

PECE event – 27 September

Partnership working Notes of breakout group

A short presentation about the tools of partnerships was followed by discussion about challenges partnerships face in CIS countries. The group identified four main groups of challenges.

Equity

Challenge

- 'marriages of convenience' – one partner (e.g. the funder, and often Western) has more control in the partnership. This can lead to resentment on both sides
- a completely equitable relationship is unusual – WWF provided an example, saying they are the bigger organisation when they work with small NGOs, but are poorer when working with business. How do you balance this inherent inequality?

Solutions

- Must recognise what each party is bringing to the table – acknowledging the contributions of all partners (one may bring funding, but another will have local knowledge, and another will have technical expertise)

Sustainability

Challenge

- How do you ensure ongoing sustainability of a project once the funding has gone?

Solutions

- Establish and develop partnerships in-country, who can support each other in the longer-term
- Ecosystem approach – develop a thorough understanding of costs and benefits – covers society and the economy as well as the environment
- Be flexible and adapt funding as project progresses

Promoting local partnerships

Challenge

- How to develop partnerships at a local, in-country, level
- Funding can create divisions and conflict – why do they get funding and not us... - how to deal with selecting one organisation, rather than another
- Competing interests between NGOs with similar aims – avoiding duplication and sharing synergies
- "Partnership" is something of a distorted idea

Solutions

- Organise 'swaps' between sectors to increase understanding of other sectors and how partnerships could benefit each
- Change views by demonstrating that partnerships work
- Rules of engagement are needed. It would be interesting to compare and analyse some projects to illustrate how some partnerships work or others break down.

Breaking into the 'closed' field of partnerships

Solutions

- Get to know the available donors – they will not always know anyone in the area and may be just waiting to be approached
- Know what your strengths are relative to the requirements of funders
- Identify the 'gaps in the market'
- Come to PECE meetings!