Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance

Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation

PVC-PVO Consultation:
Key Practitioner Issues

October 24, 2002

Washington, D.C.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

CDIE	Center for Development Information and Evaluation
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
ISO	Intermediate Support Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PVC	Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation
PVO	Private and Voluntary Organization
RD&O	Research, Development and Outreach
SEEP	Small Enterprise Education Promotion Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PVC) is committed to developing a proactive research, development, and outreach (RD&O) agenda under its new five-year strategic framework (2003-07). The purpose is to identify and disseminate information on the most effective interventions to achieve USAID priorities in a variety of development areas. As part of this RD&O effort, PVC is committed to frank discussions and consultations with U.S. private and voluntary organizations (PVO), indigenous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local intermediate support organizations (ISOs), and research institutions.

> *"Intermediate Result 1.3: Wider and more effective learning and dissemination by development partners and PVC of tested innovations, best practices, lessons learned and standards."*
> **PVC Strategic Framework (FY2003-07)**

The PVC-PVO Consultation on Key Practitioner Issues is the first step in launching PVC's RD&O Agenda. The consultation was organized around a synthesis report based on ten end-of-project evaluations under PVC's Matching Grant program.[1] The synthesis focused on five crosscutting themes identified by PVC staff as important for future programming, particularly with regard to NGO sector strengthening. The five themes selected were: partnership, networks, measuring capacity building, sustainability, and PVC management issues.

Evaluation findings were used to identify three program issues – partnership, networking, and measuring capacity building -- that became the basis for a series of dialogues with PVOs that took place during PVC's annual PVO Conference on October 24, 2002. The dialogue sessions contained the following elements:

1. Overview of the purpose of the Matching Grant evaluations, the methodology employed, the process followed, and the resultant synthesis report.

2. Presentation of highlights from the synthesis report, as related to the three themes selected.

3. Twelve small group dialogues on the three themes, involving a total of 120 participants. Conference participants chose the topics they wished to discuss and divided into groups of ten. Four groups chose partnership; five selected measuring capacity building; and, three chose networks. Participants were given two handouts: a summary of synthesis

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[1] Joan Goodin, 2002. *Synthesis Report of PVC Matching Grant Evaluations.* Washington: USAID/Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation. The major purpose of this report is to provide information that will be useful as PVC develops plans for the priorities outlined in its new strategic framework and studies the issues included in its RD&O agenda.

findings related to the topic chosen; and, a sheet to guide the group's work, including five questions to be addressed.

4. Following roughly an hour of discussion, each group gave a brief summary of results and provided a written report of the session.

The Consultation was intended to be another step toward bringing the voice and ideas of practitioners into PVC and USAID's decision-making process. This document summarizes the Consultation discussion, with particular emphasis on the views of the PVO community that emerged in the small group dialogues.

II. PARTNERSHIPS

B oth current and past PVC Strategic Plans have stressed the importance of partnerships between U.S. and local organizations as vehicles for achieving sustainable development. The vast majority of participants reported that their PVOs have policies to partner with local NGOs. The majority view among participants was that partnering with local organizations is "standard operating procedure."

> *"[Partnerships are] a mutually beneficial alliance between organizations where roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined. They are based on a shared vision regarding the objectives and purpose of the work undertaken together. Joint contributions of resources, shared risks, and shared control of program and financial information and planning identify partnerships."*
>
> **CARE**

1. Definition of Partnership and Partner Selection

P artnership, like beauty, appears to be in the eye of the beholder. There is no clear pattern on the definition of partnership or the number and type of partners chosen by PVOs. They run the gamut from community-based groups to national-level NGOs and international PVOs, village to national government agencies, and a wide variety of commercial enterprises.

In addition to the CARE definition (see box above), another PVO incorporates the major elements of partnership espoused by many in the community, defining it as: "a type of institutional relationship in which two or more organizations work together to achieve mutually defined goals on mutually accountable terms." This PVO further defines strategic partnerships designed to increase the capacity and scale of its programs as: "concurrent institutional relationships formed at community, national, or international levels in order to increase impact around a clearly defined policy or practice that incorporates two or more program areas."

The number of partnerships undertaken relates less to the size of the PVO than to its approach to development. One PVO with offices in 36 countries reported nearly 30,000 partnerships, while another registered 26 partnerships in 14 countries. Another organization with worldwide operations established only one partnership in each of the two countries targeted under a USAID grant.

Among the factors mentioned most frequently relating to the choice of partners were:

- Existing relationships with members of other organizations;

- Sector-specific experience in the area of project objectives; and,

- Local context and the presence of organizations with similar interests.

2. Purposes and Types of Partnerships

Clearly, partnership is not an end in itself. It must result in some greater development good that would not be attained by partner organizations operating individually. The Consultation provided insights on the purposes of the partnerships established by participating PVOs. While they were designed to pursue a wide range of technical and sector-specific outcomes, their specific objectives were to: tap into local knowledge and expertise; leverage resources; increase coverage and impact; achieve sustainable programs after exit of the PVO; advocate for policy change; test and transfer new methodologies to local organizations; improve access to local input and buy-in; and, build capacity of the NGO sector.

In a number of cases PVOs have either ceased direct project implementation, or are in the process of shifting from direct service provision to indirect service delivery through partners. In one case, the PVO was committed to increasingly shifting from a service delivery mode to one of facilitation and capacity building for any interested public or private organization that might work within the priority geographic areas identified. It sought to capitalize on the advantages of working with partners of various types and at different stages of the project cycle for the purpose of increasing coverage and impact in poverty reduction.

For another PVO that works to strengthen the private sector, "the blurring of distinctions between partners and clients" was the key to understanding its new, "very partner-dependent" strategic approach: "all the sustainable economic benefits that [the PVO] seeks to establish flow from the continued profitable operation of its partner/client businesses."

In the Consultation five types of partnerships between PVOs and other organizations were discussed. They differed mainly in the degree of shared decision-making and governance and included:

- *Sub-grants and contracts.* The PVO awards a sub-grant or contract to a partner organization for the provision of specific services. The sub-grantee or contractor has virtually no role in the decision-making process or overall project management.

- *Dependent franchise.* In this model, the PVO takes an ownership or major shareholder position in a local organization, which then depends on the PVO for its sustenance and direction.

- *Spin-off NGO.* The PVO either spins off staff from its own operations or motivates others to create a new, local NGO.

- *Collaborating organization.* The PVO engages organizations with complementary expertise in the same area or sector to collaborate in the pursuit of goals and objectives of mutual interest.

- *Shared vision or co-equal arrangement.* The PVO and its partners are committed to a mutually beneficial relationship based on a shared vision and agree to be held accountable for clearly defined roles and responsibilities, while contributing resources and equally sharing risks and project control.

3. Major Constraints to Successful Partnering

Perhaps the most important lesson about partnerships that emerged from the dialogues was careful attention is required if they are to be successful. As one PVO representative pointed out, "the partnership itself, including each organization's role in it, needs to be managed, almost as a separate entity. It is not enough to simply assess each institution separately; the actual bonds, incentives, tensions, and structural issues that help or hinder effective partnership must also be examined." In this context, it was suggested that responsibility for actively managing important partnerships be assigned to a specific individual, and that the partnership management process contain an early warning system to detect emerging problems.

The main constraints to successful partnering that surfaced in the discussion were:

- The time required for the establishment of partnerships is substantial, and a minimum of three to five years is required to build a sustainable program.

- Lack of internal cooperation can contribute to delays and uncertainty. This includes reticence to participate on the part of PVO administrative and field staff, especially when they have not been involved in the partnership's establishment.

- Commitment to partnership can vary across the various levels of a PVO. In some instances, management and operational systems are not fully adapted to partnerships.

- Absence of clearly understood and mutually acceptable oral or written agreements.

- Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, both within the PVO and between the PVO and its partners.

- Unequal financial status of partners. In many instances, this can lead to a donor-client or top-down interpretation of the relationship.

4. Partnership Principles and Factors Related to Successful Approaches

Shared interests or values provide powerful underpinnings for the development of some partnerships. For instance, for PVOs involved in a specific sector, such as microfinance or the environment, the identification of local organizations with like interests and the subsequent establishment of partnerships can be relatively straightforward. In many cases, these organizations are already in contact through issue-based networks or associations to which they belong. Clearly, these factors facilitate the identification of local partners and may speed the process of partnership development.

On the other hand, questions have often been raised by local partner organizations over who is driving the agenda and defining development. They do not necessarily feel part of that process, and some perceive PVOs as proxies of U.S. foreign policy, with little that distinguishes them from donor agencies. In this sense, the question remains, does identification with a specific issue or set of values reduce the time required for partnership development and how does this impact the supervisory and oversight role of PVC grantees vis-à-vis their partners?

Among the general principles discussants mentioned most frequently as important for building and maintaining partnerships were:

- Mutual trust, respect, and commitment to and responsibility for program outcomes;

- Clear objectives, roles, and separation of financial transactions;

- Transparency and accountability to stakeholders;

- Frequent communication, collaboration, and open discussion of challenges;

- Timely and creative problem solving and willingness to learn from difficulties;

- Long-term commitment to the partnership and agreements and relationships that transcend individuals; and,

- Active commitment of country director and management team and a country strategic plan that embraces the concept of partnership.

One PVO representative working in the area of microfinance identified a six-step process for building partnerships: survey and assess potential partners; conduct feasibility studies; prepare a business plan; develop a written agreement; set reporting standards and formats; and, build in monitoring and learning tools.

Another PVO representative emphasized accountability as critically important in partnerships in countries characterized by high levels of corruption. In such cases, U.S. PVOs enjoy a higher degree of trust than local NGOs and are seen as providing a greater measure of protection and ethics. This same source said building three-way partnerships is a very time-consuming and complex process because it is necessary to learn about the structures of all of the organizations involved in order to ensure sufficient internal support. A lack of institutional commitment at all levels of potential PVO, business, and USAID partnerships can lead to false starts and other problems. In the case of USAID, for example, bureaucratic hurdles and contradictory views encountered at various levels within the Agency became a serious constraint to three-way partnerships.

5. Future issues and recommendations

Discussants identified a number of issues for more in-depth examination under PVC's Analytic Agenda, including:

- Strategies for addressing the issue of leadership succession within local NGOs. High rates of staff turnover can contribute to organizational instability. NGOs can also suffer organizational inertia as founders-directors retire or are unwilling to delegate to a second generation of leaders.

- Provision of best practices and models that deal with the constraints and challenges of partnerships.

- The cost-effectiveness of USAID investments in partnership development and management, as compared with other less time-consuming and more direct approaches to achieving Agency objectives.

II. NETWORKS

The strengthening of indigenous NGO networks is an important element of PVC's new strategic framework. Since NGOs are frequently limited in capacity and reach, multi-organization initiatives that mobilize different groups around common concerns can expand NGO impact at the local and national level. Under past PVC strategies, networks have proven to be an effective means for helping PVOs and their partners identify and address problems hindering program impact and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to deal with programmatic challenges and policy issues. In addition to providing access to information, peer input, and dialogue, networks have also served as a platform for outreach to donors and governments.

> *"For lateral learning networks, the most critical challenge is to ensure that member commitment and participation are constantly nurtured and supported through processes and structures that: define and update the network's vision and goals; establish programs, their goals and objectives; and set association policy."*
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> **Building Lateral Learning Networks: Lessons from the SEEP Network**

Nearly all participants in the Consultation reported that networks are part of their organizations' program approach. They spoke of both formal and informal networks, noting that they are for both short- and long-term purposes. Examples of the types of networks mentioned included: educational, microfinance, medical/technical, and cooperative business networks. Some were described as "very formal, business-like," while others were informal, comprised of individual volunteers from different walks of life. A number of networks were reported to have frequent interactions with local governments and businesses.

1. Typology of Networks

In general, a network can be defined as a set of relationships between and among organizations or individuals with common interests, goals, and needs. There are a wide variety of development-oriented networks operating in the U.S. and overseas. They vary by the levels at which they operate, purposes they serve, operational structures, and relationships they cultivate among their members. The four most common kinds of networks are:[2]

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[2] This discussion is based on *Networks Development* (2002), a paper developed for PVC by Carolyn Long.

- *Generic NGO Networks or Consortia.* Groupings usually created at the national level, including indigenous NGOs alone or international and local NGOs engaged in development, relief, or refugee assistance. The purpose of the network is to strengthen individual members and enhance their effectiveness, as well as that of the overall NGO sector, through information sharing and dissemination, coordination of member activities, capacity building, research, and fundraising. These networks also advocate on NGO-specific issues and national or sectoral issues related to development. Examples of this type of network are InterAction, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh, and the Namibia Non-Governmental Organization Forum.

- *Networks of Community-Based Organizations.* Sometimes called federations or movements, these networks are comprised of grassroots groups and associations. They are formed to encourage cooperation and collaboration among member groups via direct attention to and involvement with development programs and projects. Examples include the *Federation des ONG Senegalaises* in Senegal and the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress in Zimbabwe.

- *Sectoral Networks.* Groupings that focus attention on a particular sector through activities such as information sharing, capacity building in technical areas, program collaboration and coordination, joint research and training, and development and promotion of standards. Such networks also engage in advocacy and policy dialogue with local or national government officials and bilateral and multilateral donors. These networks are sometimes created with donor resources and often at the urging of the donor. Examples of sectoral networks are the PVC-supported Small Enterprise Education and Promotion Network in the U.S., African Forest Action Network in Cameroon, and *Groupe Pivot* in Mali.

- *Advocacy Networks.* Sometimes called alliances or coalitions, these groups are formed to engage with national or local governments or international organizations to foment political, social, or economic change. Created by organizations, networks, and activists, these alliances are often established in response to perceived opportunities or threats related to a particular issue, such as women's or children's rights, agrarian reform, or democracy. Examples include the Permanent National Forum for the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Brazil and the People's Campaign for Agrarian Reform in the Philippines.

In terms of organizational structure, two distinct types of networks – lateral learning and affiliate – were identified at the Consultation. Lateral learning networks are sector specific, distinguished by their non-hierarchical structure and diverse membership. Such networks tend to be composed of a range of independent organizations that do not necessarily share the same target clientele or development methodologies. What unites them is their interest in improving state-of-the-art practice, sharing information, and coordinating to enhance the policy and funding environment in a particular sector.

Lateral learning networks have often started out as development projects intended to mobilize NGOs for particular activities, which then evolve into networks with formal structures. Networks of this type are operating at the international, regional, and national levels. They may be informal, functioning largely on voluntary labor and in-kind contributions, or have a more formal structure, including a central secretariat with paid staff, membership requirements, and dues.

Services provided by lateral learning networks include information exchange, technical training, development of best practice materials, donor marketing, and policy coordination.[3]

Affiliate networks are networks in which the members are operationally or financially linked. Typically, these are formed around an individual PVO, with the network being comprised of their country offices and affiliate organizations. The purpose of these networks includes disseminating headquarters policy, harmonizing technical approaches, and achieving increased scale and replication in service delivery. In contrast to a lateral learning network, members of affiliate networks tend to share the same methodology and are frequently led by an apex institution that provides technical guidance and resources and enforces adherence to the organization's principles and goals. Finally, affiliate networks are more directly involved in members' resource mobilization efforts.

2. Lessons for Lateral Learning Networks

In recent years, PVC grants have supported a lateral learning network in the microfinance sector known as the Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network. The network is made up of 56 U.S. PVOs that support micro and small enterprise programs in developing countries.[4] Some of the lessons from SEEP described below may also apply to other types of networks, particularly those aimed at strengthening member capacity and improving service delivery.

Consultation participants identified bottom up planning, matched with shared vision and objectives as key to a lateral learning network's success. Limiting memberships to practitioners – government agencies, donors, and consulting firms are barred – also encourages the development of products that are ready for use by local institutions. Workshops, seminars, newsletters, websites, and communications are the tools of networking, but in the case of SEEP working groups formed the backbone of its lateral learning approach.

Lessons learned from SEEP's experience are numerous and instructive:

- Organizationally, define the membership, focus on the practitioner, and utilize guiding principles that acknowledge equality and community.

- Structurally, start small, expand as needed, and establish the network as a formal institution only when necessary.

- Operationally, start with one activity and do it well, foster members' engagement in governance and policy formation, and focus on products and their dissemination.

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[3] *Building Lateral Learning Networks: Lessons from the SEEP Network* (http://www.seepnetwork.org/LAT/SEEP_latlm .html).
[4] The objective of the grant was to increase the effectiveness of microenterprise development practices among U.S. PVOs and their southern partners through institutional development services. SEEP also supports developing country microenterprise development networks, although there was no Matching Grant funding earmarked for this purpose. Funding from other donors was used to implement a network development services program.

- Procedurally, create mechanisms for learning that favor collective analysis and include opportunities for all to teach and learn and distinguish political activity from the research/learning agenda.

- Administratively, keep core operations compact and expenses low, depend on members' contributions, and avoid competition with members for program funds.

The principle future challenge for lateral learning networks centers on maintaining the successful practices and products of the network as a member-driven association, while its membership expands and interests diversify.

3. Network Strengthening

Clearly, networks can play a valuable role in getting newer PVOs and NGOs up to speed by providing standards and disseminating best practices and tools. A challenge for networks is how to satisfy a broad spectrum of members, particularly when it comes to strengthening the capacity of individual member organizations.

The main constraints to the creation or strengthening of networks identified by the discussants include:

- It takes a long time for large organizations to develop the trust, transparency, and mutual accountability necessary to work together and lose their institutional competitiveness;

- The long-term cost-benefit of developing the network is open to question;

- Competition for funding among network members and financial sustainability;

- Difficulties maintaining relations and momentum once the network is formed and problems filtering best practices from headquarters to the field; and,

- Need to curtail free riders – i.e., extent to which non-members participate – and the fragility of the network structure -- e.g., maintaining value of network to members.

The means to address these constraints include:

- Having a common purpose and shared vision;

- Good leadership and strategy for leadership turnover – rotation, accountability, reporting – and having a good business manager;

- Adequate resources for start-up and an umbrella grant to counter competition among network members; and,

- A trained and competent Board that provides advice but doesn't become too political.

4. Network Sustainability

Consultation participants expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of networks. While networks need to strive for cost-recovery and the diversification of funding sources, it was noted that they are likely to remain dependent on third party funding. There are also potential difficulties related to resource development, since members' individual funding agendas may clash with that of the network – a dilemma endemic to cluster organizations. In addition there was concern that if a volunteer-based network raises membership fees substantially, it may undermine its volunteer base by forcing members to compete for the same pool of volunteers.

5. Advocacy

PVOs are increasingly shifting from providing direct services to facilitating the building of local civil society organizations and multi-sector alliances to solve local problems and deliver services. This trend is expected to continue, with indigenous NGOs taking greater responsibility for community and national development over time, and forming different relationships (partnerships, networks, and coalitions) with PVOs.

PVC support has been important in building the advocacy-related skills of PVOs/NGOs, particularly through networks and coalitions. For example, while SEEP does not formally undertake advocacy activities, it has provided a platform to amplify the voice of PVOs in international policy discussions. A key SEEP role in this regard has been collecting credible data and using its capacity to convene members for the purpose of influencing decision-makers.

Networks have been used to develop advocacy strategies for sectoral policy reform in areas such as microfinance, the environment, and health. In addition, networks have been an effective means to advocate for the adoption or use of particular program models or methodologies developed by PVOs. Illustrative examples of the use of networks for advocacy include:

- *Improving the Enabling Environment.* Networks have proven to be an effective mechanism for promoting regulatory reform and improving the enabling environment for NGOs. This has been particularly relevant in the microfinance sector where networks have been the main channels for microfinance-related advocacy activities. One PVO, for example, worked with local microfinance associations in Kenya and Uganda to push for the regulation and supervision of the microfinance sector. In Uganda, the association began a dialogue with the government and the Central Bank on industry regulation. In Kenya, the association has been involved in drafting a Microfinance Act, which at the time of the Consultation was pending in the Attorney General's office. In both cases, these associations were supported by the respective USAID Missions and received funding from USAID/Washington through the Microenterprise Development Office.

- *Promoting Innovative Models, Scale-up, and Replication.* In some cases, peer networks can play an important role promoting innovative program models. In the microfinance sector, one PVO and its local partners used the network to advocate for a model that integrates health education with village banking services. Their main targets have been peer agencies, governments, and donors. Despite resistance from some microfinance institutions to this integrated approach, participation in networks has been an important advocacy and

dissemination strategy for the PVO and its partners. Analysis of case studies and the financial analysis of the banking-with-education experience in the field have given this PVO a wealth of information to use in its advocacy work.

- *Coalition building.* Another PVO made significant progress in developing coalitions to advocate for environmental issues in Jamaica and Indonesia. In the case of Jamaica, the PVO was instrumental in establishing a national network of local NGOs involved in protected area management. The network was effectively used to promote policy reform, and continues to serve as a productive protective area management policy forum. In Indonesia, the PVO and its local partner developed site-based coalitions as constituencies for conservation in two national parks and played an important role in helping aggregate community interests and facilitate community/park authority communications.

  In contrast, differences in advocacy strategies can also create discord between partners. In Indonesia, for example, a major area of tension emerged between a PVO and local NGO when the latter supported demonstrations against the government that were perceived by the former as being "overly confrontational." However, the Synthesis Report concludes there is no reason why the PVO could not maintain the non-confrontational approach befitting an international voluntary organization, while accommodating the local NGO's wishes to act more aggressively to bring about change. The Report suggests that establishing an arms length distance between the partners would provide greater latitude for the NGO to adopt advocacy tactics at variance with the PVO, while not jeopardizing the latter's status in the country by being associated with internal political issues.

In addition to advocating for policy reform, PVO and NGO networks also have the potential to improve the efficiency of service delivery and increase program coverage and impact. Networks are effective and inexpensive mechanisms for launching new initiatives and disseminating best practices, methodologies, and tools.

IV. MEASURING CAPACITY BUILDING

For PVC, capacity building like partnership is not an end in itself; it should lead to improved service delivery. Many PVC grants have dealt with capacity building at two distinct levels: the institutional capacity of a PVO itself; and, the institutional or sector-specific capacity of its local partners. The bulk of PVC's Matching Grants have been designed to strengthen the institutional capacity of recipient PVOs to perform specific functions in pursuit of their development goals. The areas addressed have ranged from microfinance to rural development, conservation, and poverty at the household level. Many grants have also sought to build the capacity of partner organizations.

> *"When selecting a measurement instrument, it is helpful to begin by clearly identifying what needs to be measured. The intervention's objective may be to strengthen the entire organization or only a specific function or component of the organization. Measurement, to be most useful, will capture only the information that is relevant to the intervention.... Understanding and measuring institutional capacity is critical and often more complex than measuring the services and products that an organization delivers."*
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> **Best Practices Paper, Measuring Institutional Capacity, CDIE, 1999**

1. NGO Capacity Building

While many discussants said their PVOs include building indigenous NGOs' capacity in their strategies or approaches, they also reported they had not attempted to measure changes in institutional capacity because they had been unable to find appropriate indicators or had concentrated exclusively on tracking substantive results. For example, although a number of PVOs have conducted some form of institutional capacity assessment of partner organizations, in many cases the assessment was conducted as part of the partner selection process and was not used as a basis for any subsequent measurement of change.

In one example, the assessment was conducted during a workshop with the partner NGO. With the resultant information, the PVO then developed a capacity building plan for the partner organization, but without its participation. This led to only limited ownership of the plan by the local NGO which, in turn, led to limited and unmeasured results. Another PVO source explained that no attempt had been made to measure the institutional capacity of partners "beyond informal assessments based on local reputation."

This discussion also addressed the incentives and disincentives to measuring changes in institutional capacity. The incentives identified include:

- Shows capacity to achieve the mission of the organization;

- Provides evidence of sustainability and the ability to meet donor requirements;

- Is an important tool for increasing credibility and gaining public support for a project; and,

- Increased capacity leads to increased performance, impact, and cost-effectiveness.

Disincentives include:

- Skill, time, resource, and definition requirements (monitoring and evaluation phobia);

- If local organizations can implement the program, measuring capacity is extraneous;

- Fear about what happens with the information; and,

- Ensuring the reliability of data and follow-up after project completion.

2. Tools for Measuring Capacity

There are a wide-range of tools available for measuring capacity building. Some PVOs have introduced the Discussion-Oriented Organization Self-Assessment (DOSA) method to partner NGOs.[5] However, rarely is there evidence of plans to repeat the DOSA exercise or otherwise monitor changes in capacity over time.

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[5] DOSA was developed in 1997 for PVC. Using group discussion interspersed with individual responses to a 100-item questionnaire covering six capacity areas, two types of scores are produced: a capacity score indicating how participants perceive their organization's strengths and weaknesses; and, a consensus score indicating the degree to which participants agree on their evaluation of the organization's capacity.

A variety of other organizational capacity assessment tools have been employed by PVOs, including the:

- Institutional Development Guide and Framework (SEEP);

- Sum Institutional Development Checklist (United Nations Development Program);

- Organizational Assessment Tool (Mennonite Economic Development Associates);

- Food Security Community Capacity Index (Africare);

- Magi Microfinance Self-assessment Tool (Catholic Relief Services); and,

- Institutional Strengthening Assessment (Child Survival Technical Support);

The overall view among Consultation participants was assessment tools do exist, but they usually need to be adapted to be relevant.

3. Constraints

A number of constraints to measuring institutional capacity changes were identified. For example, one group of PVOs reported a distaste for scorecards, calling for other more qualitative measures to be developed. Another PVO noted there is a challenge in defining "adequate" capacity, pointing to a need for contextual definitions. An emphasis was also placed on developing non-judgmental, culturally appropriate methods of measuring capacity. Other challenges identified include:

- Resistance within NGOs to being "measured" and North/South power issues. For example, measuring effectiveness may alienate indigenous NGOs because they do not participate in the selection of the indicators;

- The difficulty of measuring changes in capacity over the lifetime of relatively short programs, particularly given the amount of time and resources needed to do so;

- Fear on the part of both PVOs and NGOs of having weaknesses exposed; and,

- Concern that progress is being measured for the sake of donor reporting requirements.

A number of recommendations were made to address these constraints, including:

- Providing technical support with a clear technical assistance plan;

- Greater donor flexibility in project length;

- Ensuring local ownership of the strategic plan; and,

- Developing measurement tools in a collaborative fashion with the local organization.

APPENDIX

WORKING GROUP ON PARTNERSHIP

OBJECTIVE

To obtain inputs from PVOs that will be useful to PVC as it moves towards implementation of its strategy with respect to the issue of partnership.

PROCESS

A.   Group participants introduce themselves to one another and choose a rapporteur.

B.   The group discusses and responds to the questions posed below.

C.   To facilitate the subsequent summary of results from the various groups dealing with this issue, please record your responses on the flip chart in the same order as the questions, using the numbers provided.

D.   The rapporteur gives a brief summary of the group's major responses during the plenary session that follows.

QUESTIONS

1.   Is partnership with indigenous NGOs part of your organization's official policy or program strategy? If yes, for what purpose?

2.   Within your organization, what are the main incentives for establishing partnerships with local NGOs?   Are there administrative or operational disincentives?

3.   In the field, what have been the main constraints to the establishment of partnerships with local NGOs?

4.   What are some ways to overcome these constraints?

3.   Are there specific issues related to partnership that PVC should include in its Analytic Agenda?

WORKING GROUP ON NETWORKS

OBJECTIVE

To obtain inputs from PVOs that will be useful to PVC as it moves towards implementation of its strategy with respect to the issue of networks.

PROCESS

A.   Group participants introduce themselves to one another and choose a rapporteur.

B.   The group discusses and responds to the questions posed below.

C.   To facilitate the subsequent summary of results from the various groups dealing with this issue, please record your responses on the flip chart in the same order as the questions, using the numbers provided.

D.   The rapporteur gives a brief summary of the group's major responses during the plenary session that follows.

QUESTIONS

1.   Is the creation or strengthening of indigenous networks part of your organization's program strategy? If yes, for what purpose?

2.   Are these networks comprised only of indigenous NGOs or do they include other sectors, such as local governments and businesses?

3.   In the field, what have been the main constraints to the creation or strengthening of these networks?

4.   How can these constraints be addressed?

5.   How can the sustainability of indigenous networks best be ensured?

WORKING GROUP ON MEASURING CAPACITY BUILDING

OBJECTIVE

To obtain inputs from PVOs that will be useful to PVC as it moves towards implementation of its strategy with respect to the issue of measuring capacity building.

PROCESS

A.   Group participants introduce themselves to one another and choose a rapporteur.

B.   The group discusses and responds to the questions posed below.

C.   To facilitate the subsequent summary of results from the various groups dealing with this issue, please record your responses on the flip chart in the same order as the questions, using the numbers provided.

D.   The rapporteur gives a brief summary of the group's major responses during the plenary session that follows.

QUESTIONS

1. Is building the capacity of indigenous NGOs part of your organization's strategy or program approach?

2. Within your organization, what are the main incentives for including the on-going measurement of changes in the capacity of indigenous NGOs in program designs? What are the disincentives?

3. Does your organization have a particular tool or methodology for measuring changes in the institutional capacity of indigenous NGOs over time?

4. In the field, what have been the main constraints to measuring changes in the capacity of indigenous NGOs?

5. How can these constraints be addressed?