

Briefing Note on Partnership Principles

CRDB/CDC

March 2007 (amended April 2009)

Background

A number of Government ministries and agencies have recently entered into, or are negotiating, a set of Partnership Principles with the development partners that support programmes or projects in their respective sectors.

Partnership Principles are seen by some to be a useful tool on account of their ability to establish a consistent approach to partnership-based work, especially where changing personnel may otherwise disrupt programme implementation. They set out the manner in which dialogue is to be managed and also establish practical arrangements for common programme management (e.g. priority setting, programming of resources, reporting & review).

This note provides guidance that is intended to ensure a consistent and efficient approach to developing Partnership Principles. In particular, this Note helps to ensure that Partnership Principles promote ownership, partnership and a focus on achieving results that are linked to the NSDP.

A proposed Government Position on Partnership Principles

1. Government ministries may, at their own discretion, enter into negotiation with development partners regarding the development of Partnership Principles. Upon request, CRDB/CDC, in its role as Government aid coordination focal point, can provide advisory support of an aid management related nature.
2. Partnership Principles should ideally be linked to the development or consolidation of a Programme-based Approach (sector programme) that emphasises Government ownership and leadership as a guiding principle.
3. Partnership Principles should be consistent with existing Government positions on issues of a similar nature and should therefore be derived from:
 - National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) , 2006-2010
 - Declaration by the RGC and Development Partners on Enhancing Aid Effectiveness (October 2006)
 - Strategic Framework for Development Cooperation Management (January 2006)
 - Updated RGC Action Plan on Harmonisation, Alignment and Results (February 2006)
 - National Operational Guidelines for Development Cooperation Grant Assistance (March 2006)
 - Guideline on the Role and Functioning of the Technical Working Groups (October 2006)
 - On issues related to capacity development and technical cooperation, the Guideline on the Effective Use of Technical Cooperation should be referenced.
4. Partnership Principles should also be consistent with international commitments entered into by both the Government and development partners. They may, inter alia, address issues of ownership; alignment; harmonisation, results; and mutual accountability. As such, they should be consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008);
5. Before negotiating a set of Partnership Principles, Government must be convinced that it can lead the process with credibility and that there is a clear value-added to the exercise in terms of strengthening partnership, reducing the transaction costs of aid management, and in delivering results.

Features of Partnership Principles

1. Partnership Principles should establish and elaborate the partnership arrangements by which development assistance will support Government implementation of the NSDP or a related programme (see the Guideline on the Role and Functioning of the Technical Working Groups);
2. Partnership Principles should be seen mainly as a set of *principles*, i.e. they elaborate, at a broad level, *how* the development partnership will work to attain commonly agreed objectives. The Partnership Principles may also identify objectives, i.e. a broad statement of *what* is to be achieved, but should try to avoid too detailed a level of either objectives or commitments (which should be detailed in a workplan or M&E framework);
3. Specific activities should be avoided under any 'commitments' section as they may stray too far from the concept of 'principles' and will mean that the Partnership Principles require regular (and time-consuming) up-dating. Specific commitments should be included in the Workplan, with the Partnership Principles commitment being simply to finalise and implement the Workplan in a timely and partnership-based fashion, as well as to establish the principle for its monitoring and review;
4. Specific activities of an important nature should be included amongst the set of annual indicators that are associated with the Workplan, or may even be submitted to the GDCC to be included in the set of Joint Monitoring Indicators for endorsement by the CDCF (the principles for designing JMIs must be adhered to);
5. Language of the style 'to the maximum extent possible', or 'progressively' and 'over a period of time' should be avoided where possible as they make principles and objectives virtually meaningless and render the whole exercise worthless. Specific targets, timelines and monitoring arrangements are to be encouraged or, where incremental progress is indicated, a clear definition of what this means in practice should be included;
6. Partnership Principles should therefore ideally be associated with a monitoring framework, identifying clear targets and timings where applicable;
7. The Government may wish to articulate its preferred modality for programming support, or for managing technical assistance in a manner that will have a demonstrable positive impact on capacity development;
8. The concept of mutual accountability should be acknowledged, meaning that both parties indicate how they will work together to plan, implement and review. This should not detract from Government's overall role to take decisions and to assume responsibility for actions within their respective scope of operations (see the TWG Guideline on the respective role of Government and TWGs);
9. Partnership Principles must also be balanced. Some earlier versions commit Government to detailed and elaborate actions, while development partners indicate only that they intend to 'make progress over time' on some vague notion of harmonisation. This is to be avoided;
10. Data sharing on project support should, in the first instance, be through the CRDB/CDC ODA Database.