



Making Partnerships Effective

Report on Stage 3 of the Project

Submitted on 9 August 2010

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Summary

The *Making Partnerships Effective* initiative began in June 2009, when CDC/CDRB commissioned The Partnering Initiative and VBNK to undertake a programme of work to strengthen development partnerships in Cambodia. The project team has subsequently worked with senior Cambodian Government and development partners in a 3-stage process: an engagement and inception phase (June 2009); a Strategic Meeting on Making Partnerships Effective (September 2009); and a follow-up phase (October 2009 – present). This report describes support provided and identifies specific actions that have been taken by different Government and development agencies towards making their partnerships more effective since the initiative began.

Even though precise impacts are hard to measure, the project team believes that the initiative has had important and useful outcomes. Most progress can be seen in terms of qualitative benefits. There are indications, for example, of more open and productive working relationships between the government and donor partners. There is generally a deeper understanding of the nature of a partnering relationships and what it takes to create systems, build skills and develop an enabling environment through which partnership approaches can flourish. In addition, the need to promote ownership and mutual accountability (as identified in phases one and two of the project), combined with a results-based management workshop late in 2009, has informed a new set of agreements around the joint monitoring indicators.

The report notes the importance of maintaining momentum by (a) building on emerging ‘good’ practice in Technical Working Groups (TWGs) that show particular enthusiasm for deepening the partnership approach and a clear aptitude for enabling their colleagues and TWGs; (b) more actively engaging civil society organisations in development partnerships; and (c) continuing to build an enabling environment in which partnerships can thrive.

The project team recommends four activities that would be valuable in advancing this work:

1. Creating a more formal partnership evaluation process closely aligned with the up-coming review of the TWGs; the Paris Declaration principles and commitments; and the agreement to review CSO engagement and their participation in development forums.
2. Developing a series of learning case studies that focus on good partnering practice in a way that can be accessed and assimilated by Government and donor partners and which would also give direction to CSOs on how to strengthen their capacities for engagement.
3. Establishing a comprehensive series of partnering skills training courses linked to key issues that are proving challenging (e.g. Facilitating Dialogue; Facilitating Partner Relationship Reviews and Interest-based Negotiation) and make these available to Government, donor and CSO partners.
4. Making an active connection to similar initiatives in other countries to allow for cross learning and confidence building.

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Background to Stage 3

Partnerships matter. We need to spend time at senior level thinking about how to make them effective. We must acknowledge our differences and recognise the diversity of interests, reporting lines, accountabilities and cultures ...and then work hard to find a common interest and a shared set of objectives.

H.E. Mr Yanara, CRDB/CDC Secretary General¹

The Making Partnerships Effective initiative was ...rooted in the effort to promote mutual accountability and to make this concept more workable, and the two organisations involved were told clearly that: ...in many cases not all partners [were] sufficiently engaged.² These two themes have underpinned the design of the project and informed how it could best contribute to the strengthening of partnerships, so that the Government can work effectively with development partners to secure the results anticipated in the National Strategic Development Plan and the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals.

In June 2009, CDC/CDRB commissioned The Partnering Initiative (TPI) and VBNK to undertake a programme of work to strengthen development partnerships in Cambodia. Drawing on a range of facilitation interventions and a wealth of local and international partnership experiences, the project team has subsequently worked with senior Cambodian Government and development partners in a 3-stage process.

Stage 1:

The engagement and inception phase of the project (Stage 1) reviewed various background documents and undertook a large number of 1-1 and group discussions to analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the status and effectiveness of Government and Development Partnerships.

The findings of these discussions were particularly helpful as they differentiated between Cambodian Government and Development Partner views (see summary findings in Appendix 1) and were consistent with:

...global evidence demonstrating that technical approaches are an incomplete and inadequate response to the challenge of improving aid practices. [Indeed] Framing the problem in technical terms is a misdiagnosis. The approach that is perhaps most relevant now is not to think exclusively about the future desired state or to focus too much on the planning/transition phase. Instead, the key is to understand more about our present state" (Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report 2010: 27).

The stage-one analysis informed the planning of stage two.

Stage 2:

The team worked hard to plan a face-to-face event (in Siem Reap) in the form of a Strategic Meeting on *Making Partnerships Effective*. The event was held in September 2009 and attended by 40 government partners (including the Chairs of the Technical Working Groups and Secretariats), 22 development partners and 23 CDC officials. All 19 TWGs were represented.

The Strategic Meeting aimed at building a deeper and a shared understanding of:

- What partnerships working to optimum capacity can achieve;
- What the core principles, frameworks and behaviours are that support effective partnering;
- What makes for good leadership and process management in a partnership;
- What skills, competencies and approaches are necessary for partnerships to be managed effectively and
- How their real value can be assessed and maximised.³

The structure and design of the meeting was somewhat untraditional in style in an attempt to break through some operational patterns (of approach and behaviour) that, the team felt, may have held back the partnering work in the past. Informal seating arrangements and small working groups were intended to give maximum opportunity for experiencing the value of new ways of working together.

This was not altogether a comfortable process for all participants but it appears to have broken down at least some barriers and to have introduced the group to more interactive and open-ended ways of working that we believe has impacted the working relationships and collaborative arrangements for the better.

Each participant was introduced to basic core partnering concepts (through the distribution of *The Partnering Toolbook* (made available in Khmer as well as in English).⁴ In addition, TPI and VBNK also subsequently developed a *Partnership Review Tool* to be used by individual TWGs to assess their partnership's working methods and value as well as to identify areas that would benefit from more attention to make the partnership more effective. An additional *Event Design Tool* provided a resource for TWGs wanting to run sessions in other settings using a similar approach.

Through this process *...each TWG has members who are now familiar with partnership models and the partnering process.*⁵ These individuals – whether from Government or development partner organisations – now have the potential and understanding to stimulate further discussion within their TWG, celebrate successes and decide on specific actions to make their partnering more effective. As a further result of the event, TWGs also now feel more encouraged – as some participants suggested – to develop initiatives that will engage with a wider group of Government officials, development partners and others (including NGOs and private sector) to build a stronger partnering culture in Cambodia and to explore potential for innovation through greater diversity of representation.

It was clear (from the end-of-meeting feedback) that *...many appreciated the opportunity to work together in a less formal way and that there was some measurable progress over the two days in terms of willingness to listen more openly and to undertake tasks more collaboratively.*⁶ And, as indicated below, there is emerging evidence of changes in behaviour and productivity in the TWGs since the Strategic Meeting in September 2009.

Further capacity-building:

In November 2009, three key individuals (one each from CDC, UNDP and VBNK) completed a **Partnership Brokers Basic Training Course**⁷ in the UK. This involved a 5-day intensive residential programme where the trio were trained in interest-based negotiation, facilitation and collaborative planning skills. The additional benefit of the course was the opportunity for the group to work with partnership practitioners from other cultural contexts and to thus share a wide range of partnering experiences. This opened them up to the wider possibilities and added value of partnering than was possible just from working in the specific Cambodian context. In the end-of-course evaluation, the three trainees reported that this training had given them new insights, skills and – most importantly – confidence to support partnering processes within their organisations and in the partnerships in which they had key roles.

The VBNK trainee subsequently completed level 2 (a 4-month period of mentored professional practice followed by a detailed assessment of brokering competence) and was awarded affiliation to the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme early in 2010. Building on this training, VBNK has subsequently been able to provide tailored facilitation of various kinds to a range of multi-stakeholder partnerships in Cambodia. This has included support to enhancing relationships amongst civil society actors and also coaching to a Donor-Government partner relationship in the Ministry of Land.

Other related outcomes from Stage 2:

In November 2009, CRDB/CDC commissioned VBNK and MDF Training and Consultancy to deliver a **Results-based Management Workshop** for Royal Government of Cambodia and Development Partners that introduced the principles of a results-based management framework and linked these to the joint monitoring indicators (JMIs). The JMIs have proven to be a key tool for the TWGs to develop agreements on expected outcomes and to manage expectations. This event, combined with the outputs of stage two, has been a significant breakthrough in terms of building a common vocabulary around mutual accountability.

Following on, in February 2010 the Chair of the Partnership and Harmonisation Technical Working Group⁸ recalled that the aim of the Partnering Initiative Meeting in September 2009 had been to improve the partnering relationships between the TWG chairs and secretariats and the lead development partner facilitators within each sector. He went on to report⁹ that, based on the results of the Workshop on Managing for Development Results, the JMI format would be revised to improve quality, partnership-based features, and especially to ensure aid effectiveness as it was mainly focused by Accra Agenda for Action.¹⁰

Other activities have taken account of the commitments included in the Accra Agenda for Action, focusing in particular on strengthening links with civil society. Additional initiatives include on-going work to promote the use of country systems, and a March 2010 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on establishing capacity in the National Assembly to engage in national economic management issues.¹¹

At a National Multi-stakeholders Consultation Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness (July 2010)¹² CDC reconfirmed its commitment to the TWG networks and to continuing its efforts to address the behavioural aspects of partnering so as to make the concept of mutual accountability "*more workable*." At the same time, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have also embarked on new initiatives, inspired by the Accra Agenda for Action and the commitment of donors and partner countries to "deepen engagement with civil society organisations."¹³

Report on Stage 3

Stage 3 was extended (from October 2009 to July 2010) (a) so as to give the TWGs the opportunity to work through some of the lessons from the Strategic Meeting; and (b) so that the findings from a country evaluation of the Paris Declaration (PDE)¹⁴ could inform – and be informed by – this project.

The PDE study reports indicate that participants found the Strategic Meeting provided *...a useful opportunity to establish an understanding of how partnerships can manage diversity and create value. [Since then] the TWG Network has ...continued to meet, recognising and promoting the value of peer-to-peer communication that complements formal structures*¹⁵

The PDE also identified¹⁶ that:

- TWGs (specifically, Education, Agriculture and Water and Fisheries) had reported on their follow up to the Strategic Meeting on Effective Partnerships, citing examples of improved internal working relationships, especially during the development of the TWG work plans for 2010.
- The TWG for Infrastructure used their involvement in the project as a prompt to revise their terms of reference and to create sub groups.
- The TWG for Gender had facilitated a survey among the TWG members to learn more deeply about levels of understanding and views on the effective functioning of the TWG.
- The Mine Action TWG Government representative observed that the partnering work had contributed to a significant renewal in commitment to the partnership in that sector.
- A Government partner said, *“...the Strategic Meeting helped re-enforce those things we are doing well.”*
- Inter-Ministerial decision-making is improving and has strengthened over time. Decisions have in the past been simplistically seen as either ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ rather than an on-going valuable relationship-yielding, mutual benefit to all parties. There appears to be an increased sense of Government ownership for decision making, though the question remains about how to extend this ownership to all Government partners.
- One development partner described, *“I had one and one-half days [during the Strategic Meeting] to spend talking with my TWG chair, this was part of team building. Now we have established a pattern to discuss [issues] before TWG meetings and work out together some of the more sensitive issues.”* Our impression is that several development partners also felt this was a key benefit of the Strategic Meeting.

Additional gains:

Examples of improving practice include:

Following on from the Strategic meeting the TWG on Gender (TWG-G) conducted an internal review (December 2009) within the Ministry of Women’s Affairs that allowed the advisor to draw on her learning from the Strategic Meeting to remind members about the work of the group.

...what was most interesting was how happy the members were with the TWG-G meetings ...and here we were thinking we would get the support we needed to bring about some radical change. [But] also on the downside, how few of the members realised [the TWG-G] was about aid effectiveness and achieving development results not only information sharing. 80 percent did not know what a JMI was let alone what the TWG-G JMI was. Even though we

had all discussed and endorsed it... So for the following TWG-G meeting I went back to basics as part of my follow up partnership presentation ...it just shows, we forget there is a high turnover of people on both donor and government sides (excerpt from PDE Evaluator's discussion with the Technical Advisor, MoWA).

In November 2009, a CSO high-level dialogue was held on aid effectiveness and constructive engagement in Cambodia's NSDP.¹⁷ One of the key speakers, Dr. Sin Sumony (Director/MEDiCAM), presented examples on how MEDiCAM has been acting as a bridge between implementers and policy makers. MEDiCAM is represented in the health sector TWGs and many of the recommendations in their position papers have resulted in concrete actions. Dr. Sumony explained the reasons: *...regularly participating and providing quality information; strong preparation; clear communication; patience, resilience and persistence; and being proactive and optimistic.* The presentation was informative for other CSO networks wanting to engage in Government/development partner dialogues, as it pointed to areas where CSOs need to strengthen their capacities to engage in these high-level partnerships.

Examples of the development of a more enabling partnership environment include:

The PDE (2010:15) also cites *...many positive examples of emerging leadership and capacity initiatives at sector level, often manifested in the production of a coherent and comprehensive sector strategy that provides the basis for all partners to engage in and support a Government-led effort and which have ...had benefits in terms of facilitating the consensus and partnership that is required to secure the ownership required for successful implementation.*

- The Strategy for Agriculture and Water (SAW) has finalised five sub-programmes and is seeking to incorporate a mechanism that accommodates public finance management and administrative reforms, thereby ensuring that capacity development objectives are consistent with broader Government objectives.
- The Government and development partners engaged in providing support to mine action related work have collaborated in the development of the National Mine Action Strategy 2010-2019 as a single framework for mine action related assistance.¹⁸ Their partnership agreement is based on five principles - Ownership and Leadership; Alignment; Harmonisation; Measurement for Results; and Mutual Accountability – regardless of the financing modality, origin of resources, or the size of the contributions.
- Other line ministries and agencies, including Ministries of Health; Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction; Commerce; Rural Development; Interior; and Women's Affairs, have identified the development of a sector-wide strategic plan as the basis for future aid effectiveness work.

The PDE (2010:30) found that development partners' policies and procedures have a stronger influence on staff behaviour than the Paris Declaration principles and tend to drive the partnerships and the selected aid delivery modalities. Whether organisational and staff incentives have played a role in the modest increase in harmonised aid delivery modalities is thus uncertain and would require additional evaluation research.

Examples of a renewed partnership commitment include:

The PDE noted that the **Making Partnerships Effective in Cambodia** initiative has helped to *...demonstrate how to build further trust and common understanding among stakeholders based on equity, transparency and mutual benefit as the 3 drivers of effective partnering.* The PDE identifies these underlying values *...as a precondition for facilitating wider change in aid delivery practices.*¹⁹

Civil society organisations were omitted from the original Paris Declaration. The Government-Development Partner Coordination Committee (GDCC) recognised the importance of renewed commitments at its most recent meeting in April 2010,²⁰ when an agreement was made to *...discuss the roles of NGOs in RGC mechanisms so that NGOs could express their interests and ...the views of the NGO community as a whole. Towards this end, the terms of reference for the GDCC will be reviewed and updated to reflect the roles of NGO representatives in TWGs.*"

Development Partnerships in Cambodia – Key Success Factors

Effective and inclusive partnerships have been identified as central to the Paris Declaration principles, in particular to the principles of shared ownership, managing for results and mutual accountability. The analysis of the project's activities and impacts (from October 2009 – June 2010) – including the above-mentioned examples – provide some descriptive evidence of the strengthening of TWG networks aided by this project.

There is evidence that indicates that a range of interactions occurring outside the hierarchical chain of command is encouraging Government partners to more effectively utilise their capacities and achieve goals. Initiatives by CRDB/CDC include promoting the TWG networks and encouraging partnerships with other stakeholder groups. Indeed the values demonstrated in this approach to building networks and partnerships underlie the Paris Declaration; they include equity, transparency, openness and honesty in relationships as pre-conditions to building trust across stakeholder groups (PDE, 2010: 37).

The "Making Partnerships Effective" initiative, which employed a network method in an attempt to complement formal structures within Government as well as between development partners, has demonstrated the value of taking time out to better understand partnership dynamics in a multi-stakeholder environment and to identify the potential value that each stakeholder can bring to the process. In this way, exploring and promoting partnerships can also help us to understand where we are before, then agreeing where we need to go and how we may get there (Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010: 29).

There is also evidence that maximising the use of informal relationships while strengthening formal mechanisms (such as the TWGs) promotes: a far higher level of joint learning; effective knowledge management; better integration of core reforms and National Strategic Development Plan priorities as well as improved (more all-encompassing) monitoring arrangements. Most importantly, it also helps *...operationalise the synergies and interdependencies of ownership and capacity, which are mutually reinforcing* (Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010: 29). These findings are in line with partnership experiences elsewhere.

As noted above, civil society organisations were omitted from the Paris Declaration. However, both MEDICAM (a network for NGOs contributing to the health sector in Cambodia) and NGO Education Partnership (NEP) have been actively participating in the joint Technical Working Groups for the Health and Education sectors respectively. In both sectors the Government and donor partners are extremely keen for NGO input and actively invite their participation. Further, the NSDP update for

2009-2013 explicitly defines the NGO sector as a development partner and states that the *...Royal Government will continue to ensure rigorous participation of CSOs in the dialogue mechanisms.*

At the same time though, it has been noted (PDE, 2010: 81) that there is a mixed understanding in Cambodia of what civil society is and its potentially complementary role in development partnerships. It is recognised though that the institutional capacity of the NGO sector, as a component of civil society, is underdeveloped and this puts constraints on its performance and its relationships with Government and development partners. The study concluded that civil society organisations need to develop their capacity to take greater advantage of the opportunities to participate in aid coordination mechanisms, monitor their commitments, and improve the availability of information on CSO development activities and results (PDE, 2010: 81). These findings are echoed in the recent NGO Sector Assessment Study conducted by the Cooperation Committee of Cambodia.²¹

Whilst the project remit did not include participation of civil society organisations, the potential value of expanding the partnership arrangements to include selected NGOs, other civil society organisations and the private sector was an issue raised during the Strategic Meeting.

Recommendations

We believe that the project has had important and useful outcomes – though the precise impacts are hard to measure. Most progress can be seen in terms of qualitative benefits including better (more open and productive) working relationships between the two partner groups. The application of new methodologies for conducting meetings, brainstorming ideas and reviewing the effectiveness of the partnership have made some impact at TWG level and these changes are felt as positive by those involved. There is generally a deeper understanding of the nature of partnering relationships and what it takes to create systems, build skills and develop an enabling environment through which partnership approaches to development can flourish. These gains represent a useful step forward in the effective implementation of a partnership approach to aid in Cambodia – despite the challenging context and the urgency of need.

But all those involved recognise that this is just a start. Momentum will be lost without further support and encouragement. The ideal scenario is to identify those in both the Government and development partner groups (and/or their key programme management staff) who show particular enthusiasm for deepening the partnership approach and a clear aptitude for enabling their colleagues and TWGs to do this. There is also a need to more actively engage civil society organisations in the partnerships.

As noted above, the need to promote ownership and mutual accountability (as identified in phases one and two of the project), combined with the results-based management workshop, informed a new set of agreements around the joint monitoring indicators. Future capacity development efforts should closely link identified needs with the outcomes and expectations of the Paris Declaration.

To truly embed the partnership approach, it is necessary to build an enabling environment and an atmosphere in which such partnerships can flourish. This means engaging with and influencing beyond the immediate TWG network. It also means building on those collaborative elements that are part of Cambodian tradition and to ensure that all those involved see the partnering approach as something that is in line with their cultural heritage and not imposed on it.

To support this approach and to maintain the continuation of progress and value in deeper, more strategic and more productive partner engagement we recommend that a number of further activities would be valuable. These include:

1. Creating a more **formal partnership evaluation process** (aligned with the up-coming review of the TWGs). This priority would be in line with the PDE recommendation that Technical Working Groups *...hold each other mutually accountable to ensure that investments in development are designed and implemented in a manner that is increasingly consistent with all the PD principles and commitments, particularly those related to managing for results and mutual accountability* (PDE, *ibid*, p. 79). Moreover, this action would contribute to the agreement to review CSO engagement, such as their participation in TWGs and other forums.²² Such a facilitated process could be developed quite quickly and pilot tested with 1-3 TWGs to combine the technical and partnership skills-based approaches that CRDB indicates as necessary in the 2010 Aid Effectiveness Report to strengthen sector programmes.
2. Developing a series of **learning case studies** collaboratively written with the TWGs that focus on good partnering practice in a way that can be accessed and assimilated by other TWGs. For example, such an approach could articulate step-by-step how to build consensus around how the status quo can be influenced towards positive change that benefits all stakeholders, or how PBAs can offer a way to focus on innovation and the creation of alternatives for managing a *process of change*. Other possibilities for such case studies include how a TWG undertakes an internal review or how CSOs draw lessons learned from partnering to give direction to strengthening capacities for engagement. A useful reference for this approach is *The Case Study Toolkit: Partnership Case Studies as Tools for Change* (published by The Partnering Initiative). These case studies could form a portfolio of partnering success stories and could also inform the partnership evaluation process.
3. Establishing a comprehensive **series of partnering skills training courses** – perhaps a number of 1-day courses linked to key issues that are proving challenging including: Facilitating Dialogue; Public Relations; Partner Relationship Review Facilitation; Interest-based Negotiation and Collaborative Problem-solving.

This would be best run by a ‘neutral’ training organisation (e.g. VBNK) drawing on the tried and tested training materials of The Partnering Initiative. Ideally these would be a series to which individuals would return over, say, a 6-month period. Equally ideally, the trainee group would be mixed (from all sectors) since learning together is the best possible way of learning how to work together. Run cross-sectorally, this could have the additional advantage of building partnering skills amongst civil society organisations which will, in due course, give the current partnerships greater diversity and reach partners.

4. Making an **active connection to similar initiatives in other countries** – especially those recovering from conflict, needing to build new structures (including a buoyant civil society and private sector) and where partnering between governments and donors is seen as critical. The Partnering Initiative’s *Partnering with Governments* programme may be one way to do this and there are others. Both Government and development partners are most likely to gain confidence in a deeper partnership engagement if they see it work successfully for their counter-parts elsewhere.

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The Partnering Toolbook in English (2nd edition, 2007) and Khmer 2009), originally written by Ros Tennyson and published by The Partnering Initiative (2003)

Appendix 1 WORKING TOGETHER

Summary SWOT analysis of the current status of the various partnerships

Based on perspectives of RGC and development partners (taken from 1-1 and group meetings during the phase one of the project)

WORKING TOGETHER

Perceived Strengths

Points of Agreement:

1. TWG structure provides a regular and official channel for exchange of information between the 2 groups
2. The Secretariats are playing an effective role in networking and providing support to TWGs
3. Overtime we have seen more effective working relationships and increased goodwill:
 - a. Greater focus on SWAP and alignment with government programme strategies
 - b. Examples of donor harmonisation
 - c. Increased national ownership
 - d. Increase in outputs
4. Contributions made to strengthening capacity
5. MIS now in place (= foundation for managing for results)

Government Partners also said:

- Greater mainstreaming of some key issues
- Improved mutual accountability
- Moving towards management by results
- Commitment to trying to improve the various mechanisms
- Experienced staff: have been involved since the beginning

Development Partners also said:

- Working to an agreed set of principles
- Better understanding of people's constraints
- Pooling of funds – a much better approach
- Better aid flow information
- Leadership and facilitation provided by CDC is good
- There is more transparency

Observations from the project team

Where the TWG's are experienced as working well, there are enthusiastic reports of real progress and change. Government Partners feel more 'equal' in the relationship and value the increasing sense of mutual accountability as well as stronger relationships and increased commitment to making the TWG's work. Similarly, Development Partners appreciate greater openness and willingness to improve mechanisms as well as to adhere to shared principles and goals.

However, these perceived strengths only apply to some of the TWGs, not all. There was a marked discrepancy between those that were seen as productive and 'on course' and those that were not.

It was also interesting that there seemed to be a general lack of enthusiasm for sharing good practice and what was working well between TWGs.

It was also clear that, on the whole, the cross-cutting TWGs felt far less satisfied with their achievements and believed that their work was compromised by both groups of partners tending to give priority to the TWGs working with just one Government department.

WORKING TOGETHER

Perceived Weaknesses

Points of Agreement:

1. Lack of appreciation of the investment required for TWGs to work effectively and low prioritisation of TWG activities
2. While there has been more alignment with SWAPs and greater donor coordination:
 - a. Overall approach is still fragmented
 - b. Lack of national ownership
 - c. TWGs lack authority and/or skills to influence others
3. Over-emphasis on process versus implementation and achieving results; multiple monitoring processes waste time and resources
4. Incomplete and inaccurate reporting leads to lack of programmatic information
5. Have not worked out how to manage competing priorities

Government Partners also said:

- Failing to use MIS effectively and consistently
- DPs still not making decisions based on national priorities
- Failing to get the cross-cutting issues properly addressed
- Poor representation (in cross-cutting TWGs) from line ministries
- Lack of mutual accountability
- Coordinating with other ministries causes delays
- Challenges in monitoring results

Development Partners also said:

- Little or no implementation of principles
- Same (few) people do everything
- Lack of champions in the ministries
- This way of working is not comfortable or understood
- Players can't see the potential gains
- TWGs often only seen by ministries as mechanism to leverage funding
- Need to acknowledge successes
- lack of willingness of some partners (on both sides) to give up their control / power / agendas / identity
- Lack of debating function / formulaic agenda
- Disconnect between those donors involved in TWG and those not

Observations from the project team

The perceived weaknesses as described here are very clear – though there may be a bias to the views of those in the weaker TWGs (i.e. those from TWGs that are perceived as working well did not identify many of these weaknesses). At some level these comments seem to reflect the experience / surprise that working collaboratively in this way takes more investment (of time and energy), commitment and willingness to share ownership and decision-making than had been anticipated. Many of the issues raised here will form the basis of the event in September since failure to address those risks repetitive behaviour patterns and stagnation in terms of achievements and productivity.

WORKING TOGETHER

Perceived Opportunities

Points of Agreement:

1. Potential for CDC to focus on more cross-cutting issues
2. To strengthen learning and linkages between TWGs
3. To enhance capacity to make these partnerships more effective and build leadership strength
4. To mobilise support from and engage different civil society actors, the private sector and 'new' donors

Government Partners also said:

- Improving the collection and analysis of data to help measure and monitor achievements
- Systematic approaches to reviewing TWGs and improving where necessary
- As public administration and D&D reform happens the TWG work will become easier
- Building on the growing political stability and development of human resources
- Involving academia in these processes

Development partners also said:

- Further develop basket funding
- Develop sub-groups to: air issues before meetings; make decisions
- Develop a 'whole system' approach to partnership capacity building
- Build further political will to support a holistic approach
- Get all those involved in TWG to better agree division of labour

Observations from the project team

Quite a notable focus on capacity-building to be able to partner more productively / efficiently; being more systematic in approach (reviews, division of labour, monitoring etc). Leadership and 'political will' both potentially key issues for the September event.

These responses also raises interesting suggestions about CDC and its potential to act more in the role of 'broker' or intermediary – especially to help the cross-cutting TWGs to work better and to increase its role in linking the TWGs in order to share learning and experience in practical ways.

WORKING TOGETHER

Perceived Threats

Points of Agreement <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Over-reliance on short-term external advisors and experts can undermine the TWGs2. New DPs are driven by a different set of drivers and are not aligning with the process3. Unless we can develop a mechanism to move away from 'blame' and talk about contentious issues, the TWGs will continue to stall	
Government partners also said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ DPs and ministries continuing to pursue individual policy objectives without assessing their impacts on other programmes▪ Civil service and other central reforms take too much time or don't work as hoped▪ Lack of trust in government systems leads to DPs developing own systems: thus perpetuating the weaknesses▪ Hard to convince donors that capacity development is a process that needs long-term commitment and investment in a systems-wide approach	Development partners also said: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lack of financial and fiscal controls in place▪ Salary supplements issue not resolved▪ Limited or reducing authority of CDC▪ DP differences of approach jeopardising partnership arrangements (e.g. Global Fund)▪ Lack of capacity to commit to predictable multi-year funding▪ Too many parallel monitoring and other processes – wastes time and resources
Observations from the project team <p>Large-scale issues that impact negatively and threaten the TWGs are to do with actual / perceived weaknesses in fiscal controls; administrative reforms taking too long and some key issues remaining unresolved.</p> <p>Some real confusion and concern about the interface between the TWGs / secretariats and external advisors / experts not directly related or responsible to the partnership. Disappointment / frustration that some of the newer donor / development agencies did not want to work within the TWG system. In other words, activities outside the TWG system were seen as a serious risk to the development and impact of the TWGs.</p> <p>Other more 'internal' risks are to do with wastage (e.g. too many parallel systems operating) and with frustration at a tendency to avoid addressing internal challenges head on.</p>	

Endnotes

- ¹ From the "Making Partnerships Effective" Meeting held in September 2009, quoted in Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010: page 26
- ² Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010: page iii
- ³ Report on Stage 2 of the Project, Recommendations for Stages 3 and 4 and Products from Stage 2, 30 September 2009, The Partnering Initiative and VBNK, *September 2009*
- ⁴ Copies of *The Partnering Toolbook: An essential guide to cross-sector partnering (in English and Khmer)* are available electronically (at www.vbnk.org) or in hard copy from CDC/UNDP.
- ⁵ Report on Stage 2 of the Project, 2009, *ibid*
- ⁶ Report on Stage 2 of the Project, *ibid*
- ⁷ TPI's Brokering training programme promotes professionalism and integrity in brokering multi-sector partnerships for sustainable development – see <http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/>.
- ⁸ Minutes of the Technical Working Group Meeting for the 3rd Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum Held on 16 February 2010, at CDC
- ⁹ Partnership and Harmonisation Technical Working Group – Report (February 2010)
- ¹⁰ Accra Agenda for Action, 3rd High Level Forum of Aid Effectiveness, September 2008
- ¹¹ CDC/CDRB, 2010, Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010: 23
- ¹² National Multi-stakeholders Consultation Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness, 22 July 2010
- ¹³ Cooperation Committee of Cambodia, 2010, *Reflections, Challenges and Choices: Cambodian NGO Sector Assessment Study Final Report*, study conducted by Jane Bañez-Ockelford and AP Catalla Jr. under the umbrella of the Enhancing Awareness on Governance and Effective Regulations for Civil Society Project, Cooperation Committee of Cambodia (August 2010)
- ¹⁴ Cambodia Country Evaluation: Phase 2 Evaluation of the Paris Declaration (draft, July 2010)
- ¹⁵ Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report, 2010, page 4
- ¹⁶ Cambodia Country Evaluation: Phase 2 Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, draft, July 2010, Technical Volume, Annex D: Page 79
- ¹⁷ "Constructive Engagement" in Cambodia's National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), Civil Society Organisations' High Level Dialogue on Aid Effectiveness (November 20, 2009)
- ¹⁸ Partnership Principles for the Implementation of the National Mine Action Strategy 2010-2019, (May 2010)
- ¹⁹ Cambodia Country Evaluation: Phase 2 Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, draft, July 2010: Page 20
- ²⁰ Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Government- Development Partner Coordination Committee (GDCC), 29 April 2010
- ²¹ NGO Sector Assessment Study Draft Report, *ibid* (July 2010)
- ²² The National Multi-stakeholders Consultation Forum on CSO Effectiveness – "Moving from Aid Effectiveness towards Development Effectiveness (22 July 2010)