

## Partnership between Government and Civil Society -The Road Ahead

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### **Abstract**

*In recent years, there has been increased recognition of the role that civil social group organizations can play as better half with governments and inter-governmental organizations in various types of constructive works. Even this potential has been recognized in various UN reports published and declarations made by Security Council. This paper concentrates on understanding partnerships as autonomous entities and its dependence in wider societal structures.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last two decades, there has been a major international wave of privatization. Therefore, there has been a growing emphasis on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in a range of sectors including health, education, and infrastructure provision. Partnerships amongst these two major actors have now become so significant that recently the International Monetary Fund has described PPPs as ‘a wave that is sweeping the world’.

In fact, the modern democracies can be conceived as consisting of three coordinating domains: the state, the market and the society, concerning whom partnerships are bound. A basic premise is that each of the domains fulfils a function that cannot be fulfilled by the others.

1. The state is responsible for an orderly society;
2. The market for its economic basis; and
3. The civil society for social and community relationships.

Traditionally, governance boundaries between the public and private realms are difficult to be surpassed. As a consequence, responsibility for matters of public interest is fully relegated to the public domain of the state. It has been institutionalized with all kinds of collaborative arrangements, which may be addressed as partnerships, between representatives of the state, the market and civil society.

With partnerships, the well established boundaries between the state, the market and civil society seem to get nullified, consequences of which leads to government functioning becoming more dynamic, complex and heterogeneous. This has given birth to strong societies which is at least partly based on private initiatives from the market and the civil society. Therefore, there remains a debate on public and private responsibilities, their inter-relationships, and even the possibilities to unite them into a working force within the framework of governance<sup>[1]</sup>.

## PARTNERSHIP AS FORM OF GOVERNANCE

Partnerships are self-organizing and coordinating alliances that are set up to solve variety of problems the beneficiaries of which remains the society. This alliance is a resultant of a commitment that is accomplished, either partially or exclusively, by the protagonists. In fact, the concept of partnerships is rather flexible. It not only refers to new relationships between corporations and NGOs, but also to new forms of cooperation between these actors and governments. A useful definition is:

*Cooperative preparations are in which actors from two or more domains of society (State, Market and Civil Society) are participating in a non-hierarchical procedure and these actors strive for property content.*

As an integral part of governance, partnerships have specific characteristics that make them distinctive from other forms of governance especially with respect to relationships between the agencies, their focus, and the function. The characteristics may be summarized below as:

1. In partnerships, agencies both public and private, have a tendency to operate independently, underlying concepts of that development and their relationships to it;
2. Participation is voluntary and aims to develop some common normative framework as a basis for further collaboration.
3. In the course of the interactions the relationship becomes more functional, i.e., dedicated to a task that is fulfilled in co-production, based on a regulatory structure for a joint management practice.
4. This practice sets forth development actions and timetables that are to be abided by in order to bear fruits and

bring up in other forums to enlarge the commitment to the service.

5. Once concluded, each of the partners can be held responsible for the agreed upon contribution and together they take responsibility for the final results.

## THE PARTNERSHIP PARADIGM

Partnership arrangements differ in the type of actors involved, their intensity, scale, intentions and activities. Partnerships unite around area specific issues to global issues with sustainability now becoming the key word. Some take the form of institutionalized interactive platforms in which complete sectors are involved, while others take the form of a onetime collaboration between one company and one non-governmental organization. They also vary considerably not only in number of partners and in geographic scope but also in terms of their time frame and access to funding.

Together, they represent a new management paradigm. Management paradigms filter our way of looking at reality. They interpret reality; highlight the essentials, with the objective to formulate specific guidelines for the deliberate governance of progressive societal change.

The partnership paradigm is based on the following assumptions<sup>[2]</sup>:

1. Each of the parties from the public sector, the market, and civil society generally has an interest in sustainable management practices.
2. A reconstructive dialogue and cooperative activity among them may be convened in a setting that eliminates hierarchy and authority.
3. Collaborative action may be based on associated assets commitment, and mutual obligation of all actors for the entire task can serve both private and public interests.
4. Collective activity can be commercialized in nature; the market

mechanism can encourage more sustainable exercises through the advantage and spin-off of private-sector investments.

The considered strength of partnerships, concerning the tri-sector ones, is the combination of the NGOs, the market principles of businesses, and the public authority of the state.

### **INCENTIVES TO CREATE PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships have been formed exponentially since the 1990s of last century. Collaboration across the state, market and civil society domain has become a policy goal at national levels in India and also globally<sup>[3]</sup>. In particular, it has become the main strategic approach of the UN policy on sustainable development applications of which have started happening in various local bodies in India<sup>[4]</sup>.

Incentives from partnerships are also found to be in the changing consumer preferences. Consumers, backed-up by NGOs, have started seeking for more environmentally friendly and socially responsible solutions. In fact, many local authorities in India have started recognizing that NGOs have acquired power and legitimacy as agents of social change and NGOs acknowledge them as both cause and solution of environmental problems.

Even so, governments in India today can neither neglect businesses nor societal organizations anymore. They have become indispensable to any definition of public problems and their solutions.

### **PAVING 'THE ROAD AHEAD'-STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS**

At the national and regional level, cooperation between governments and

NGOs can be increased by shifting the activities of NGOs from one part of the country to another, so that all areas may be strengthened<sup>[5]</sup>. Greater attention must be paid to the increase of transparency within donors and the financial community which seeks to increase competitiveness and enable horizontal networking between local actors, and avoid conflicts of interests and corruption practices.

With this goal in knowledge, civil social group must workout much more pressure on their respective authorities demanding the execution of those program and tasks that excite the application of the most recent activities in public governance<sup>[6]</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION**

Partnerships are not autonomous entities, but embedded in wider societal structures. In today's world, partnerships derive partly from the powerless role of governments. However, their success is also largely dependent on them. Further partnerships depend on specific government policies and government's role in meta-governance. This creates a situation in which responsibilities are diffusely spread over public and private actors.

Impressive relationship between governments and civil social group organizations could be constituted not only via strict procedures and well-defined legal frameworks, but also through self-confidence and trust between them. Although many countries do have a proper legal basis for information, consultation and public participation in government decision-making, serious problems exist with their implementation.

This is why building self-confidence, reliance, trust and responsibility between partners is to be considered a crucial determinant for advance work.

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