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**4<sup>th</sup> World Bank Conference on Evaluation and Development: The Partnership  
Dimension**

The Foundations of Partnership  
A practitioner's Perspective"  
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**A pragmatic vantage point on partnerships.**

I am very glad to be here. I have now discovered, listening to the last speaker, why Canadians are good at partnerships. It has to do with contrition. You have to know a lot of Canadians to understand the point of the joke that if you want to know if there are any Canadians in an elevator, you step on everybody's foot until somebody says, "I'm sorry." We are good at contrition; I am not sure why. There must be some Canadians in the audience; I hear a lot of laughter. I am glad to be here and am enriched by what has been said so far.

My vantage point, as suggested by the chair, is that offered by a privileged vantage point during three decades of international development work in national, international, nongovernmental and research organizations. This was not, I would emphasize, at the level of actually managing projects on the ground or doing project preparation or project implementation activity. I don't want to claim that credit. I have always been at the managerial end of things.

I have however listened long and learned much from the experiences that I have had the joy and the privilege of being associated with. This is therefore a fairly personal reflection on partnerships in the field of international development, my observations, and the evaluative criteria that they suggest.

When I was President of CIDA we financed a good number of NGOs, municipalities, professional associations and private sector firms to undertake development activities. This often involved very innovative programming and in the sense that we were all working toward development goals, a notion of partnerships was involved. To achieve some project goals, we struggled to move from a relationship in which CIDA simply gave money to create activity and relationships in which CIDA money and activities were to be offered in parallel or alongside complementary activities to create partnership arrangements. You will note that I am already making a distinction between simply doing good things using the same pot of money and a real partnership arrangement.

At UNICEF, with Jim Grant, I was present at the creation of the Child Health Task Force that went on to do a lot of the work of immunizing the world's children. I think that was a true partnership.

At the Population Council, an international independent research NGO, we needed a lot of partnerships to do our work. We put different groups together for very pragmatic business purposes, ie to create large funding requests but we also created cross-sectoral partnerships to tackle the complex areas of reproductive health and particularly the role of women.

And now I am chair of the Global Water Partnership, a 21<sup>st</sup> near virtual organization dedicated to creating partnership to do no less than change the way the world manages water. I will tell you about it.

I have seen a lot of successes and lots less successful. What follows are both some admonitions on the essential elements of successful partnerships, and some thoughts on the evaluative criteria that may be needed to evaluate partnerships.

### **Questions of definitions and types**

The word partnership is undoubtedly overused; it is now one of the politically correct forms of social organization and is brought into use to cover a variety of relationships that are in truth contractual. It is more comforting – and indeed may get more commitment from those involved in an undertaking – to refer to these as partnerships. The essential difference is that contractual relationships depend on the fulfillment of contractual obligations to continue. In a good contractual relationship I contract with you, and you do everything that is in the contract, but it is still my money--is this a partnership? I think not.

Partnerships can take many directions and involve unexpected outcomes. Partnership is an "in" word; but I am not sure how many of what we talk about as partnerships really are. In terms of evaluation, one of the first necessities is to decide what is a partnership and what is not a partnership. If one party brings all the resources, this is likely not a partnership; hence an essential element of partnership is that each partner brings something to the enterprise and there is a fairly clear understanding of what the contribution of each will be. These should be reviewed and can be modified, but contribution from all parties is an essential element of partnership. Otherwise it is likely a contractual relationship--and they can be good, and they can be very effective in getting things done, but I think we are talking about something else.

*Fairly rigorous criteria should be used to discern the existence of partnerships as opposed to contractual relationships or associations.*

*One evaluative criterion should be related to the extent to which the partnership arrangement established the inputs expected from each partner and each partner accepted that these were expected inputs.*

We probably need evaluative criteria that separate out the results of an activity from whether it also fulfilled the partnership activity. It is quite possible to achieve quite good results and yet not achieve the partnership criteria. All the

children in a country may get immunized, but foreign interests may do it and the Department of Health may not fulfill any of its undertakings. There may be a short-term/long-term discrepancy in how enduring the results are, and in terms of evaluative criteria as a dilemma will be created without separation of criteria:

*Evaluation criteria must have separate elements on project success per se, and partnership success. Some evaluative criteria deal with whether the project activity was performed, and some will cover whether the partnership was actually sustained and whether the partnership qua partnership produced what it was supposed to.*

### **Why bother with partnerships?**

One big question is - why bother? Why engage the partnership? This should be asked at all stages of development. Why not just address the problem through coordination, a contractual relationship, or some other traditional relationship? What is missing for these when you actually have to tackle the problem at hand, and what will be the expected added value of a partnership? These are the questions that must be asked.

The reason is usually related to the need for a more dynamic approach to the issue at hand, or a more diversified series of inputs. As the international development process has proceeded, for example, we have all come to realize that much more than just government-to-government relationships or government-to-international institution relationships are needed to accomplish what needs to be accomplished in the real world.

*The evaluative criteria should describe why partnership arrangements were chosen over unilateral implementation*

Partnership has also become more desirable because of growing awareness of the limitations to government activity. Globalization concerns for national competitiveness has imposed limits on government activity both by depressing the spending power to maintain competitive tax and debt ratios. The combined efforts of the Fund and the Bank in stabilization arrangements have generally been to move governments out of activities. The crisis of welfare in the North has made governments pull back from their activities, and the failure of State-led development models in the South--again, all these things have moved us away from a focus which once existed on seeing the state as the essential and sometimes the only actor in getting something done.

There is also the nation state "too big/too small" dilemma. The nation-state is too big to do the important things that really matter at the community and the individual level and too small to contend with the forces that are going on in terms of monetary and economic flows and international trade flows. So partnerships are needed to accomplish what must be done.

For all, government or non government, the essential pre-condition for the decision to engage in partnership is the realization that success is outside the unique

purview of those who are seeking to make the change. In other words, the major basis for partnership is the realization by the originator of the activity that they cannot take on this task by themselves; that their reach simply does not extend far enough to make the desirable goals happen.

Let me give you an example, using an example from the Population Council. To reduce maternal mortality, yes, there are a few nutritional aspects, but basically, the cause of maternal mortality is complications in delivery. Complications in delivery mean that three things have to happen. Somebody has to signal the existence of a potential delivery difficulty, and that somebody – a traditional birth attendant or friend or regional health official has to have incentives to do so. Then somebody has to be willing to spend money on a woman to get her to medical care, even though what is involved is, quote, "only childbirth," unquote; and then there has to be a transportation system available to bring this woman from wherever she is to where that medical care is available. Neither of those latter two things is under the control of the health system. Neither of those two things is under the control of those that are normally working on maternal mortality.

So tackling a problem like this means creating partnerships at the community level, involving different people like purveyors of transportation and community structures such as the religious structure and the traditional political structure that influences who makes the decision and on what family money is spent. The partnership has to bring together those who can actually have an impact on the problem areas, and as I said, the reason that the process starts is the realization by players within a health system, even a good health system, with outreach, that they cannot affect these other elements which actually contribute to maternal mortality levels in this particular region.

There has to be the willingness to engage, but then, when actually into the modalities of partnership, there has to be the capacity to be adaptive to the actual changes that will be necessary.

So, the first and essential condition for forming a partnership is the realization that whoever wants to make this change cannot do it acting alone. The second essential precondition is the willingness and capacity to adopt new working methods.

### **Pro partnership adjustments in working methods**

Partnership means new working methods. It is not easy or automatic. There are great disparities in working methods. Shoab-Sultan Khan of the Aga Khan Rural Development Foundation, before he went up to Gilgit had been working with a number of multilateral and bilateral donors. In tackling the problems of Gilgit in remote north eastern Pakistan, he said he thought he would listen to villagers for the first three years. How many donors have the flexibility in a rural development budget to allow expenditures to go forward depending on the success or rate of conversations with villagers for a three years period? Whose budgetary flexibility

allows them to put down "talking to villagers for the first three years"? Most agency's rural development project modus operandi pretty quickly specify how many wells will be dug, where and how roads will be built etc. If an aid agency has hidebound regulations and cannot change and cannot restructure those, the partnership capacity may be limited even though people within the agency have a willingness to change. The capacity to embrace the working methods of others may be very limited.

What are the essentials of this shared activity in terms of budget lines or participatory consensus? Which will dominates in case of conflict?

*Evaluative criteria should consider the extent to which possible clashes in working methods were considered at the time of project design and commencement*

### **Outreach and Policy**

Partnerships undoubtedly contribute to better outreach, and a lot of these arrangements can become not only very innovative and involve all sorts of very different players. Just for example, the first line of defense in the tobacco wars for years was health people, and doctors, working on a one to one basis with patients and agitating for stronger public health measures. These had some success. Who is the first line of attack now? Lawyers. Lawyers are making more of an impact in the tobacco wars, certainly in North America and Europe, and starting in other places in the world, than the health sectors now can because health evidence alone has not proved sufficient. Litigation, suing, and financial might has changed corporate behaviour. Health officials have got further putting health information in the hands of lawyers than they did with a lot of governments. Therefore, that partnership, which has very different motives on the part of different players, is actually winning some of the battles in the tobacco wars.

Police forces had to be brought in as partners to create truly effective response to domestic violence. One can preach about domestic violence and publish data, but partnership alliances need to join the health sector, with law enforcement, with women's ministries, and judicial systems, and make partnership arrangements across these entities with very different working modalities in order to actually address this particular issue.

On policy development, there is growing awareness that much more than the official view is needed on many issues. One of my favorite examples to illustrate the evolution of partnerships in the policy formation process – or the official view versus the unofficial view - is provided by the Cairo Conference. Nafis Sadik who was Secretary General of the Conference is with you today. At Cairo, we discussed sex, basically, for about two and a half weeks. In the official building there were 3,000 government delegates of whom 80 percent were men. In the sports stadium were 5,000 NGOs of whom 80 percent were women--and you may believe that you got different views coming out of those two assemblies. Both are

essential ingredients in the policy making process. To resolve some of the real issues of the world such as reproductive health, rates of fertility, sexual violence - all of those things, which are absolutely core and essential to development, more than the view of the 80 percent male assembly is needed. To solve some of the issues, more contacts and power than the 80% NGOs can muster is also necessary.

*Evaluation criteria for policy processes must assess the extent to which there is some element of partnership at a minimum in the policy making process in order to incorporate disparate viewpoints and contradictory elements.*

Obviously, the private sector **profit making private sector** is one place to look for partnership arrangements for some purposes. Some partnerships in this area work well. And competition is certainly one answer to improved efficiency.

I am working now in the water sector. If a country has a decent regulatory climate and procedures, the private sector can add efficiency to the delivery of water services in the municipal context. Therefore, this is an area where the private sector can have a demonstrated advantage. For this kind of arrangement to work in the developing world, there needs to be a great deal of transparency in the contractual relationships, probably some civil sector implication in the monitoring, and quite possibly community or NGO groups working to extend water delivery arrangements to the most disadvantaged communities. This is a blend of contracts, associations and partnerships. The success has to be evaluated in terms of who gets the water at the end of the day and how efficiently it is actually being delivered, as well as how well the contractual elements are being carried forward.

The need for public goods and the goals of the private sector do not always coincide. Market failure is also very real. Therefore, partnerships with the private sector have to be subjected to the kind of scrutiny that Professor North and Professor Axelrod were talking about.

Let me give the example of contraceptives. The perfect contraceptive is inexpensive and long-lasting. To a commercial purveyor of contraceptives, does this sound like a good product to you--inexpensive and long-lasting? What could be a worse recipe for commercial success than something that lasts forever and is easy to use and is inexpensive in the first place? So in the Population Council, we tried to develop such products and then create relationships, with companies to be interested in these and ultimately to sell these; but there always had to be this balance between who was going to be interested in actually disseminating such a product because of their commercial interest and our interest in trying to get widespread, safe, secure, long-lasting, easy-to-use products out. So the elements of partnership were very difficult to set up because of very different objectives that were in play.

*Evaluative criteria in assessing public-private partnerships must take account of the various types of associations.*

*Where regulatory effectiveness is involved, criteria may have to include the transparency of these to assess development effectiveness.*

*Evaluative criteria must distinguish among the incentives of various partners, recognizing that these may be complex.*

The **NGO sector** can provide other answers, especially to reach the parts that the private sector is not interested in and governments cannot reach. Governments cannot go around collecting gently used dental chairs. It would be unseemly. NGOs can and have made a difference in doing this kind of activity. NGOs can bring in people who have been previously left out of power structures--women, ethnic groups, interest groups, very special interest groups like mothers of political prisoners--and above all, the poor.

The evaluative criteria have to include the extent to which new capacity is brought in by each partner. It is possible that the criteria will need to explore their incentives for being there in order to assess the contributions to the success of the activity. So now we start to get into Professor North's territory--what is the incentive of this particular player to be a part of the arrangement? A profit making private sector firm is going to have a very different set of incentives than a community-based women's group. What are the incentives, and how are these going to be lined up together?

*Evaluation criteria must include an assessment of the extent to which the incentives of each partner these were acknowledged during project design. Project difficulties may be encountered if incentives are not realized. .*

### **The process of assembling partnerships**

Partnership is not easy and automatic. Putting a group of people in a room doesn't guarantee they will see a problem the same way or that they will be able to work together. They will probably spend most of the time explaining their own working methods.

A true partnership has to start way, way back and start in at the definitional phase of what the issue is. Partners have to define the issue together, or at least understand how the other partners see it. In a population area, the government will probably define a problem as too high levels of fertility; an NGO will see it as the low status of women. Ultimately, partnerships have to center on the problem, not the solution. It is almost impossible to create a partnership to implement a solution--"I've got an answer to this. All I need is that you come and do it." There is no imperative for total congruence among partners' views but there has to be enough common ground before partners can actually work together.

*Evaluative criteria should examine the extent to which working methods/processes of the various partners have allowed the accomplishment of project goals, and the extent to which these created conflict.*

Most partnerships ignore the public persuasion phase. Most partnerships ignore that science and policy change does not influence society in the absence of supporting cultural norms. This is something that Douglass North was talking about. Therefore, part of the partnership always has to be answering the question on the "What needs to happen in order that this change can be made?" question. There is always the presumption that the partnership, because the partners are convinced of the validities of the goal, is actually going to make it happen. There is far too little time spent analyzing what actually has to happen--what kind of change needs to happen for this new state which we collectively want to end up to actually be created? Then it will be necessary to evaluate how the partnership and the partnership activities actually contributed to reaching that real world goal. If there is no analysis of what needs to change in order that change can occur, the partners won't get there!

I met at the break a Ghanaian colleague who works at Tamale. I used to use Tamale as an example of a water system in perfect equilibrium. The people in Tamale did not pay their water bills, and the Government did not deliver water; so this is a system in perfect equilibrium, but probably not the one that people actually wanted. In this case the fundamental question was not to decide among competing technical designs for a new water system but to work through how these two fundamental states can change.

Partners can spend a lot of time conceptualizing, but the issue is to answer the questions about, first of all, what has to happen for the system to produce water, including the human and operation and maintenance issues, and what has to happen for people to paying the water bills in order that there will be enough money to make the system function. Without facing these two questions--and I think we are into the incentives issue here--all the partnership arrangements in the world probably will not achieve the long-term objective of water supply.

### **Some partnerships that have worked**

A few examples of partnerships that have worked could provide examples that can be looked at, for success, at least is some elements.

The HIV/AIDS Alliance – this is not UN AIDS which is quite different, funneled bilateral donor money to the community level in developing countries. Donors know that they could not do this on their own; there is simply no intermediation possible between a big bilateral donor and actual community groups on the ground.

The solution there was to create an intermediary that took on the accountability responsibility and had its own relationships with the groups on the ground. That was a partnership that worked because there was a good understanding of all sides on where the accountability was and what the expectations were.

River blindness or onchocerciasis-- is a partnership with a very, very light administrative structure. Partners of very many different sizes and shapes tackled it. A pharmaceutical major, Merck, supplied Ivormectin, and it became a partnership after that stage with a very light administrative arrangement. One export committee examined and approved application forms, which then allowed it to flow. Merck could not make this produce available on the ground, or was not interested in doing so because of litigation concerns; none of the bilaterals or multilaterals could take this on directly. They created a partnership structure that then allowed this to happen.

The Bangladesh Population Program, under World Bank leadership--I thought this was a very innovative partnership. Individual donors came into this program and retained their own program guidelines, budgets, and formalities. Some used a common administration. The unifying theme was the concept of young women who visited at the household level, bringing primary health care, including family planning; and the other unifying theme was a very strong research background to this project. Again, this was a different kind of partnership--one organizer, others coming in but keeping all of their own rules and regulations, unified, on the ground, and the agreement to use a common methodology and a common output. Obviously, one of the big partners there was the Bangladesh Thanas themselves. At the same time, the monitoring and project administrative arrangements, reflecting the presence of so many donors were horrendously complex.

*Evaluative criteria should allow for separate elements to be evaluated separately. A project can 'succeed' in some measures but be less than successful in others, such as keeping costs down.*

The Child Health Survival Partnership was possibly the most famous of the major health partnerships.. It was begun when Jonas Salk and Bob McNamara approached Rockefeller to ask whether they couldn't try to emulate the green revolution success in the health field. And Mahler at WHO and Grant at UNICEF both recognized they probably couldn't swing a partnership of their own organizations if either one of them was in the lead, given the institutional rivalries at that time--and maybe today. The World Bank's taking a lead in health was not thinkable at that time. So they put together a Task Force on Child Survival, adding in UNDP, IBRD, the Rockefeller Foundation. It had a very light infrastructure where, every three months, all the partners got together and looked at what they were doing individually and therefore how they were meeting the collective goal in immunizing all of the world's children. Developing countries were brought in seriatim, as health ministries and finance ministries in the developing world signaled an interest in joining the partnership and being part of this particular

arrangement. So again, this partnership was characterized by a few very light administrative arrangements, and basically, everybody else continuing to obey his own rules and then collectively looking at how they were advancing toward the goals of the partnership.

Earlier I said that I see a new and potentially very interesting future for policy partnerships. The Global Water Partnership is one of these. The GWP exists to create and accelerate the global movement towards practical implementation of the Integrated Water Resource Management or IWRM concept. The concept is subtle. We see the wealth of experience worldwide in actions, investments, policies and approaches that can be used for improving water resource management, held variously by practitioners, policy makers, theorists, experts and users of water. Not all these groups can be aware of all the options. GWP through regional, part time and voluntary structures builds and encourages regional and national structures to implement the IWRM concept, and we make linkages between various national dialogues on water policy. Each region – to a greater or lesser extent is working on four major thrusts that we see as the key to IWRM

- Establishing partnerships and mobilizing political will
- Building strategic partnerships for action
- Promoting good practice in IWRM
- Developing and promoting regional actions.

The practical activities

- Work with partners to advance the debate on several of the most important outstanding issues building on debates in regions and countries.
- Support debates on regional priority issues to get a more cross-sectoral approach.
- Advance the debate on controversial issues by providing a platform for discussion (e.g. initiating first meetings, commissioning short studies or ensuring different and opposing groups are part of any debate and involving front-line policy makers, help the preparation of agendas for the debates, and provide an information base).
- Provide inputs to help achieve informed debate e.g. through submissions of experts, and in some cases, act as a neutral player to organise specific roundtables or workshops.

### **Partnership: lessons learned – maybe**

Let's go to lessons learned.

- The first one is that partnership is very tough, especially when only one partner brings almost all the money and expects to call the shots.
- The second one is that partnership has to be focused on the bottom line of what is really being sought—such as immunize all the world's kids. It cannot focus on the intermediate steps exclusively, or one simply never gets there.
- Partnership should start at the planning and the definitional stage. Unless there is at least some shared and collective understanding of what it is that is being sought, it is very difficult to get to the goal.... As Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you are going, just about any road will take you."

- There needs to be an understanding at the beginning of the road exactly what is being mutually pursued. For evaluative criteria, there should be set down at the inception of the partnership arrangement the expectations of each which is clear and accountable. The appraisal process must track these as the project develops.
- Experience would suggest not to look for standard patterns. It is not worthwhile to try to set up a standard model of partnership.
- Checklists could be useful. Set up that which fits.
- Partnership may work best with the lightest arrangements which allow most of the partners to retain their own set of internal working mechanisms, because these are so blessedly hard to change in many, many instances when you are dealing across sectors with universities, with NGOs, with governments.
- There needs to be a clear understanding of obligations and expectations, and the trick is to define what each will do to forward the goal.
- Partnerships are not occasions to convert others.
- Partnerships don't usually bring more money to the participants. Some participants get into partnerships thinking they can make money from the other partners. Usually, that is also not the case. Usually, you can use the partnership to advance more money for the goal, but those getting into partnerships thinking they are going to be remunerative are probably in for a disappointment.
- To the extent possible, let each partner get credit for what happens. That is sometimes quite difficult. There are those who leap in and take credit very early, who get into huge cultural differences about what it is appropriate to try to take credit and how vis-a-vis the participation of others. The best thing is to try to let 100 flowers bloom, but that isn't always very easy.
- Overlaps are easy to find, because there will be institutional frictions; gaps are much more difficult. Therefore, part of the surveillance process should be a consistent and constant effort to try to find the gaps that exist in the partnership toward the achievement of what is actually being done.
- Evaluative criteria here must take account of what the partners really bring, and how conflict resolution is going to actually take place, and is the extent to which these have been stipulated from the beginning, and observed.

As we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is a world of new partnership opportunities.

The policy-based partnerships are just starting, pulling people together to try to get understandings on difficult issues: genetically modified food issues, GMO safety; intellectual property management—these new dialogues cannot be done with just regulatory or government agencies.

The kinds of labor and environment issues that the Seattle protesters are saying have to be put on the table together with the trade and capital issues are going to need to be addressed by new policy partnerships. There are new and innovative private sector responses ISO 9000, the ISO 9001s, triple-bottom-line reporting, and

sustainability and environmental reporting, some of which have elaborated these with environmental NGOs. We have got to bring these together, and it certainly is not going to be just government partnerships that bring these together.

I think there is a huge new world for policy collaboration through policy partnerships. Governments have to accept that they may be in the second row for these. It is very difficult when governments have always been in the first row, and everybody else has been ranged behind them. It is a difficult habit pattern to change. Problem-solving partnerships are going to change the way we deal with a lot of issues.

Partnerships I say are a triple E-D. They are Essential for Development; they are Excruciatingly Difficult, and they are much Easier said than Done.

Thank you.

[Applause.]