



African
Development
Solutions

Partnerships and Power – Understanding the dynamics within



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The rhetoric



- Partnerships seen as a way to increase development effectiveness :
 - *2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*: donor policies and practices aligned to national development strategies, role of nat'l governments at the forefront
 - *2008 Accra Agenda for Action*: engagement of wider stakeholders, including CSOs and private sector.
 - *2011 Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*: voice at the negotiating table to even wider group. Established framework embracing traditional donors, South-South cooperators, the BRICs, CSOs and private funders.

The status



- Progress in including various stakeholders into decision making and implementation processes
- Southern voices stronger than they were 20 years ago
- Contributions of non-traditional actors increasingly recognized as valuable

What do we mean by partnership?



- Current definitions and debates fail to acknowledge that implicit in any partnership are **power dynamics**, and **different understandings** of, and approaches to 'reality'



Power differentials



- How often are partners really equal?
- To what extent are partnerships and the dynamics within them dependent on what each partner has and can bring to the table?
- ‘Partnerships’ with donors – money and conditions often set by them – very often these are contractual relationships?

Power differentials (continued)



- Power differentials even more evident when you have 3 layers: Donors → INGOs → local NGOs → local communities
- Need to recognize that relationships are very often unequal
- Local NGOs/CSOs are rarely the ones who hold the power

Power differentials (continued)



- There is a need to enter into real, equal partnerships where each party has a voice
- Devolve more and more power and responsibility to communities and their governments themselves

Changing dynamics



- What do we mean today by the term ‘international NGO’?
- Southern founded and based NGOs are increasing in number, and likely to outnumber traditional western-based NGOs
- Important to recognize hierarchy and power dynamics, but dichotomy between ‘international’ and ‘local’ NGO becoming increasingly artificial



"First, can we agree that it is a big back yard?"

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