <li>■ What are the factors that are affecting the performance of partnerships?</li> <li>■ How do different partnerships affect benefits of different clients, countries (country categories?) and target groups?</li> </ul>
<b>What is the value-added of different partnership categories and instruments?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To what extent have different partnership types and mechanisms achieved their intended outcomes? Has there been value-added?</li> <li>■ Have partnerships delivered more effectively than non-partnered activities would have done?</li> <li>■ How does the experience of partnership value-added?</li> </ul>

Key questions	Sub-questions
<b>Efficiency and value for money: How efficiently are partnerships performing to justify their value addition?</b>	
<b>How efficiently are partnerships organized?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Are the partners' internal organization and associated processes efficient for: (i) general support structures; (ii) partnership approval processes; (iii) administrative support systems, (iv) legal reviews; and (v) monitoring and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>Is staff equipped and incentivized to manage partnerships?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Are partnerships supported through adequate institutional structures and business processes?</li> <li>■ To what extent do processes address and support selectivity and efficient management of partnerships?</li> <li>■ To what extent is the pursuit of partnerships encouraged and rewarded?</li> </ul>
<b>To what extent do partnership benefits and value-addition justify their transaction costs? (value-for-money)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is there a process of balancing benefits/value-addition and costs when entering into partnerships?</li> <li>■ Which costs occur most frequently and how do they affect the projects?</li> <li>■ Which partnership risks are most prominent and how are they mitigated?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability: What are the main drivers of partnerships sustainability?</b>	
<b>What is the likelihood of sustainability at various levels of the partnerships?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How sustainable are partnerships at: (i) the institutional level; (ii) the financial level; and (iii) at the project level? Overall, are benefits likely to be continued?</li> <li>■ What are the main factors affecting sustainability?</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons learned on partnerships</b>	
<b>What are the main partnership lessons?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are the main lessons learned and best practices from this review to improve partnership engagement and management?</li> <li>■ What works in mobilizing and leveraging resources?</li> <li>■ What are the identified partnerships' best practices through all evaluations and most relevant for the AfDB?</li> </ul>

## Annex 3: The Concept of Partnership in Multilateral Organizations

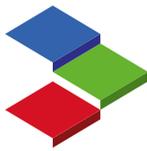
**The African Development Bank** makes a distinction between partnerships that involve financial commitment (with requisite legal agreements) and those that do not. The main categories include: (i) financing partnerships that support projects and programs, and catalyze co-financing opportunities (ii) coordination and cooperation partnerships that support the Bank's operational objectives and strategies and (iii) knowledge and advisory services partnerships that focus on knowledge generation and dissemination on themes with operational relevance, undertaken mostly with research and related organizations. Most of the Bank's partnerships seek to promote broad-based cooperation at the regional and country levels, with respect to project and program design, loans and grants, analytical work and policy dialogue.

**The Asian Development Bank** defines partnerships as a dynamic relationship between diverse actors based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labor, and guided by the comparative advantages of each partner. It highlights mutuality and organizational identity as distinctive factors. Mutuality means horizontal coordination and accountability among partners, and equality in decision-making. Organizational identity refers to the ability of each partner to maintain its core values and constituencies over time.

**The Global Environment Fund** is very interested in partnership questions because its business model relies heavily on a network of more than 150 partners, including the UN, TFPs, private sector donors, implementing agencies and countries. It has been exploring partnerships in the context of its focus on integrated, programmatic and multifocal approaches in recent years. Its partnership business model has major implications for its own internal decision-making process, providing guidance and setting strategic priorities.

**The International Fund for Agricultural Development** defines partnerships as “collaborative relationships between institutional actors that combine their complementary strengths and resources and work together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way to achieve a common goal or undertake specific tasks”. Partners share the risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits of that collaboration, and learn from it through regular monitoring and review. The IFAD evaluation synthesis has six partnership outcome categories: policy influence, scaling-up and mainstreaming, knowledge and learning for innovations, complementarities and synergies, ownership and sustainability, and leveraging resources against which partnership effectiveness was measured.

**The World Bank** does not have a unique partnership policy, although partnerships are mainstreamed throughout its operations. It has the largest number of trust funds and global partnerships (financial intermediary funds), which dominate its partnership discussions, in addition to more thematic partnerships such as those with the private sector and, particularly, CSOs.



IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation  
**African Development Bank**



## About this Evaluation

IDEV conducted this Evaluation Synthesis on Partnerships (ESP) as the first phase of a comprehensive evaluation of partnerships. It brings together evaluative evidence and research from 38 studies on partnerships at the global, corporate, country and project levels. The synthesis aimed at facilitating learning, both within and outside the African Development Bank (AfDB), on the effectiveness of development partnerships. It sheds light on the concept of partnerships for development, provides main findings, and shares lessons learned.

The evaluation synthesis is based on the experiences of various International Financial Institutions with similar partnership objectives, institutional processes, and clientele as the Bank.

Overall, the synthesis finds that partnerships have the potential to contribute to long-term development impact. They can improve the effectiveness of development interventions through a more efficient use of resources and the promotion of innovation and strong commitment. At the strategic level, it is important to have an effective policy to promote partnerships firmly anchored in the core activities of the partner agencies and not seen as peripheral to corporate goals. Partnership policies should also be accompanied by well-defined objectives, a common approach, agreed estimates of the resources available, and a reliable monitoring mechanism, with evidence-based outcome indicators.



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