

Introduction

There is an African proverb that says “*one blade of grass can’t sweep the yard*”. It means that by working with others you can achieve your objectives more efficiently and successfully. What are our objectives? Ultimately, its about a sustainable improvement in hygiene and sanitation practises and clean water supply. By working with others we can not only come up with more satisfactory solutions, we can improve efficiency during implementation and help secure sustainability.

The purpose of this TAN is to help you develop more effective networks and productive partnerships.

What are networks, and what are partnerships?

Networks are a group of interconnected individual or organisations sharing a common interest. The relationship is normally fairly informal, and is generally based on sharing information and ideas. It requires some kind of Forum where these ideas can be exchanged: these might be through phone calls, regular meetings, or increasingly through e-mail circulars/newsletter or discussion pages. The idea is to learn from each other, share and develop ideas and expertise. Networking is a very powerful tool and can have significant impacts on effectiveness and performance. From a personal perspective, effective networks are seen as essential for quality management and leadership

Partnerships take the relationships a step further. Building partnerships is about working with others to achieve what we cannot achieve on our own.

A partnership is a special kind of relationship, in which people or organisations combine their resources to carry out a specific set of activities. Partners work together for a common purpose and for mutual benefit.

Building partnerships is different to “networking” or “public relations”. This is because partnerships are about relationships that are in-depth, involve a few carefully selected targets and have specific, practical goals. They also tend to be based upon formal contracts or Memoranda of Understanding, rather than informal agreements.

Partnerships should complement – rather than compete with - an organisation’s programme work

Some of the benefits of networking and partnerships include:

- Good ideas
- Access to people
- Lessons learned
- A helping hand
- Equipment
- Money
- Profile and status
- Developing individual skills - capacity building
- Social influence
- Knowledge
- Political influence
- Access to places
- Practical support
- “In kind” support
- Moral support



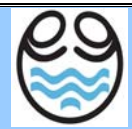
Forming Networks

You may well already have an informal network that you are part of, but it is worth reviewing this to see if all relevant stakeholders are represented. The RWSSP Toolkit if Stakeholder Analysis may help with this process. It is important to think broadly about potential networks/partners. Sometimes, it makes sense to work with “traditional” partners - such other NSAs. Other times, however, it is important to branch out and experiment with different types of partners, such as business leaders, youth groups etc. Working with the latter cannot only bring practical benefits, but a fresh perspective to your work.

Who could you form network/partnerships with?

- Police
- Factory owners
- Media
- Business leaders
- Civil servants
- Legal organisations
- NSAs
- Consultancy firms
- Health professionals
- Women’s clubs

RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.4 Networking and Partnerships.



- Academics
- Farmers' leaders
- Rotary clubs
- National governments
- Influential individuals
- Foundations
- Local government
- Arts and sports organisations

In order to form a network discuss with these stakeholders shared and common interests, discuss ways in which you feel you can help each other, and then establish a mechanism for the exchange of information/ideas. Either through regular meetings, through exchanging contact details, via the e-mail or even in a newsletter.

Forming Partnerships

Partnerships are more formal arrangements and involve a division of responsibilities and resources. Partnerships could be formed with any of the organisation listed in the table above and it is well worth exploring these opportunities.

The RWSSP Grant application form differentiates between Partners and Associates on the basis that Partners must satisfy the full eligibility criteria for receiving EU grants, whilst Associates do not since they do not actually receive any of the funds. For the purposes of this TAN we use partnerships to cover both definitions, it is up to you to identify the distinction in your application. RWSSP would particular welcome partnerships between small and large NSAs and with local level government.

There are several smaller community and faith based associations registered with RWSSP, who are still waiting to be given the opportunity to participate in the water supply and sanitation programme. These organizations often have excellent programmes and activities at the grassroots level, but either failed in the eligibility criteria, or on some aspect of their financial/organisational capacity assessment. Partnership with such organisations could benefit both parties whereby the larger NSA can undertake full financial and administration responsibilities, whilst the smaller associations can take hands on responsibilities in the community mobilisation processes and organisation of the water supply and sanitation activities on site. Where some NSA covers more than one location with water supply and sanitation projects it provides a good opportunity to seek out a local partners on site.

RWSSP is particularly keen to encourage networking and partnerships with Local Level Government and Provincial Government. The reason for this is that decentralised government, coordinated by the department of health, is mandated to provide rural water supplies, and has a budgeting process and targets to support this. On a basic level they at least need to know what is going on and where (networking), but ideally should be much more involved in the process, where possible, through participating in the planning, implementation and continuous monitoring of the results and outputs (partnership)

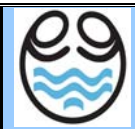
It is inappropriate for them to be excluded from this process.



What Challenges do Partnerships Bring?

Despite their rewards, partnerships can also be very challenging. This is because they involve organisations and sectors that, despite sharing some commonalities, have many differences. These can relate to their:

- Primary interest. For example, one NSA might have a health focus, the other a conservation focus.
- Strategic priorities. For example one NSA may focus on the needs of women.
- Ways of working. A typical problem for partnerships between NSAs and local government.
- Resources. For example, one partner might have access to international funds,



while the other might be dependent on “in-kind” local resources.

- Key stakeholders. For example, one might be ruled by its shareholders, while the other might be influenced by community members.
- Influence. For example, one might have a high profile and mainstream political power, while the other might be unknown or seen as “radical”.
- Primary timeframe. For example, one might work to election cycles, while the other might work to project cycles.
- Capacity. Often one partner needs to invest time and resources in developing particular capacities in a partner, this may be training for example, or providing resources such as vehicles.
- Lack of transparency. If organisations do not keep open books during the implementation period this may lead to disputes over expenditures
- High expectation. One partner may have high expectations from the other that they then fail to live up to.

None of these is a reason not to embark on a partnership – but differences do need to be realised at the start so that issues can be addressed early on.



Identifying partnership opportunities

There are a number of ways to identify potential partners. First of all you need to conduct a stakeholder analysis in order to identify key stakeholders in your area – this might yield some interesting partnership ideas. In addition, RWSSP

PMU has a database of NSAs which we can put in touch with each other, just give us a call.

How can Challenges be Managed?

Many of the challenges involved in partnerships can be managed through rigorous planning, where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. However, to complement this, it is important to put measures in place to ensure that, from the start, you and your partner work well together, both as organisations and as groups of people.

To avoid misunderstandings, conflicts and frustrations, it is necessary to take action on two levels:

Formal Agreements (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding)

Whatever the scale or timeframe of a partnership, both parties should state and agree to their commitments in a formal document, such as a Memorandum of Understanding.

A Memorandum of Understanding should outline all of the key information and commitments relating to the partnership in question. These include: the aims and objectives; key activities (and, possibly, a work plan for the initial period); what each partner will give (e.g. in terms of time, money and skills); management structure; monitoring and evaluation framework; budget; and legal information (e.g. “intellectual property rights” to materials).

In addition all formal Partners (as defined by the EU in the Grant application process) are required to complete a Partners Statement which outlines key principles of good partnership practise.

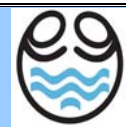
Informal Agreements (e.g. Values Statement)

To complement formal measures, it can be useful for partners to also have an informal agreement about how they want to work together. An example of this is a Values Statement - a declaration of the principles underlying the partnership that outlines how you want to treat your partner and, in turn, how you expect them to treat you.

It is often effective for each partner to draw up separate Statements, to come together to discuss the relevant issues and, then, to draw up a joint one.

Both Memoranda of Understanding and Values Statements should be signed and dated by the Head or Director of each of the partner organisations.

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If conflicts arise, you can return to both your Memorandum of Understanding and Values Statement to try to identify where things went wrong and how they could be put right.

How can Partnerships be Planned?

As with any other area of work, partnerships should not “just happen”. Instead, they should be subjected to rigorous planning.

This involves a process – or “journey” – from the development of initial concepts for the partnership through to evaluating its results.

key stakeholders within their areas, and most definitely with local government services. RWSSP will also encourage and support partnership arrangements where appropriate.

There are a number of RWSSP toolkits to support this TAN. These include:

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Partnership tools

Phase	Key tasks
Partnership exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify potential partners ▪ Identify what benefits you imagine from the partnership ▪ Provide up front resources to facilitate the partnership ▪ Consult with partners on expected benefits and likely roles.
Partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build consensus between partners on a common vision and the aims and objectives of the partnership ▪ Agree the resource commitments, roles and responsibilities ▪ Strengthen the capacity of partners to implement their commitments
Partnership management/maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be willing to re-negotiate the terms of the partnership ▪ Follow agreed procedures for ongoing communication and transparency ▪ Monitor and evaluate the impact of the partnership.



This programme is funded by the European Union

Concluding Comments

Both networking and partnerships are essential if rural water supply and sanitation projects are to be planned and implemented successfully and if the benefits are to be sustained over the long term. Organisations tend to shy away from partnership arrangements since they perceive the potential pitfalls to outweigh the benefits. This is very rarely the case, whilst they tend to involve more careful planning at the start the benefits can be considerable. All NSAs during Phase II will be very actively encouraged to network closely with