

BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Designing Healthy Partnerships for
African Civil Society Organisations
working in Natural Resource
Management and Conservation

NOVEMBER 2017





WELL GROUNDED

Well Grounded provides organisation development support to civil society groups in Africa so that they have real and sustainable impacts on natural resource governance and community rights. Well Grounded provides tailored support to each client organisation based on its particular needs and priorities. Well Grounded also promotes change by connecting organisations with each other to build a strong civil society voice. Well Grounded currently works with over twenty civil society organisations in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo and has also worked in Gabon and Liberia.



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Maliasili exists to help talented local conservation organizations overcome their challenges and constraints so that they can become more effective agents of change in their landscapes, communities, and nations. Through long-term support and partnership with a portfolio of over 30 leading community-based and national civil society organizations in eastern and southern Africa and Madagascar, Maliasili is working to increase the impact of a new generation of African conservation leaders.

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“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

–AFRICAN PROVERB

INTRODUCTION

Achieving lasting, large-scale change in natural resource management and conservation – the kind that can address today’s pressing needs – is inherently challenging. Few organisations have the capability to deliver transformative changes in resource governance, land tenure, or landscape-scale conservation outcomes on their own. Strong and effective partnerships between organisations with different and complementary skills, knowledge, and resources are often critical in achieving lasting outcomes and systemic change. In particular, effective partnerships between international organisations and locally rooted civil society groups can be a powerful lever for change.



INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS can bring access to resources through their networks and fundraising opportunities in different parts of the world, as well as presence and leverage within global policy-making bodies. They can help convene decision-makers, draw on diverse technical sets of skills, and mobilise resources.



NATIONAL AND LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs) can bring the relationships, grassroots constituencies, cultural knowledge and awareness, social and political legitimacy, and grounded insights that are needed to design and execute efforts to influence their communities and societies.

As a result, **healthy, effective, and durable** partnerships between international organisations and national or local civil society groups can provide a combined set of skills and resources that neither party can deliver on its own.

For many African CSOs working on natural resource management and conservation initiatives, these kinds of partnerships can be an important factor in their growth, development, and sustainability. Often, strategic partnerships are a key to local CSOs becoming established and provide critical early support. International NGOs can enable local groups to build their networks, resourcing, and draw on technical skills that they lack or cannot easily develop. For international organisations, national or local partners often play the key role in delivering impact on the ground, acting as change agents in ways that international NGOs frequently cannot due to cultural, social, or political factors.



STRONG GLOBAL-TO-LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE THEREFORE A KEY COMPONENT OF THE OVERALL CAPACITY OF AFRICAN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS, AND IN ENABLING THEM TO ACHIEVE RESULTS AND SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES.

But designing and maintaining healthy partnerships, like any relationship between diverse organisations and individuals, is not simple, and requires mutual awareness, thought, and investment. Relationships between international and national or local civil society groups can be undermined by a lack of trust, misalignment of interests, insufficient mutual understanding, poor communications, and inadequate shared investment in maintaining the relationship. On the other hand, partnerships can be strengthened, and set up for success, through conscious design and foresight, and adaptive management of challenges that arise.

At Well Grounded and Maliasili Initiatives, we have witnessed the critical role that healthy and durable partnerships can play in building the capacity and impact of local African CSOs, and in contributing towards large-scale, systemic change in different settings. We have also frequently experienced and observed challenges with the design and management of partnerships, and seen how these can also undermine local organisations' efforts and drain their energy. Partnerships require constant maintenance and frequent fine-tuning if they are to perform well and endure.

We have developed this publication to pull together a range of resources, insights, guidance, and case studies that we hope can inform the design and maintenance of stronger partnerships between international NGOs and local CSOs in Africa and perhaps elsewhere. We hope that both international organisations and local CSOs will find these resources useful and that they will speak to both perspectives in these global-to-local partnerships.

The publication is structured by first presenting a summary of general lessons and principles to provide broad guidance and insights on partnerships, followed by a set of case studies that briefly describe a diverse set of models from amongst our partners and networks. A set of Annexes provides further tools relevant to designing and maintaining effective partnerships.

Our hope is that the examples and resources in this publication will enable all parties to strengthen joint efforts towards rights-based natural resource management and conservation.

Lessons for Designing and Sustaining Effective Partnerships

Every relationship is unique, and each partnership between different organisations has particular strengths and challenges that will change over time. Even so, the case studies presented in this publication demonstrate some important lessons and considerations that can be useful for African civil society organisations (CSOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) interested in building and maintaining healthy and effective partnerships. While not exhaustive, a number of key overarching lessons are summarised in this section. The case studies that follow provide greater detail and specificity.

ALIGNMENT



Alignment of interests, values, and approaches is key to healthy partnerships. Organisations with common or **compatible values and visions** can collaborate on meaningful, shared outcomes and longer-term impacts. Alignment means finding a good match and building a partnership from there. It does not mean that a CSO and an INGO need to be exactly the same. Rather, they will typically have distinct strengths and approaches, and these differences are indeed key to any healthy partnership. But organisations need to be aligned in terms of their overall goals and what they hope to achieve, as well as how they believe those goals can be achieved. Organisations with **complementary strengths** can learn from one another and accomplish more together than would have been possible acting alone. Further, while alignment is important, it should be found or built collaboratively rather than forced. INGOs should respect partners' distinct visions and values and, likewise, CSOs should avoid adopting INGO agendas for the sake of securing support or funding.

COMMITMENT



Partnerships require an investment from both parties – of time, human and financial resources, and often, emotional energy. The impacts of partnerships also take time to develop, as does trust. Like any relationship, partnerships between organisations will inevitably have ups and downs, and go through periods of uncertainty, tension, or even resentment. Given this, good partnerships often involve **long-term commitment**, including the willingness and ability to manage difficult periods and overcome challenges that arise. Several of the partnerships featured in the case studies have been in place for a decade or longer, and have changed over the course of that time. For INGOs, it can be helpful to see partnerships as a long-term investment. There are significant upfront costs and risks, but the collective impacts – especially over the medium to long run – will almost certainly be much greater than what an INGO can do on its own. INGOs often have greater capacity to absorb risk, and can therefore be open to new partners and opportunities.

Beyond duration, **depth of commitment** is also a consideration in good partnerships. Many African CSOs are working in politically and economically difficult environments. They need allies who will stand with them even when there are high risks and potential political costs. In good partnerships, INGOs also often make a commitment to the CSO as an organisation – not just to projects – including by supporting organisation development and core costs, and helping to enhance CSO visibility and autonomy. Ultimately, “success” in a partnership may mean getting to the point where INGO support is no longer needed.

RELATIONSHIPS



Power differentials in CSO/INGO partnerships can be hard to avoid. Nonetheless, there can be genuine collaboration when partners strive to treat one another as **respected equals** with different but mutually important contributions. In contrast, partnerships between African CSOs and INGOs are too often simply transactional, with the CSO acting as a service provider to an INGO project. Collaboration can be facilitated in part by having both **clear and fair terms** (e.g., Codes of Conduct, Memorandums of Understanding) and **responsive, close working relationships**. This kind of relationship can be challenging to establish, including where INGO or donor policies limit flexibility. For CSOs, building relationships over time and working directly with local INGO offices or dedicated staff – which tend to have more flexibility than INGO headquarters – may help.

A key part of respect is **sharing credit**. INGOs should avoid claiming credit for CSOs' innovations and impacts, and vice-versa. Partners can agree in advance on how to communicate about shared efforts, ensuring due credit is given. Beyond this, INGOs often have opportunities and resources to **pro-actively support African CSO partners in raising their profile, receiving international recognition, and spreading messages about their work**. This can help increase CSO visibility, connect CSOs to funders, and strengthen local groups' networks.



LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR HEALTHY PARTNERSHIPS

When developing partnerships, the following suggestions may help set things on a solid foundation for long-term collaboration:

- **Be clear about your organisation's priorities and needs.** What are you looking for in a partnership?
- **Be honest about your own strengths and weaknesses.** What do you bring to the table? What are your limitations?
- **Do your research**, so that you can find potential INGO or CSO partners that will be a good match. Be creative in seeking and creating new links.
- **Stay committed to your organisation's values and priorities**, while being adaptive and open to new opportunities.
- **Have clear terms for partnerships.** What are your protocols or policies in partnerships? What do you commit to doing and what do you require of a partner?
- **Set reasonable expectations and timelines.** What can you do and when, being realistic and accounting for unforeseen challenges?
- **Spend time building trust at the outset.** Often, organisations rush into planning mode to address specific projects or proposal development opportunities. But healthy partnerships must be based on shared values, mutual respect, and a foundation of trust, and require upfront investments of time and energy to develop these.

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY



Partners should be accountable to one another. Mutual accountability means that both parties are responsible for the commitments they make. **CSOs and INGOs should also be “downwardly” accountable to the communities or others they aim to support.** Accountability can be fostered by, among other things, establishing clear expectations, engaging in strategic monitoring, and allowing appropriate flexibility to accommodate mistakes and unexpected issues. Reporting can be a source of learning for both partners, if it is meaningful and relatively low-cost. Codes of Conduct, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), and similar tools can be helpful for laying the groundwork for mutual accountability, especially early on in a partnership. At the same time, such agreements are usually not sufficient in themselves and should not hold the partnership back from evolving.

COMMUNICATIONS



Good communication – including with honesty, regularity, and respect – is a critical component of building and maintaining strong partnerships. Often this includes both formal and informal channels. Partnerships are never perfect.

Enabling honest, two-way communication about mistakes and grievances can help to **resolve** them, just as effective feedback on performance is a critical function within organisations. Being willing to give respectfully candid feedback supports **learning and collaboration**, as partners can better see what is (and isn't) working and make adjustments. Good communication can also help **increase efficiency** of partnerships. For example, transparent communication about costs and budgets may reduce reporting and coordination costs. Overall, good communication also helps to **build and maintain trust**.



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN PARTNERSHIPS

- Create regular opportunities for review, discussion, and feedback, such as quarterly meetings, more frequent check-ins, or annual reviews.
- Set clear agendas and develop ways of surfacing key issues that arise within partnerships.
- Solicit critical feedback – and act on important issues and concerns that arise.
- Use appropriate modes of communication, including in-person meetings. Do not rely excessively on email, which can be a more limited communication tool, particularly in cross-cultural situations or where language barriers exist. Tailor communications so that they are appropriate to the specific audience(s) you are trying to reach.

FUNDING



For African CSOs, having too little funding, too few funding sources, or inappropriate funding present major challenges to an organisation's sustainability. **CSOs need access to reliable, flexible, and long-term funding, inclusive of overhead and organisation development costs.** INGOs can often provide this directly (e.g. via flexible grants) and can also help their local partners build links and networks to other funders that are otherwise very difficult for grassroots organisations to find and to reach. Funding, like time and energy, should also be invested in the partnership itself, e.g., for communications and for processes that build trust and strategic alignment.



BEING SELECTIVE IN PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND WHEN TO SAY 'NO'

Given the time and resources that good partnerships require, it is important to **be selective and thoughtful** in whether and how to form them. This includes understanding when there is not a good fit and saying “no thanks.” The following questions may be helpful in considering a partnership opportunity:

- Is there genuine alignment, or would the CSO (or INGO) have to substantially deviate from its own vision or strategic priorities to make the partnership work?
- Is there, or could there be, a foundation of trust and shared values?
- Will there be mutual accountability to the commitments made?

If these are not (or will not be) the case, perhaps it is not a good match.

Questions like these may also be useful when deciding whether and how to continue existing partnerships. Sometimes ending a partnership may be a relatively simple and mutual agreement, as the roles of each organisation evolve and CSO needs change. Other times, it may be more difficult, such as where there are intractable issues with communications or accountability. In all cases, partnerships can be ended responsibly and respectfully. For example, if an INGO is initiating the change, they can first ensure all reasonable efforts have been made to resolve concerns and that CSOs are given time and appropriate support to transition. Terms for ending the partnership might be agreed to at the beginning, as part of the MoU.

At the same time, for INGOs in particular, building good partnerships often requires accepting risk, and being willing to take risks on new leaders, organisations, and ideas. Setbacks are part of innovation. Not all questions can be answered in advance and partnerships (and organisations) change over time. Perfect conditions likely won't be there, but good conditions can be built over time.

Partnership Principles

These ten points provide a set of overarching principles that can be used to guide partnerships. They fall into three basic categories:

- Identifying and screening potential partners as a prelude to developing a relationship.
- Designing and implementing the partnership.
- Maintaining the relationship and adapting the partnership accordingly.

IDENTIFYING AND SCREENING PARTNERS

1. Alignment. Seek partners that share your core vision, mission, goals, and values. To find and foster the right relationships, you need to know what you really want and what kinds of partnerships you want to develop. Don't try to fit a square peg into a round hole; only take on partnerships where there is true alignment of purpose. Don't rush relationships but take the time to ensure that both parties are truly aligned.

2. Be strategic. Seek the right mix of partners for your organisation and be selective. Having a few, long-term, committed partners may be more impactful (and easier to manage) than having many. A "partnership strategy" or set of criteria may be a useful tool.

3. Complementarity. While seeking high-level alignment, good partnerships are based on complementary skills and strengths, and relationships should be designed around these. Think about what you do well, what you don't do well or cannot do, and where you can find partners that complement your skills and role.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

4. Specify roles, rules, and expectations. Be clear about what your respective roles are and who is going to do what. Jointly develop formal tools such as a partnership charter or Memorandum of Understanding to define partnerships and create frameworks for mutual accountability.

5. Communicate openly and frequently. Open and honest communication contributes to mutual understanding, collaboration, trust, and surfacing and addressing conflicts in a healthy manner. Systems and routines should be created to foster regular feedback and surface issues before they become problems.

6. Share credit. Agree on how to communicate about shared efforts, giving due credit and ensuring appropriate visibility. Take the initiative to actively promote each other's organisations and work. Consciously taking steps to be generous and promote the role of your partner can be a key to building strong relationships over time; conversely, failing to share credit is one of the easiest ways to undermine promising relationships.

7. Minimise costs. Partnerships are costly to develop and maintain, so take steps to minimise transaction costs, such as avoiding unnecessary planning processes or reporting requirements. For international organisations, be aware of the stresses that reporting and administrative requirements can impose on smaller or grassroots organisations, and find ways to actively minimize those costs.

MAINTAINING AND ADAPTING

8. Invest in long-term relationships. Good partnerships take time to develop, trust takes time to grow, and delivery of results can take years to fully materialise. Take the time to understand prospective partners' perspectives, values, experiences, and goals, and to learn from each other as both organisations grow and change.

9. Build trust. Trust is the foundation to all healthy relationships. Building trust takes time and requires active intent by both parties. Create the space for personal relationships and trust to emerge and develop when designing collaborative processes.

10. Be adaptive. Be innovative and adaptable to make partnerships work for all parties. If something isn't working, find a better way.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- 1 IDENTIFYING AND SCREENING PARTNERS
- 2 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION
- 3 MAINTAINING AND ADAPTING



Case Studies

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NAMIBIA



BACKGROUND

Namibia's globally recognised Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme has had a transformative impact on rural people's livelihoods and income, the national economy, and wildlife and natural resource conservation. Namibian law recognises the rights of rural communities to govern and directly benefit from natural resources through the establishment of communal wildlife conservancies, community forests, and other community conservation ventures. Today, 82 communal conservancies cover almost 20 percent of Namibia's total land area and have played a key role in wildlife recoveries nationwide since the 1990s. They generate nearly \$8 million USD annually in benefits for rural communities and support conservation across 16 million hectares.¹

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The **Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO)**, formally established in 1999, is a unique collaborative platform that has played a key role in coordinating support to conservancies and other CBNRM efforts. This national umbrella organisation is comprised of:

- Nine full members (Namibian NGOs and institutions)
- Associate members (including community associations, consultants, organisations and WWF in Namibia)
- A small secretariat
- Three technical [working groups](#) which are coordinated by the secretariat and served by NACSO members and other specialists

"Everyone knows we can go further as a team than as individuals working on our own, and this has created a cohesive programmatic approach. Everybody shares in the planning, implementation and reporting."

–Chris Weaver, WWF in Namibia

"We have to create common ground and develop our national partnerships to in turn support communities ... We don't necessarily agree on everything but ... we don't let this be a hurdle in moving the bigger things ahead."

–Maxi Louis, NACSO

"The biggest strength that we have is our partnerships. If we were just implementing our programmes on an individual basis, we would not have had the success in Namibia that we've had."

–Maxi Louis, NACSO

¹ Case study details are based primarily on interviews with Maxi Pia Louis – NACSO Director (April 2017) and Chris Weaver – Director of WWF Namibia Program (May 2017); as well as a presentation by Lisa Steel - WWF at a dialogue on [Strengthening Partnerships for African Conservation Leadership](#) (Organised by the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group with Maliasili Initiatives, February 2017). The paragraph also draws on: NACSO. 2015. [The state of community conservation in Namibia](#) - a review of communal conservancies, community forests and other CBNRM initiatives (2015 Annual Report). NACSO, Windhoek; and the NACSO [webpage](#).

NACSO also works closely with the Namibian government, including its national CBNRM programme; and the private sector, such as tourism and hunting companies. NACSO provides a forum for CBNRM strategic planning and coordination at the national level. The association also facilitates standardised monitoring, networking, advocacy, capacity building, and some fundraising. Working groups facilitate learning and innovation in CBNRM to support the adaptive management of the programme. NACSO also organises exchange visits for others to learn about Namibia's approaches. Collectively, these efforts help to ensure that Namibian NGOs and agencies can give higher quality, more harmonised, and wider-reaching assistance to communities implementing CBNRM, including applying common systems and standards in support of all conservancies.²

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Namibia – a country office of the international conservation NGO, WWF – is an associate member of NACSO and one of its founding partners.³ As an associate, WWF does not have voting rights in NACSO. Nonetheless, it works closely with and supports NACSO with, among others:

- Technical support through the working groups, particularly wildlife management, governance, and monitoring and enterprise development in conservancies.
- Funding, including an annual institutional support grant to the secretariat and grants that go to members. NACSO then has responsibility for grant administration and reporting to WWF.
- Connections to other technical and financial resources.⁴ For example, WWF arranged for NACSO, together with government representatives, to visit and learn first-hand about community conservation financing in Costa Rica.

WWF began supporting CBNRM in Namibia in 1993 (just three years after Namibian independence) under the USAID-funded [Living in a Finite Environment \(LIFE\)](#) project. Rather than implementing projects themselves, WWF's role has always been to assist Namibian organisations to develop a national CBNRM Programme and the capacity to implement it. WWF's support was initially shaped through the creation of the LIFE Project Steering Committee, which was composed of the government and NGO partners who were involved with CBNRM support. The success of the Steering Committee was such that partners decided to formalise its roles into a National Association in 1996, which became NACSO in 1999. WWF's role in NACSO has changed over time, shifting from direct coordination to support.

The cooperation and trust between NACSO and WWF in Namibia has also built over time. Early on, clear terms and an MoU were established. While those agreements are still in place, the partners have also developed a more responsive, dynamic way of working together.

² Drawing on: NACSO. March 2011. NACSO Strategic Plan -2011-2015. NACSO, Windhoek; and the NACSO webpage.

³ It is noted that partnership approaches may vary across an organisation. This case pertains to the specific partnership between NACSO and WWF in Namibia. For purposes of this case, "WWF" refers to its country office in Namibia unless otherwise specified.

⁴ cf. World Bank Group and World Wildlife Fund. 2014. [Getting Financed: 9 Tips for Community Joint Ventures in Tourism](#). World Bank, Washington, DC.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Some key strengths in NACSO and WWF's partnership include:

Shared vision, with respect for different goals and agendas: NACSO and WWF are both committed to sustainable and thriving CBNRM that works for people and nature. At the same time, they recognise and respect that, as an INGO and a national umbrella organisation, they have distinct agendas. They collaborate and work closely together where there is common ground. They also have different strengths, and therefore different roles. WWF in Namibia recognises the central role local CSOs need to play in implementing and facilitating field-level work and influencing national policies. NACSO and its members recognise the important role WWF plays in helping to mobilise resources, promoting the Namibian CBNRM programme, and providing technical expertise.

Open, regular communication: There is regular formal and informal communication between partners, facilitated by NACSO's well-developed formal structure of working groups, members, and a secretariat. This is further facilitated by the physical sharing of an office complex where both NACSO and WWF are based. This helps ensure day-to-day coordination and transparency. They develop their own plans, but coordinate them.

Trust and willingness to work through challenges together: Trust, grown over time, contributes to their ability to talk through and resolve issues as they arise.

Long-term commitment: WWF has been supporting NACSO for nearly 20 years, as part of a long-term and strategic investment in building local capacity of Namibian civil society and a commitment in Namibia to working through local partners. WWF's role has, and is, changing as NACSO changes.

There are also challenges that the partners are working through. Currently, NACSO relies quite heavily on WWF for funding. In recent years, even as WWF has moved into more of a support (vs. active coordination) role, this financial reliance has increased. Namibia is now considered a middle-income country and, because of this, draws less financial support from bilateral donors and other major development funders. This has meant fewer resources for both NACSO and its individual members. NACSO is working towards greater financial independence, including working closely with WWF to establish a national community conservation trust fund and seeking new sources of funding such as private foundations and corporate donors.

"We see each other every day and there is a lot of communication. It's not just meetings, it's natural communication. These are relationships that we have built over years."

–Maxi Louis, NACSO

"A key to success is that the different stakeholders in Namibia, the NGOs and the government, recognise the value of having a team approach...including civil society."

–Chris Weaver, WWF in Namibia

"While its partnership with WWF remains strong, NACSO does not focus solely on this international partnership. It also develops and maintains the health of its national and local partners. This is important for its sustainability as a Namibian umbrella organisation and to ensure it can achieve its mission of supporting communities."

–Maxi Louis, NACSO

BUILDING A CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK FOR FOREST CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS IN NORTH KIVU PROVINCE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



BACKGROUND

North Kivu Province in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contains dense, biodiverse tropical forest, including in Virunga National Park. This World Heritage Site is home to several critically endangered and threatened species, including Grauer's gorillas and chimpanzees. The province's population includes many indigenous Pygmy peoples⁵ and nearly one million people who have been internally displaced due to armed conflict over the past two decades.⁶ There are substantial stores of valuable minerals and oil in the province, and competition for access to and control of these resources has been cited as a key driver of conflicts. These challenges increase both the risks for, and importance of, CSOs that work for the province's local communities and environment.⁷

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Le Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers (Réseau CREF) is a North Kivu network of about 30 CSOs. It was founded in 2003 with a focus on conserving forests and protecting the related rights and interests of indigenous Pygmy peoples and local communities.

This case focuses on Réseau CREF's partnerships both with its network members and INGO partners, as both are illustrative of its approach. **The network:**

- Gives technical and fund-raising support to member organisations, including for training, community support, and community forest management.
- Convenes members, including for peer learning.
- Facilitates coordination, and builds synergy between members.
- Raises awareness about and advocates nationally and internationally for the network's and network members' priorities.

Réseau CREF's vision is "[t]he creation of a Congolese society where the free, prior, and informed consent of local communities and Pygmy indigenous peoples is respected and applied [and where] customary law and tenure rights – including the right of access, use, management, and control – are protected for sustainable development and the preservation of the forest, the ecosystem, and the climate for the benefit of present and future generations."

–Réseau CREF [webpage](#)

"Each partner has its own project and reporting format. The more partners we have, the more reports we have to write differently. This takes time and can be overwhelming."

–Alphonse Muhindo Valivambene -
Réseau CREF

5 Exact numbers are not available. However, indigenous peoples in the North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema provinces include Batwa (Batswa), Bambuti, Bayanda, Babuluku, Banwa, Bambuti, and Bambote, according to FDAPYD et al. 2013. "[Indigenous peoples in the DRC: The injustice of multiple forms of discrimination](#)," NGO report on indigenous Pygmy peoples, submitted for the Universal Periodic Review of the Democratic Republic of Congo – 2014. (p.5).

6 OCHA. 2013. [Democratic Republic of Congo: Internally Displaced People and Returnees - July 2013](#). Fact Sheet; and, Joint IDP Profiling Service. 2010. [Profile at a glance: Democratic Republic of Congo - North Kivu](#). Brief.

7 Case study details are based primarily on interviews with Alphonse Muhindo Valivambene - Réseau CREF Secretary General (May 2017) and Katy Scholfield - Synchronicity Earth Conservation Research Analyst, Forests and Oceans Portfolios Lead (May 2017); as well as a background interview with Cath Long - Well Grounded Director (March 2017) ; the FPP [webpage](#); and the Réseau CREF [webpage](#). Quotes attributed to Alphonse Muhindo Valivambene and Réseau CREF have been translated from French.

Réseau CREF members must be based in North Kivu and must have been in operation for at least three years. Members are required to follow a set of shared rules, including being credible and non-confrontational, participating regularly in the network, paying an annual membership fee, being audited by other members, and undertaking self-assessments. Performance is celebrated, including with awards. However, members also have to meet their commitments in order to stay in the network. The network has also evolved over time, for example by making changes in response to issues raised at general assemblies.

Networks can be difficult to sustain, especially where there are political, logistical, and security obstacles, as is the case in the DRC. Trust and coordination between CSOs in the North Kivu region is often low. Réseau CREF therefore has several strategies to keep its network healthy. For example, the network's members are organised into smaller sub-groups of CSOs located relatively close together. There are several communication channels within and across these groups, including quarterly sub-group meetings, annual general assemblies that bring all members together, email, Skype, phone, and even an anonymous suggestion box.

Finding sustained external support is also a challenge in this region. Many INGOs and funders focus on short-term humanitarian responses and/or have left due to insecurity in the region. Despite this, Réseau CREF has successfully built long-term international partnerships, including with the [Alexander Soros Foundation](#) (ASF), the [Forest Peoples Programme](#), [Global Witness](#), [IUCN Netherlands](#), [Rainforest Foundation Norway](#), and [Synchronicity Earth](#).

Having a variety of supportive INGO partnerships has been important for the network's growth and sustainability. At the same time, it poses challenges because Réseau CREF has to manage different timelines, expectations, and reporting requirements. To address this, Réseau CREF has been working with its partners towards more coordinated funding and reporting systems. This is still a work in progress, but they have taken innovative steps, including getting partners in touch with one another and holding meetings with multiple partners when possible. The idea of integrated reports (having one report to multiple donors) was suggested at one such meeting. Réseau CREF also presents its entire budget to all partners, indicating if and how each cost is covered. This increases transparency and also helps partners see where there are gaps and how they might be able to help. Réseau CREF also has a set salary structure, which helps make its costs and terms clear to partners.

In addition, Réseau CREF communicates openly with its international partners about what the network needs and how its work is going. For example, the network requires substantial funding for convening meetings, an activity international organisations are often reluctant to fund. However, the network has been able to explain and demonstrate the importance of membership and stakeholder meetings, and get support for them.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

- Some strengths of Réseau CREF's member and INGO partnerships include the following:
- **Strong commitment and clear vision:** Réseau CREF is committed to its vision despite enormous challenges. For example, in the early 2010s, the network helped expose [SOCO International's](#) oil exploration in Virunga National Park. Its advocacy was [internationally recognised](#), but also jeopardised the personal safety of network employees and members. Réseau CREF looks for INGO partners who are aligned with and committed to supporting its vision.
- **Filling a need:** The creation of Réseau CREF was in response to a clear need for more and better CSO coordination in the province. It maintains focus on its members' key needs and interests, including making changes in response to what it hears from its members.
- **Clear rules and mechanisms for mutual accountability:** Clear rules and mechanisms enable greater transparency and mutual accountability with network members and with INGO partners.
- **Communication and coordination:** The network has multiple, coordinated channels for communication between members and with INGO partners.
- **Active trust building:** Regular communication, together with thoughtful facilitation and leadership, have helped the network build strong relationships in a context where trust and coordination between organisations has often been low.

Réseau CREF's effectiveness is supported by the strong leadership and institutional memory of the network's founder and Secretary General, Alphonse Muhindo Valivambene. This strength may also become a longer-term challenge, because it is often difficult for organisations to stay healthy when their founding leaders move on. However, the network is taking steps now to help ensure its long-term sustainability.

"One thing that stands out is Réseau CREF's passion for what they're doing. It's a very difficult place to work but they're committed ... even when conflict breaks out. There's complete, underlying loyalty to what they're doing."

– Katy Scholfield, Synchronicity Earth

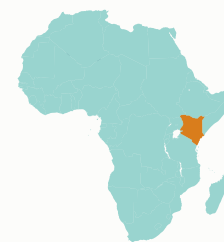
"It is difficult to make a network sustainable. The fundamental question is to ensure that the initial motivation remains understood ... [a] network for exchange, sharing of information and experiences, [and] capacity building. But also, the needs of members can evolve in time and according to context."

– Alphonse Muhindo Valivambene - Réseau CREF

"Alphonse is very open ... to talking about what is and isn't working. And we really encourage that discussion and openness, including in reporting."

– Katy Scholfield, Synchronicity Earth

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CONSERVATION KENYA'S RANGELANDS



BACKGROUND

Rangelands where pastoralist communities and some of the world's great wildlife populations have co-existed for centuries lie at the centre of rural people's livelihoods and conservation efforts in Kenya. In the face of growing threats to these lands, including from fragmentation, increased domestic and international demand for natural resources, climate change, and declining wildlife populations, pastoralist communities across Kenya's rangelands have been forming conservancies. A conservancy is land set aside by a community, private owner(s), or company for wildlife conservation. Conservancies have been legally recognised since the passage of the 2013 Kenyan Wildlife Act, though communities and individuals have been establishing them since the early 1970s and communities have long governed commons in the region.⁸

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) is a community-led Kenyan organisation that has been working since 2004 to “develop resilient community conservancies, which transform people's lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources.” Its 33 member conservancies cover over 4.4 million hectares, working with pastoralist communities across northern and eastern Kenya. Governed by a Council of Elders,⁹ NRT works directly with and for its members – raising funds, providing hands-on technical support and training, monitoring for information and accountability, etc. It supports and empowers its members to develop their own governance structures, build peace and security, and sustainably manage conservancies. In 2014, NRT also established the for-profit [NRT-Trading](#), which helps to grow businesses, such as livestock trading or beadwork, within member conservancies to diversify their funding. NRT's widely-recognised approach has informed government regulations on community conservancies.

It is “a[n] active, recurrent relationship that is alive all the time ... In my long-term experience working in this field, I've never found a more effective partnership than this NRT-TNC one.”

–Mike Harrison, NRT

“NRT's vision in Northern Kenya is our vision in Northern Kenya.”

–Matt Brown, TNC

“It's more than just money or periodic technical assistance. TNC tries to provide us access to a wide range of their resources as an international organisation ... It's a genuine partnership.”

–Mike Harrison, NRT

⁸ Case study details are based primarily on interviews with Matthew Brown - TNC Africa Conservation Director (April 2017) and Michael Harrison - NRT Chief Executive Officer (May 2017); as well as the NRT [website](#) and a presentation by Allison Martin (TNC) at a dialogue on [Strengthening Partnerships for African Conservation Leadership](#) (organised by the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group with Maliasili Initiatives, February 2017). The paragraph also draws on: NRT. 2015. NRT [State of Conservancies Report](#) and the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) [webpage](#).

⁹ The Council includes each conservancy's chairmen and chairwomen as well as institutional members. See NRT [webpage](#).

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Africa – a regional office of the global conservation organisation – is one of NRT’s key international partners.¹⁰ Since 2007, TNC’s programme in Africa has been helping NRT to grow and better serve its members by providing funding and hands-on technical support for NRT’s operations. This has included:

- Organisation development support, e.g., leadership and communications training for NRT staff, wildlife and social monitoring systems development, and, early on, strategic and financial planning. TNC has arranged for business experts from the U.S. to work on-site with NRT on trust fund and business planning.
- Technical support from TNC scientists on, for example, grazing and conservation plans and specific conservation projects.
- Government relations support through TNC’s office in Nairobi.
- Funding assistance, including a flexible annual grant, funding for specific projects, joint proposal writing, facilitated connections to other donors, and capital investment in NRT-Trading.

NRT and TNC in Africa’s partnership is grounded in individual and institutional relationships that have been built over more than a decade. The partnership is one that both parties entered into based on a sense of useful alignment between their interests, and one in which roles have been intentionally developed to reflect their respective strengths. They have formal agreements, including a MoU, but the elements that make their partnership effective go beyond this.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Some strengths of NRT’s partnership with TNC in Africa include the following:

Shared vision and complementary strengths: NRT has a strong vision for conservancies in Northern Kenya and works with its community partners on the ground to see this through. TNC believes in and shares this vision, and so supports NRT in achieving what they have set out to do. It is a partnership that works for both organisations, and which draws on their different strengths.

Trust: There are high levels of trust between the organisations and between individuals within them. Ideas, questions, and concerns can be raised and addressed.

Open lines of communication, including to address challenges: This trust helps maintain open communication, and vice versa. NRT and TNC (Africa) leaders talk on a near-daily basis, and meet regularly in person. There are also direct lines of communication between staff, including to TNC’s fundraising team.

¹⁰ It is noted that partnership approaches may vary across an organisation. This case pertains to the specific partnership between NRT and TNC’s programme in Africa. For purposes of this case, “TNC” refers to its Africa programme unless otherwise specified.

- **Long-term, collaborative work:** There is active, hands-on, shared work to which both organisations are committed. For example, currently, a TNC marine scientist is working full-time under NRT leadership on mangrove research and protection in coastal Kenya.
- **Mutual respect and due credit:** The organisations and individuals within them respect one another. This can be seen, among other places, in their efforts to make sure that due credit is given in all communications (websites, reports, etc.). This can be difficult because they work collaboratively on many things and have some different audiences. For example, TNC has U.S.-based members and donors to which it must describe its achievements. At the same time, TNC avoids claiming ownership or undue credit for the work of NRT and its members.

These interrelated strengths help the partners resolve challenges when they arise. For example, NRT and TNC are quite different in size and ways of working. As part of a large INGO with many set procedures, TNC in Africa cannot always be as fast or flexible as NRT needs to be in responding to changing situations on the ground. Likewise, as a growing, community-based organisation, NRT does not always have the standardisation expected by an INGO. Differing long-term expectations between the partners can also be a challenge. TNC is a large INGO with many partners in the region and around the globe, among which resources must be shared and prioritised. NRT is an increasingly well-established Kenyan NGO, though it would like to see sustained levels of financial and technical support from TNC to help it fully realise its vision. When concerns arise, they are typically raised to leadership and talked through before they become major problems.

“[B]ased on a relationship of trust, [TNC] can make suggestions or critiques of NRT and we know they’re acting in our best interest. ... We’re together in this.”

–Mike Harrison, NRT

“We are very respectful of one another ... We complement each other and we’re aligned in our vision. That’s a happy relationship.”

–Matt Brown, TNC

“TNC does not try to ‘plant their flag’ in Northern Kenya as a TNC project. ... We are more visible, and we are supported by TNC.”

–Mike Harrison, NRT

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND VISIBILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



BACKGROUND

Communities and economies in West and Central Africa rely on natural resources from across the region's diverse forests, drylands, coasts, and other ecosystems. Yet conservation and governance of these resources face substantial obstacles. These include increasing resource demands, climate change impacts, and political instability. There are many actors working to overcome these challenges, including African CSOs.¹¹

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Since 2006, a regionally-focused **Small-Scale Initiatives Programme** (PPI) has funded over 180 biodiversity conservation and climate change projects proposed and implemented by CSOs in Central and West Africa, Madagascar, and Mozambique. Through these small grants (\$50,000 USD max), the PPI programme aims to preserve the ecosystems on which local people depend and to strengthen CSO capacity and influence. The PPI programme is funded by the French Fund for the Global Environment and managed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) National Committee in France; however, day-to-day management is carried out by a small team within IUCN's West and Central Africa Programme (IUCN-PACO).¹²

"Networking between NGOs is important ... When we talk about capacity building, it's not just a technical issue. It's also about building trust and confidence."

–Thomas Bacha, PPI Programme Coordinator, IUCN-PACO

"[IUCN-PACO] has accompanied us in building of the organisation."

–Aristide Kamla, AMMCO

"We work with young NGOs. We work together for them to find themselves."

–Thomas Bacha, PPI Programme Coordinator, IUCN-PACO

11 Case study details are based primarily on interviews with Thomas Bacha – PPI Programme Coordinator (May 2017) and Aristide Kamla – AMMCO Founder and President (June 2017); as well as a background interview with Mireille Kayijamahe – Well Grounded (May 2017). Organisation descriptions also draw on IUCN. 2016. [2016 Annual Report - IUCN-PACO](#). IUCN-PACO; the IUCN [webpage](#); and the AMMCO [webpage](#).

12 It is noted that partnership approaches may vary across an organisation. This case refers specifically to partnerships between West and Central African CSOs in the context of the PPI programme, managed in the region by IUCN-PACO.

The PPI programme started in 2006 as a funding mechanism. An evaluation after about four years (two funding cycles) highlighted the need for more focus on capacity building. The programme has since developed a more comprehensive approach. It still funds projects, but now couples this with ongoing technical and organisational support, particularly for CSOs that demonstrate commitment and progress. For example, staff from IUCN-PACO now provide some direct support to CSO partners. They offer hands-on technical assistance to strengthen CSO efforts in a variety of areas, including the following:

- Initial proposal development.
- Organisation development, from managing and monitoring projects to developing visions and strategies.
- Advocacy and visibility of CSO agendas.
- Networking and peer-learning between CSOs.
- Links to additional funding.

While these are common elements of support, there is no set formula in the PPI programme. Each CSO is different – with its own strengths and challenges and interests – and IUCN-PACO tries to work with each partner to develop an approach that works for them. One of the PPI programme coordinators, Thomas Bacha, has a demonstrated commitment to fostering healthy, equitable, and tailored partnerships. This involves a lot of formal and informal communication and personal relationship building. IUCN-PACO also engages other partners to provide CSOs with support that it is not well-placed to give directly. For example, [Well Grounded](#) has worked with IUCN-PACO specifically to provide organisation development support to some CSOs that are part of the PPI programme.

It is often challenging for an INGO/donor to provide support without unduly influencing CSO decisions, particularly for newly formed organisations. However, in the context of the PPI programme, both partners (African CSOs and IUCN-PACO) are aware of this risk and try to avoid it, including through open communication about each CSO's vision and interests and by developing a close working relationship.

PPI project funding runs in two- to three-year cycles and CSOs can apply for multiple cycles, based on prior performance. Currently, the PPI programme actively supports about 20-25 CSOs in West and Central Africa on an ongoing basis.¹³

The Cameroonian **African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation (AMMCO)**, formed in 2012, is one of IUCN-PACO's longer-term partners within the PPI programme. They work for aquatic megafauna and habitat protection in Central Africa through education, awareness raising, participatory research, and capacity building. They have established a collaborative database and are building stakeholder capacity to collect and use data.¹⁴ AMMCO was founded by its President, Aristide Kamla, a young PhD candidate who is very committed to the organisation's mission.

“IUCN hired a consultant ... who worked in close collaboration with us to identify ... and solve ... weaknesses and ... reinforce our strengths as an organisation.”

–Aristide Kamla, AMMCO

“You can't work on capacity building, you can't make structural change, in a short time, like six months or a year... Long-term partnerships help build confidence between partners.”

–Thomas Bacha, PPI Programme Coordinator, IUCN-PACO

“We don't have only an official relationship. We have also an informal relationship. He [PPI-PACO coordinator]...checks with me regularly to know how the organisation is going. If we've been able to get funding and how implementation is going. To check on the difficulties and to give us advice.”

–Aristide Kamla, AMMCO

¹³ For other examples, see PPI. 2016. [Petites initiatives, tout un programme – 2016](#).

¹⁴ For example, see AMMCO education project recognised by [UNESCO](#).

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Some strengths of the partnerships within the PPI programme include the following. These reflect the programme's approach to partnerships in general, including its partnership with AMMCO as illustrated.

- **Long-term relationships with a commitment to partners:** IUCN-PACO, in the context of the PPI programme, tries to build long-term relationships with CSOs with the intent of helping them realise their visions. They view capacity building as an ongoing process that benefits from accompaniment by committed partners. Over time, they also build **trust and personal relationships** that go beyond formal institutional roles. For example, PPI programme coordinators have offered support to CSOs when they are negotiating with other INGOs that may override the agendas of these smaller, still developing organisations.
- **CSO leadership and visibility:** The CSOs define their own visions and projects under the PPI programme. The PPI programme coordinators try to be aware of power dynamics and ensure that support is invited, constructive, and in service of CSO agendas. The programme also seeks to raise partners' visibility. For example, they have helped CSOs produce short [videos](#), attract media, and participate in national and international forums.
- **Organisation development:** IUCN-PACO, in partnership with Well Grounded, supports organisation development – from writing proposals to clarifying missions and visions.
- **Networking and peer learning:** The PPI programme enables networking and peer-learning between CSOs. Exchanging experience has been an important source of self-strengthening. The programme also funds some CSOs to participate in other international and regional networks, such as the IUCN World Parks Congress (WPC). Or for instance, AMMCO is expanding its sea turtle conservation work based on a connection with a Central African network, [Rastoma](#), which has also been supported by IUCN-PACO through the PPI programme.
- **Tailored support to new CSOs:** The PPI programme includes smaller, emerging organisations and helps them build the kind of CSO they envision through support that is tailored to their needs and interests.

IUCN-PACO, through the PPI programme, tries to connect partners with additional funders. However, it has been difficult to find funding that is not project- or agenda-specific. This poses a risk for growing organisations that are trying to define and pursue their own agendas.

The PPI programme's growth is both a sign of strength and a source of longer-term challenge. IUCN-PACO seeks to work closely with a growing number of CSOs, but has limited resources. The programme's success has also drawn attention and IUCN (the broader INGO) is interested in institutionalising and expanding the approach. However, many of its key features will be difficult to standardise – including tailored support, trust built over time, committed and innovative leadership, and the relatively low profile that IUCN-PACO maintains in the partnerships.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE – SUPPORTING EMERGING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



BACKGROUND

Natural resources are increasingly under threat in eastern and southern Africa, due in part to increased global demand for land, minerals, and wildlife. Local CSOs are important change agents in natural resource governance in the region, advocating for government and business accountability and helping communities secure land and resource rights. CSOs also face many threats, including when they challenge established power relationships in natural resource ownership and use.¹⁵

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

This case focuses on partnerships between a number of CSOs in Eastern and Southern Africa and the World Resources Institute (WRI) between roughly 1995 and 2005.

A number of influential environmental CSOs in Eastern and Southern Africa have, over the last few decades, significantly influenced environmental governance in their countries and the region. Their impacts range from facilitating and informing constitutional and legislative changes, to calling governments and international bodies to account, to empowering rural community partners to claim rights and meet responsibilities related to natural resources. Some of these organisations include:

- **Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE)** – a public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda and working throughout the region. It seeks to “make public policies work for the people” through research, policy outreach and advocacy, and capacity building.
- **Centro Terra Viva (CTV)** – a leading environmental research and advocacy NGO on land governance in Mozambique. It brings together diverse professionals in the environmental field with the aim of improving national policies and legislation and increasing civil society capacity to participate in environmental policy and practice. It has been particularly active and influential in the area of land rights and community land tenure.

“We had a mission and an interest. But the question of how we were going to achieve that was wide open and would depend on who was there and what they wanted.”

–Peter Veit (WRI)

“This investment in ACODE was also about creating the foundations of organisations that could be partners, and could also in a few years partner with other organisations too.”

–Godber Tumushabe (formerly ACODE)

¹⁵ This case study is summarised and adapted from a more complete version: Campese, J. 2016. “African Advocates: Partnerships for Building Civil Society. A review of World Resources Institute support to East and Southern Africa civil society organisations 1995 – 2005.” Prepared by Maliasili Initiatives for the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG) with support from USAID. This paragraph also draws on: Maliasili Initiatives and Well Grounded. 2015. [Strengthening African Civil Society Organisations for Improved Natural Resource Governance and Conservation](#). Maliasili Initiatives and Well Grounded: Underhill, VT and London, UK.

- **Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)** – a public interest law group promoting justice, sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, and environmental democracy and governance. It works in partnership with civil society, private sector, and government actors, including to provide technical and legal support. To enable such partnerships in a context of low trust between government and civil society, ZELA often establishes Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with specific government agencies. While MoUs are not a ‘silver bullet’ for these partnerships, they can help clarify the terms and expectations, and move action forward in a challenging context.

“We helped set up new groups. But they were very independent and had their own ideas about how to link the law to justice.”

–Owen Lynch (formerly WRI)

These organisations are among a handful that, as new CSOs, received financial and technical capacity building support from the **World Resources Institute (WRI)**.¹⁶ WRI is a global research organisation focusing on the intersections of environment, economic opportunity, and human well-being.

In the early 1990s, when seeking local partners during a time of widespread regional governance reform, democratization, and decentralization, WRI found few African CSOs working on environmental policy analysis and action-research. In response to this gap, between roughly 1995 and 2005, WRI supported the development of about 15 Eastern and Southern African CSOs interested in building environmental research and policy advocacy. This included working with emerging leaders and environmental champions to establish new, independent CSOs, as well as supporting policy units in some existing CSOs. The founders and leaders of these new CSOs were identified in various ways, including when WRI staff visited law schools throughout the region to connect with young, promising students interested in new initiatives. The main building blocks of WRI’s capacity building support initiatives included:

- Multi-year seed funding in the form of flexible grants.
- Mentoring on organisation development and policy research skills, tailored to each partners’ interests and needs.
- “On the job” learning, including through collaborative research on land and environmental governance.
- Support for network building and peer-exchange.

In sum, these efforts helped a group of leading African environmental CSOs to establish themselves and, to varying extents, become established as regional environmental civil society leaders. The CSOs have diverse visions and strategies, adapted to their context.

¹⁶ It is noted that partnership approaches may vary within and across organisations. This work was undertaken by what was, during the case study period, called the WRI Institutions and Governance Program (IGP). It is now known as the Governance Center of Excellence. For purposes of this study, references to “WRI” refer specifically to the work of the WRI IGP circa 1995 – 2005, unless otherwise specified.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Some strengths of these CSOs' partnerships with WRI included the following:

- **Appropriate funding with mutual accountability:** WRI had substantial, flexible, and relatively long-term funding from USAID. It was able to, in turn, give substantial, flexible, and relatively long-term grants to its partners. This included funding overhead for, for example, salaries, rent, computers, and organisation development such as planning and training. WRI also helped partners access other long-term funding sources. While grants were tailored to each partners' needs, CSOs were also accountable for their use, including through regular auditing.

"We've had funding partners who ... gave us enough flexibility to adjust, to adapt – and these are the kind of donors that we want ..."

–CTV

"... We needed the funding, but what is more important is that we needed the learning."

–Mutuso Dhliwayo
(ZELA)

"This wasn't theoretical ... capacity building. ... It was learning by doing. ... Part of this is you accept mistakes. ... It's part of the learning."

–Jon Anderson (formerly USAID)

- **Collaborative, respectful, and sustained relationships:** WRI sought partnerships where there was shared vision and commitment and where it could meaningfully contribute. CSOs worked with WRI as partners on joint projects (as opposed to local CSOs acting as service providers for an external agenda). The shared nature of their work also helped build trust. These were personal relationships – not just institutional ones – and they grew over time. Joint research provided important opportunities for both organisations, and was also a means for new organisations to learn through practice. Additionally, as new organisations, mistakes were proactively addressed, but were accepted as part of learning.
- **Risk-taking, including accepting setbacks and failures:** Investing in new organisations is a risky endeavour. WRI and USAID were willing to invest substantial time and resources into new organisations, and part of this meant accepting setbacks. Likewise, the CSO founders and leaders took a big risk, building a new kind of organisation with a new partner. WRI's willingness to take this risk on was facilitated in part by confidence in their partners.
- **Tailored, evolving support:** There was no blueprint for these partnerships. In part because it worked with relatively few organisations, WRI was able to tailor support to each CSO, adjusting plans and approaches over time.
- **Standing with partners:** These CSOs and their staff have faced serious political and legal challenges from governments and other powerful actors. Several have been put at personal risk because of their work. Often, this was when they were challenging status quo power arrangements. While not working with them on the ground in most cases, WRI backed its partners when political risks and costs were present.

There were, of course, also challenges. While these were relatively long-term partnerships, managing change and securing sustainable funding after WRI's direct support ended has been challenging for some of the CSOs. There were also relatively few women leaders in these CSOs, pointing to the need for more or different efforts to identify and work with women. Going forward, another challenge these CSOs face is remaining vibrant, effective organisations when their founding leaders move on. This highlights the importance of working with partners for the long-term, including for change management.

BUILDING LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS FOR RIGHTS-BASED FOREST CONSERVATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



BACKGROUND

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contains the world's second largest tropical forest. There is increasing pressure on these forests, including from demand for timber, sub-surface minerals and oil, land for commercial agricultural (palm oil), and other natural resource-based commodities. DRC's biodiverse forests are also central to the livelihoods and rights of local communities and indigenous Pygmy peoples. While there have been some improvements in environmental legislation, including recent passage of a community forestry law, natural resource governance in the DRC remains highly challenging. This is due in part to the long-term and present-day impacts of armed conflict. There was a national and regional civil war (1997-2003) and armed-conflict continues in Eastern DRC, where many of the country's forests are found.¹⁷

PARTNER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The **Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN)** is one of a relatively small number of INGOs that is doing sustained work with Congolese indigenous and environmental CSOs. RFN aims to “support traditional populations of the world's rainforests in their efforts to protect their environment and secure their rights.” In DRC, where RFN has been working since 2003, its support typically includes:

- Hands-on technical support for CSO organisation and programme development.
- Financing, including for organisation development, core costs (overhead, meetings), and programme activities.
- International and national networking and advocacy support.

RFN's approach is grounded in building close, long-term relationships and supporting organisations as a whole (rather than just projects). Some of the Congolese CSOs that RFN has partnered with in the past include: AfriCapacity (profiled below as one example), Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA), Groupe d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement (GASHE), Réseau CREF, Réseau Ressources Naturelles (RRN), and Solidarité pour la Promotion des Femmes Autochtones (SPFA), among others.

“Our support is not only focused on project implementation. It's very much focused on the organisation level, which ... contributes to stable and continued partnerships.”

–Gunnell Sandanger, RFN

“If you want to strengthen civil society, it's hard if you only have short-term contracts because you can't see what is really needed and where the strengths and weaknesses are ... We don't give up ... We stay.”

–Gunnell Sandanger, RFN

¹⁷ Case study details draw on interviews with Jean de Dieu Wasso – Africapacity, Director (May 2017) and Gunnell Sandanger – RFN, Senior Adviser Central Africa Department (April 2017); as well as a background interview with Cath Long - Well Grounded, Director (March 2017). The paragraph also draws on: Raymond Achu Samndong and Isilda Nhandumbo. 2014. [Natural resources governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Breaking sector walls for sustainable land use investments](#). IIED Country Report. IIED, London; and the RFN [webpage](#).

AfriCapacity has been an RFN partner since 2005. It seeks to strengthen the capacity of local forest organisations, communities, and indigenous Pygmy peoples to realise their development, natural resource management, and advocacy goals. AfriCapacity is contributing to the sustainable management of resources found in the Itombwe Mountains, in line with local peoples' rights and interests. For example, when the Itombwe Nature Reserve (INR) was originally gazetted in 2006, surrounding communities pushed back against its establishment, fearing their rights would be infringed by the reserve. AfriCapacity has been a key partner in facilitating community mapping and participation to reach agreement on boundaries and other questions of natural resource governance within the reserve. INR boundaries were formalised in 2016.¹⁸

“So far, very few international civil society actors are involved in this field. The role played by RFN is very important for the future of tropical forests and for the DRC in particular.”

–Jean de Dieu Wasso,
AfriCapacity

In DRC, RFN's partnership approach stands out for being long-term (beyond crisis-response), collaborative, and focused on the CSOs' development as an organisation. RFN seeks partners that have a compatible vision and collaborates with them – avoiding the too-common approach of having CSOs work as service providers to INGO agendas. For example, AfriCapacity will develop a proposed annual plan (including a budget) and submit this to RFN. RFN and AfriCapacity staff will then discuss the plan, going back and forth as needed to reach agreement on the specific activities that RFN will support. This process ensures that AfriCapacity has a large degree of autonomy in defining its agenda and plans. At the same time, RFN is involved in the details, including to resolve elements it is not comfortable with. There is also recognition that issues arise and plans may have to change. While there is relatively little flexibility in funding levels once plans are in place, RFN works with partners to shift how funding is used or to otherwise address unanticipated issues when they arise.

The partnership approach also involves mechanisms for mutual accountability. RFN requires monitoring of CSO programmes and activities it supports. RFN staff also sign a Code of Conduct meant to guide their actions, including with respect to cultural and contextual awareness. RFN shares its Code with partners, so that all parties know what RFN has committed to, and encourages them to develop their own codes or protocols if they haven't done so. Partners also have tri-party MoUs in some cases. For example, when RFN has engaged [Well Grounded](#) to work with a CSO on organisation development, the parties have developed three-way agreements on how they will work together.

¹⁸ This paragraph draws on: Deo Kujirakwinja, Alain Twendilonge, Leonard Mubalama, Onesiphore Bitomwa, Guillaín Mitamba, Jean de Dieu Wasso, and Andrew Plumptre. January 2016. [The Conservation of Itombwe Nature Reserve](#). Gorilla Journal. No. 51; and WWF. June 2016. [New era for conservation and communities in Itombwe, DRC](#). Online article.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Some strengths of RFN's partnerships with Congolese CSOs, including with AfriCapacity are the following:

- **Reliable, long-term commitment:** RFN is viewed as a stable and reliable partner that tries to find solutions to complex problems. They are able to maintain long-term partnerships in part because they work with relatively few CSOs. They carefully consider each potential partnership, including whether the organisations are a good fit for one another.
- **Mutual accountability:** There is a relatively high degree of collaboration between partners, together with mechanisms for mutual accountability. Tools like Codes of Conduct and tri-party MoUs help ensure such accountability, though they are not in themselves sufficient. RFN staff try to recognise that they may not always understand the context they are working in, and to listen to partners.
- **Raising CSO visibility and giving due credit:** While it has to communicate about its own achievements, RFN tries to raise partners' visibility and avoids claiming credit for CSO work. Supporting CSO partners' visibility is one way they can help them secure additional funding sources.
- **Supporting organisations, not just projects:** Supporting non-project costs and strengthening the organisation as a whole are important factors in CSO sustainability, including for being able to secure additional funding. RFN also tries to connect its partners to other resources, e.g., engaging Well Grounded to support organisation development.
- **Peer-exchange and network-building at multiple levels:** In addition to funding networking and stakeholder meetings in-country, RFN enables partners to participate in international policy processes it is engaged with, such as climate change negotiations.

"RFN thinks it is positive that our partners are not solely dependent on us [for funding]. Sometimes we work with organisations for a long time and they build up their visibility and other donors become interested in them. That is a good development."

–Gunnell Sandanger,
RFN,

[In working with RFN], "AfriCapacity always retains its autonomy and initiative to develop its business plan, in line with its context and objectives[.] Support from RFN strengthens AfriCapacity initiatives."

–Jean de Dieu Wasso,
AfriCapacity

While RFN's focus on supporting organisations (versus projects) is a strength, it can be challenging to measure and communicate the impacts of this approach. It takes time for CSOs to make concrete change and the pathways from support to impact are rarely simple or obvious.

RFN's close involvement with partners is also both a strength and a challenge. For example, as described above initial plans and budgets come from the CSOs and RFN then works on the details with its partners to reach agreement. As a result, RFN can have substantial influence on these plans. It can be hard to find the right balance between CSO autonomy and INGO/donor guidance. This challenge is addressed through regular dialogue.

Changes in RFN staff can also pose a challenge for partners. It takes time for new staff to develop detailed knowledge of the context, partners, and projects on which they are meant to collaborate. RFN is working to improve the hand-over process with incoming staff.

TOOLS FOR DESIGNING AND SUSTAINING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

These annexes provide examples of tools developed and being used by CSOs and INGOs to design and guide their inter-organisational partnerships. These are a sample of many such tools and resources, and are not meant to be exhaustive, nor to provide immediate solutions. Rather, they are offered as examples of the kinds of tools that might be useful to develop or adapt in support of your own partnerships.

ANNEX I: PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES & CODES OF CONDUCT

“Partnership Principles” within a “Code of Ethics and Operational Standards” – Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC)

CCIC is “a coalition of Canadian voluntary sector organisations working globally to achieve sustainable human development.” The coalition’s Code of Ethics and Operational Standards (2009) has evolved from earlier versions (in 1995 and 2004). It forms a “core element of a broader ethics program ... to support CCIC and its Member Organisations’ understanding and improvement of development and operational practices.”¹⁹ The Code covers general, organisational, and development principles, in addition to principles on partnerships.

Excerpt from CCIC [Code of Ethics and Operational Standards](#) (2009:7,8):²⁰

“For the purpose of this section, “partnership” refers to relations between CCIC Member Organisations and civil society organisations – not individuals or governments – where a mutual agreement has been established committing each Organisation to a set of agreed principles and actions over an extended period of time. While these principles may not apply to other types of relationships that CCIC members enter, they may be helpful to guide such relationships. Building on the Development Principles in Section C4, CCIC and its Member Organisations are committed to the following additional principles applying to partnerships:”

“C5.1 Partnerships should be vehicles for long-term accompaniment that support the right of peoples to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options, through their civil society organisations”

“C5.2 Partnerships should advance and exemplify the full realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, social justice, equitable distribution of global wealth and environmental sustainability”

“C5.3 Partnerships should be built on shared visions and goals for society which imply mutual support and solidarity beyond the implementation of specific programs and projects”

¹⁹ CCIC. 2009. [Code of Ethics and Operational Standards](#). CCIC. (p.3)

²⁰ Ibid (p.7,8)

“C5.4 Partnerships should be formed in a spirit of inclusiveness that respects and promotes the value of diversity”

“C5.5 Partnerships should embody equity. Acknowledging that inequalities often exist as a result of power dynamics, especially in funding relations, partners should strive for equitable partnerships”

“C5.6 Partnerships should be dynamic relationships built on respect and honesty, in which partners strive for better understanding and appreciation of one another”

“C5.7 Partners should be transparent and accountable to one another”

“C5.8 Partners should respect one another’s autonomy and constraints and strive to foster a climate of mutual trust in all their partnership activities”

“C5.9 Partners should endeavour to learn from one another and facilitate the sharing of knowledge”

“10 Principles of Good Practice for the Intelligent Funder” – CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation)

CIVICUS – the World Alliance for Citizen Participation – is an “international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world” through “protecting the rights,” “strengthening good practices,” and “increasing the influence of civil society.”²¹ The following principles form part of a CIVICUS ‘toolkit’ directed primarily to organisations that provide funding, including donors and, in many cases, INGOs. In addition to the principles, the toolkit includes case studies and lessons from their application.

Excerpt from [“Principles of Good Practice for the Intelligent Funder”](#).²²

“The following principles of good practice should be seen as interdependent – no single principle can be implemented independently from the others; each principle is complementary to the other. There is no hierarchy between the principles; the enumeration below is arbitrary – each principle builds on the other, as a value as much as an approach to intelligent funding. Taken together, these ten principles define how the intelligent funder approaches funding relationships.”

“Principle 1: UNDERSTAND CIVIL SOCIETY [-] Through innovative tools and mapping exercises, understand civil society and the context in which it operates; identify the “agents and drivers of change” in civil society, and understand their motivations and restrictions.”

“Principle 2: RESPECT CIVIL SOCIETY’S NATURE [-] Respect the diversity and variety of civil society. Do not impose your own agenda, but symbolically acknowledge civil society’s diversity through statements of intent that mirror your ethos and determine the rules of your engagement.”

“Principle 3: ENGAGE AS PARTNERS [-] Listen to the stakeholders and beneficiaries, and find frameworks for dialogue and applied learning. Act on what you have been told – engage your stakeholders and ultimately aim to build a real partnership with the recipients of your funding. Find forums to channel the engagement, such as multi-stakeholder groups. Build ways of engagement with other donors from your sector, and other sectors.”

²¹ <http://www.civicus.org/index.php/what-we-do>

²² Rehse, E. (SCVO) and H. Valot (CIVICUS). 2009. [10 Principles of Good Practice for the Intelligent Funder](#). CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. (p.4.5)

For further information: www.civicus.org/world-assembly/intelligent-funding-track

“Principle Number 4: HAVE A LONG-TERM VIEW [-] Balance the short-term goals with long-term, strategic approaches. Be in it for the long haul – become an effective partner for your beneficiaries, and help them build their capacity through long-term and core support. Find ways to make your funding approaches clear and consistent.”

“Principle 5: MAXIMISE COMBINED RESOURCES [-] Be responsive to the local context in your programming. Tap into the ideas, resources and enthusiasm of your civil society partners and maximise those combined resources.”

“Principle 6: FOCUS ON ACCOUNTABLE RESULTS [-] Adhere to self-regulation, good practice guidance and standards set with your peers. Agree on expected and realistic outcomes with the grantee through results-based management and consequently ensure a shared strategic approach. Inform your beneficiaries about any changes in your approach.”

“Principle 7: BE TRANSPARENT [-] Be open about your opinion and evaluation processes and results and your aims and motivation in entering a funding relationship. Be clear in your purpose and intentions, about the source of your funding and the process of your decision-making.”

“Principle 8: INVEST WITH PURPOSE [-] Funding civil society is an investment of more than money. You invest time, intellectual and financial capital. Define why you are investing in a specific partnership, what your purpose in this relationship is, and what you wish to receive in turn from your partner.”

“Principle 9: LEARN [-] Innovate, test and implement methods of evaluation and assessment to continually improve your understanding, effectiveness and responsiveness, in a manner that is neither too arduous nor just ticking boxes. Work with your civil society partner on learning lessons from your partnership.”

“Principle 10: SHARE WITH YOUR PEERS [-] Share your learning and knowledge with other donors, through formal and informal engagement. Become a more effective donor through harmonisation with other donors.”

“Principles of Partnership” – Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a humanitarian aid INGO working in more than 40 countries. Noting that “[h]ow we partner reflects our values,”²³ its approach is grounded in part on forming effective and ethical local partnerships. Towards this end, Mercy Corps has developed a range of “partnership tools.” The extracted “10 Principles of Partnership” below are found within a [Local Partnerships Guide](#), which includes additional information on these partnership approaches and tools.

Excerpt from the [Local Partnerships Guide](#):²⁴

“10 Principles of Partnership”

“There are three overarching principles agreed among many organisations as important for partners to be able to work together. Practicing these principles in concert provides a firm foundation upon which to build effective partnerships. All partnerships are developed in service of helping to support the development of secure, productive and/or just communities, not to partner for partnership’s sake.”

“Equity – all partners have valuable resources and expertise, as well as risks and benefits that lead to a complementary purpose and respect.”

“Transparency – A crucial factor to developing trust, a positive environment to collaborate and ensuring decisions are made in a socially responsible way.”

²³ Allen, R. et al. 2011. [Local Partnerships: A guide for partnering with civil society, business and government groups](#). Mercy Corps (p.3)

²⁴ Ibid. (p.4,5)

“Mutual benefit – including commitment to other partners as well as to the shared partnership, leading to deeper engagement.”

“Additionally, a number of operational principles contribute to effective working relationships among partners.”

“Communities are the primary stakeholders – Their opinions and contributions matter and must be a part of any interventions we conduct in their communities. We will work to ensure to every extent possible that all groups in the community participate and that the community takes ownership of the projects.”

“Non-discrimination – Development assistance should be targeted for those in need regardless of race, religion, gender, political affiliation, ethnicity or ability. Partners will strive to make sure that our programs do not discriminate against people for these or any other reasons.”

“Fiscal responsibility – Funds have been entrusted to partners for helping improve the lives of the most vulnerable. All partners have a shared responsibility to ensure funds are spent wisely and accountably both to our donors and to the communities we serve.”

“Consistent communication – Partners will work to maintain an open and professional relationship with each other. When problems or differences of opinion arise we will jointly work to solve these harmoniously and come to a mutual agreement of the best solution.”

“Coordination – In order to avoid duplication and inefficient use of resources while maximising opportunities and effectiveness, partners commit to regular sharing of information from relevant programs and the context. This includes with each other and where possible and applicable with others working in the area.”

“Learning – Partners acknowledge that each has different experiences and by learning from each other we can enrich our organisations and the people we aim to serve. Additionally, in identifying shared interests and pursuing joint learning we build our relationship and the capacity of the partnership.”

“Monitoring and evaluation – Understanding the impact of joint work is an essential part of program development and design during which both Mercy Corps and its partners learn from the successes and challenges organisations have in the field. Mercy Corps also agrees to establish and maintain a transparent monitoring system and its partners agree to cooperate with all monitoring visits conducted during and after implementation of the project.”

Mercy Corps further notes that “[p]rinciples are guidelines. True partnership comes from making these principles a way of working together, not a check list. Flexibility is also important as teams learn what the principles mean for them practically and work with partners to integrate them in joint work.”

They also recommend using their principles to **“have a learning conversation** among potential partners or early in the groups’ collaboration. They are a good way to discuss groups’ values and aspirations, as well as jointly create language that will guide the partnership.”

“Partnerships, Collaboration & Networking” in a “Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs” – World Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (WANGO)

WANGO is “an international organisation uniting NGOs ... help[ing] to provide the mechanism and support needed for NGOs to connect, partner and multiply their contributions”²⁵ The “Partnerships, Collaboration & Networking” principles are a sub-section of its Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs. This Code includes general guiding principles for conduct as well as more specific principles on integrity, mission and activities, governance, human resources, the public trust, financial and legal issues, and fundraising, in addition to partnerships.

Excerpt from [Code of Ethics & Conduct for NGOs](#)²⁶ (2004:38-40):

“When appropriate, NGOs may find that cooperation with other civil society organisations, government and intergovernmental agencies, and for-profit corporations may be beneficial in advancing their mission-related objectives. Such collaboration for common good may reduce duplication of services and eliminate using resources for competitive purposes rather than serving constituencies. Collaboration may allow pairing diverse strengths and resources and promote effectiveness in tackling priorities. However, an NGO may enter into such a relationship only if it is consistent with its mission.”

“A. General Principles of Partnerships and Collaboration

- 1. MISSION CONSISTENCY** [-] The organisation shall collaborate with other entities only if the relationship is consistent with the mission of the NGO.
- 2. SHARED VALUES** [-] The organisation shall collaborate on the basis of shared values, common ground, and for the good of society.
- 3. MUTUAL BENEFIT** [-] The NGO shall collaborate on the basis of equitable and genuine mutual benefit to each organisation.
- 4. TRANSPARENCY** [-] NGO collaboration shall allow financial transparency and a two-way flow of information, ideas, and experiences.
- 5. ADAPTIVE TO CHANGE** [-] Collaborations are to be adaptive to change. Changes in the relationship are to be developed through cooperation, and not forced by one or the other organisation.”

“B. Relations With Other NGOs and Civil Society Organisations

- 1. COMMON OBJECTIVES** [-] When appropriate, NGOs with overlapping missions, values, and target groups should partner with each other and civil society organisations, when it would be beneficial for the common target groups and for the achievement of common objectives.
- 2. COMPETITION AND SERVICE DUPLICATION** [-] NGOs with overlapping missions, values, and target groups should refrain from competing with each other and with other civil society organisations, and should refrain from unnecessary duplication of services and disruption of each other’s projects.
- 3. INFORMATION SHARING** [-] NGOs with overlapping missions, values and target groups should share relevant project information with other NGOs and civil society organisations, and mutually support each other.
- 4. SUPPORT FOR OTHER NGOS** [-] The NGO shall express solidarity with campaigns and actions of other NGOs, and promote the effectiveness and success of other NGOs, when it does not compromise the integrity or values of the NGO.
- 5. NETWORKING** [-] The organisation shall network with other ethical NGOs as a means for promoting the growth, effectiveness and efficiency of the NGO sector and the ability to advance the public good.”

²⁵ <http://www.wango.org/>

²⁶ World Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (WANGO). 2004. [Code of Ethics & Conduct for NGOs](#). WANGO. (p.38-40)

ANNEX II: EXAMPLE MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOUS) AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

MoU with CSO Client – Well Grounded

Well Grounded (one of the organisations co-authoring this partnerships guide) is an NGO that works with interested African CSOs to support their organisation development priorities in order to strengthen their natural resource governance and community rights impacts. (Well Grounded's approach is further described below). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is one tool the NGO uses to clarify and agree upon shared terms with its CSO clients. NB. this MoU document is regularly updated based on feedback from CSO clients and Well Grounded staff.

MoU template, shared with permission of Well Grounded:

Memorandum of Understanding between

[CSO name]

And

Well Grounded

This agreement made and entered into on the [date] between Well Grounded of **The Hub, 5 Torrens Street, London, EC1V 1NQ, UK**, and [CSO name] of [CSO address], hereinafter called ['CSO acronym'], for the duration of [x months/years].

1. Background

a. CSO

[Short introduction to aims and objectives of the CSO]

b. Well Grounded

Well Grounded is an NGO, registered in the UK and Cameroon, which provides organisation development support to civil society organisations in Africa so that they have real and sustainable impacts on natural resource governance and community rights. We also promote change by connecting organisations to build a strong civil society voice. We aim to provide a unique response through our work with each organisation, based on its particular needs and priorities.

Well Grounded works with organisations that approach us and we look at them as a whole. We don't tell an organisation what to do or do things that the organisation can do for itself: we identify issues together and help an organisation to find solutions that suit its own circumstances. We do expect an organisation to invest in the process in some way and we expect that everyone in the organisation who is affected by the process will be involved. We also facilitate processes to encourage collective action across organisations.

2. Terms of the Understanding

a. Common vision

Both parties are working towards a common vision: a world in which all people are able to seek and secure justice and sustainability in the management of natural resources.

b. Purpose of collaboration

In the context of [country name], [CSO name] has identified the following areas as being critical to address in order to achieve their vision:

[The issues or themes on which the CSO works.]

To improve its effectiveness in working on the issues identified above and achieving its objectives, [CSO name] recognises that it would benefit from engaging in a process of organisation development, including the following:

[A list here of what we've identified to do together or areas on which the organisation wants to work. Could be key areas for action: strategy, financial management, advocacy and so on.]

The two parties thus engage to work together on the issues identified above in order to further their common vision.

c. Principles for collaboration:

Focus – the collaboration is being pursued in order for both parties to achieve a joint vision and to enable [CSO name] to achieve its objectives in relation to the areas of organisation development identified above

Transparency – both parties will work to build trust and will share information openly with one another

Communication – both parties commit to communicating with one another regularly and informing one another about progress. If communication breaks down, the parties will try and re-establish good communication

Learning – both parties recognise that they will learn from the collaboration and they each commit to sharing ideas and insights that they gain throughout the process

Ethics – both parties commit to working towards the highest possible ethical standards in the collaboration

Flexibility – circumstances change, so both parties are open to changing and revising this agreement and of the focus of the collaboration if necessary

3. Roles and responsibilities

a. [CSO name] will

Ensure that Well Grounded has access to all the information required to support [CSO name] in its work.

Ensure that it responds to Well Grounded's communications, when a response is expected, within a reasonable time frame.

Ensure that Well Grounded has a named contact person in the [CSO name] team as its regular point of contact. In this agreement, the contact person is [CSO name team member]. The contact person's role is to provide coordination of communication on behalf of their organisation. However, the relationship between the organisations can go beyond the contact person.

If Well Grounded staff members are making a visit to [CSO name] from outside [country], [CSO name] will organise the appropriate invitation letters for visas, reserve accommodation in advance and help the visitors with logistics and arrangements as necessary.

Ensure that it has the resources in place to carry out the work agreed upon between the parties.

Not reveal to any person any of the confidential information concerning the organisation, business, finances, transactions or affairs of Well Grounded and never use any such information in any manner which may injure or cause loss either directly or indirectly to Well Grounded or may be likely to do so.

b. Well Grounded will

Ensure that [CSO name] has access to all the information required to collaborate with Well Grounded.

Ensure that it responds to [CSO name's] communications, when a response is expected, within a reasonable time frame

Ensure that [CSO name] has a named Focal Point in the Well Grounded team as its regular point of contact. In this agreement, the Focal Point is [WG team member]. The Focal Point's role is to provide coordination of communication on behalf of their organisation. However, the relationship between the organisations can go beyond the Focal Point.

Provide sufficient Well Grounded staff time in order to work together on the organisation development issues identified above and according to a calendar agreed between the parties.

Not reveal to any person any of the confidential information concerning the organisation, business, finances, transactions or affairs of [CSO name] and never use any such information in any manner which may injure or cause loss either directly or indirectly to [CSO name] or may be likely to do so.

4. Modifications to the Agreement

Both parties will keep each other fully informed of any changes in the circumstances surrounding this agreement that might affect its relevance, and either party can suggest changes or modifications to the agreement at any time. If both parties agree, then the agreement can be modified and re-signed.

5. Accountability

In the unlikely case of there being a concern in relation to this agreement and its implementation:

[CSO name] can contact the following people in Well Grounded, with an explanation of the difficulty:

In the first instance, the [country] Focal Point (CFP), [name of CFP], [email of CFP]

If the CFP is involved in the concern or is not available, the Executive Director, [name of ED], [email of ED]

If the CFP and the Executive Director are involved in the concern or are not available, a Well Grounded Board member: [names of Board members], [emails of Board members].

The Country Focal Point, Executive Director or Board members will reply to the concerns raised within a maximum of 3 weeks.

Well Grounded can contact the following people in [CSO name], with an explanation of the difficulty:

[Director or Coordinator]

[Member of CA or Board]

[The person contacted will reply to the concerns raised within a maximum of 3 weeks.]

Annexes

Work plan and budget

[If there's a more detailed work plan and budget, attach it here]

Sample Partnering Agreement

– The Partnering Initiative

The Partnering Initiative is non-profit organisation focused on enabling partnerships for sustainable development and business “across business, government, NGOs and the UN.”²⁷ It offers resources and training materials, including “[partner-ship support tools](#).” Its [Partnering Toolkit](#) (2011, 4th edition) is intended to offer “a concise overview of the essential elements that make for effective partnering.” It includes a number of tools, such as a “Partner Assessment Form,” “Partnering Roles & Skills Questionnaire,” “Guidelines for Partnering Conversations,” and a “Partnership Review Template,” in addition to the “Sample Partnering Agreement” below.

Sample Partnering Agreement from *The [Partnering Toolkit](#)*.²⁸

“1.0 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1.1 Partner A

Contact details / Contact person

1.2 Partner B

Contact details / Contact person

1.3 Partner C

Contact details / Contact person

2.0 STATEMENT OF INTENT

2.1 We, the undersigned, acknowledge a common commitment to / concern about ...

2.2 By working together as partners, we see the added value each of us can bring to fulfil this commitment / address this concern

2.3 Specifically we expect each partner to contribute to the project in the following way(s):

Partner A ...

Partner B ...

Partner C ...

All partners ...

²⁷ <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/about-us/>

²⁸ Tennyson, R. 2011. [The Partnering Toolkit](#): An essential guide to cross-sector partnering. 4th Edition. International Business Leaders Forum on behalf of The Partnering Initiative (p.45)

3.0 STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Partner roles and responsibilities ...

3.2 Co-ordination and administration ...

3.3 Working groups / committee(s) / advisory group(s) ...

3.4 Decision-making processes ...

3.5 Accountability arrangements ...

4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 We will provide the following resources to a) the partnership and b) the project ...

5.0 AUDITS / REVIEWS / REVISIONS

5.1 We agree to make available all information relevant to this partnership to partners as necessary.

5.2 We agree to review the partnership every ... months

5.3 An independent audit of the financial arrangements of the partnership (and any projects resulting from the partnership) will be undertaken on an annual basis

5.4 We agree to make adjustments to the partnership (including re-writing this agreement) should either a review or an audit indicate that this is necessary for the partnership to achieve its objectives

6.0 CAVEATS

6.1 This agreement does not permit the use of copyright materials (including logos) or the dissemination of confidential information to any third party without the written permission of the partner(s) concerned.

6.2 This agreement does not bind partner organisations or their staff / officers to any financial or other liability without further formal documentation

SIGNED

_____ on behalf of Partner A

_____ on behalf of Partner B

_____ on behalf of Partner C

DATE

PLACE

ANNEX III: OTHER PARTNERSHIP TOOLS AND RESOURCES

“Partner Assessment Form” – The Partnering Initiative

[See information on The Partnering Initiative, above.]

Excerpts from [The Partnering Toolkit](#) (Tennyson 2011:41):

This tool is “[a] ‘prompter’ enabling those creating a partnership to ask systematic questions of any potential partner to ensure a good fit with the goals / needs of the partnership. ... It is designed to raise appropriate questions – not to provide definitive ‘screening.’”

The tool considers:

- “CURRENT STATUS [-] A review of [w]hat you know so far[, t]he reliability of your sources of information[, and w]hether you have enough information upon which to base a decision”
- “FURTHER ACTIONS [-] A note of [f]urther information required[, r]emaining concerns[, and t]imetable and criteria for making a decision about suitability”

The assessment questions are:

“DOES THE PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANISATION HAVE ...

1. A good track record?
2. Reasonable standing / respect within their own sector?
3. Reasonable standing / respect from other sectors and other key players?
4. Wide-ranging and useful contacts they are willing to share?
5. Access to relevant information / resources / experience?
6. Skills and competencies that complement those of your organisation and / or other partners?
7. Sound management and governance structures?
8. A record of financial stability and reliability?
9. A stable staff group?
10. Sticking power when things get tough?

“ARE THE STAFF IN THE PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANISATION ...”

11. Experienced and reliable in the development of projects?
13. Successful at mobilising and managing resources?
14. Good communicators and team players?”

Communications “Content and Coverage” Tool

– The Partnering Initiative with the International Business Leaders Forum

[Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners](#) is a resource that aims to provide “a practical look at the realities of communicating in and about partnership.” It includes, among other things, several tools for planning and managing communications, such as the one on “content and coverage” below.

Excerpt from [Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners](#):²⁹

Communications “Content and Coverage” Tool

“Background to the Plan

- What are the partnership’s goals / objectives?
- What activities has the partnership undertaken to date?
- How are the partners already communicating? What tools are they using?
- What media coverage has the partnership had to date?
- What communication research has the partnership carried out (if any)?”

“Communication Objectives

- What do you / the partners hope to accomplish by communicating?
- What do you / the partners want your audiences or stakeholders to say, do, think or feel as a result of your communication?
- What responses are you hoping for from the people you’re communicating with?”

“**Communication Strategies** (the strategies should specially address the communication objectives that you’ve already identified)

- Can you suggest some effective ways of reaching the partnership’s audiences?
- How best can the partnership reach its communication objectives?
- How can the partnership best capitalise on its strengths / opportunities?
- How can the partnership best minimise its weaknesses / threats?”

“Vulnerabilities / Opportunities (SWOT*)

Internal

- What do you see as the key strengths of the partnership?
- What do you see as the key weaknesses of the partnership?

External

- What opportunities do you see for the partnership?
- What threats do you see for the partnership?

²⁹ McManus, S. and Tennyson, R. 2008. [Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners](#). International Business Leaders Forum on behalf of The Partnering Initiative (p.73)

- Do you have any competitors?
- Can you estimate the risks (of your suggested actions)?”

“Audiences

- Who will be affected by this partnership and in what way?
- Who do you think needs to know about the partnership work?
- Who do you think would like to know about the partnership work?
- Whom does the partnership need to tell about its work?
- Who are the partnership’s internal audiences? Who are its external audiences?
- Who are the partnership’s primary audiences? Who are its secondary audiences?”

“Key Messages (3-5 succinct statements that the partnership will use repeatedly in its communication)

- Does the partnership have any positioning statements already?
- What does the partnership want its audiences to know and to remember?
- What are the benefits for the audiences? (“What’s in it for me?”)
- If I were your next-door neighbour, what would you say to get me to ...?”

“Action Plan

- What specific actions are needed for each communication strategy?
- Who is responsible for each of these actions – who will do what, and by when?
- What is the targeted completion date for each action?
- Do you need to group the actions according to the intended audience or audiences?”

“Communication Materials

- What are the tangible “products” for each strategy?
- What existing communication materials or tools do you need to use?
- What new communication materials or tools do you need to produce?”

“Needed Resources

- What financial resources do you need to implement the communication plan (or each strategy)?
- What human resources do you need to implement the plan (or each strategy)?
- Do you need to provide communication training and build capacity to deliver the plan?
- Do you need in-kind resources (e.g., donation of computers, office space)?
- Have you already budgeted for these resources? Are they new items?”

“Spokespeople

- Who is the most appropriate person or people to speak on behalf of the partnership?”

“Outcomes and Impacts

- Measures of success – How will you measure the communication plan’s success? (“Did we accomplish what we set out to do?”)
- Methods of measurement – What methods will you use to measure the outcomes?
- Methods of control – How will you monitor the plan’s implementation to ensure it’s on track?”

“Plan Oversight

- Who will have key responsibility to oversee the plan?”

“Note: This outline is illustrative only – headings and questions can be changed to suit specific circumstances.”

“* A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that may impact a project or other venture.”

“Checklist of questions when identifying partners” – The Peer Learning Programme for Small and Diaspora Organisations

The resource [Partnerships and Capacity Building: A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs](#)³⁰ aims to share “information, tools and tips that can help small and diaspora organisations strengthen their partnerships and capacity building work.”³¹ Using clear language and graphics, it considers, among other things, the stages of partnerships (preparing, setting it up, managing it, exiting or closing it down) and capacity building. The guide includes summarised tools, such as the checklist for identifying partners below, as well as:

- “Backing up from ‘wants’ to ‘needs’ - A tool for transforming conflict” (p.15)
- “The partnership timeline - A tool for understanding each other’s perspective, and recognising achievement” (p.16, 17)

“Checklist of questions when identifying partners”

1. Are our mission and values compatible?
2. What sort of organisation is it – aims, activities, roles?
3. What else does it do beyond the joint project we are considering?
4. Do you know key facts about the background and links of the organisation and its leaders?
5. Is there a degree of personal trust, based on knowledge of the organisation’s track record, credibility and public image?
6. Where does their funding come from and what conditions are attached?
7. Will the cooperation contribute to our goals?”³²

³⁰ Squire, Catherine. 2012. [Partnerships and Capacity Building: A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs](#). The Peer Learning Programme for Small and Diaspora Organisations.

³¹ <https://www.intrac.org/resources/partnerships-capacity-building-guide-small-diaspora-ngos/>

³² Squire 2012:5

