

A Critical Analysis of Cross-Sector Partnerships in Southern Africa – Do they work and are there identifiable patterns of good practice?

- **Organisation:**
University of Cambridge Programme for Industry
- **Partners:**
Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum; Forum for Business Leaders and Social Partners, Zambia; Leadership Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
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€199,246
- **Countries/ Regions Covered:**
South Africa and Zambia

Background and Objectives:

The research project's aims were to identify how far a cross-sector approach has been effective in addressing development concerns; capture and disseminate lessons learned and, make recommendations for companies, governments, civil society organisations and donor agencies working in Africa to assist them in establishing successful CSP initiatives for sustainable development.

The project's evidence was produced through two major and four lesser case studies of ongoing partnerships within Southern Africa. The case studies were situated in three sectors – education, agriculture and health – and were selected to represent partnerships at different stages of development and using different partnering arrangements.

Research Findings:

The research yielded a substantial set of findings and conclusions about the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships. The primary conclusion is that cross-sector partnerships can add value to policies of poverty reduction in Africa. Although the projects studied were highly diverse and each faced severe challenges, the collaboration of institutions from different societal sectors served to enable resources to be directed to key development concerns, such as the provision of education, health care and economic development. In some instances, such provision could be seen to be

filling a gap created by government inaction or resource shortage; whereas, in others, it served to establish innovative ways of meeting the needs of developing commercial markets. Data on the impact of actual projects were hard to identify; and much further work needs to be done to improve the capacity of cross-sector partnerships to identify, monitor and evaluate their own objectives and impacts.

The value of partnerships, however, lies not just in their ability to deliver tangible improvements in social services or economic goods: it can also reside in the vantage point a partnership can give to relatively weak or disadvantaged sections of the community, to enable them to express their needs, and build dialogue with other groups and institutions which may offer complementary objectives and resources. Partnerships may also offer models of collaboration which can inspire other groups to work together to support their own (and mutual) development.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Replication:** Successful processes can be copied to produce individually tailored projects suiting specific needs.
- **Drivers and Incentives:** In the establishment of new partnerships, three questions must be addressed: why a partnership is being or has been established; what each partner seeks to gain from such collaboration; and what it is likely to achieve.

In cooperation with



- **Resourcing and Sustainability:** It is important to factor in the risk that partnerships that have been created in response to specific crises may lack the resources, incentives and structures to achieve a sustainability that is sufficient for the long-term.
- **Modelling and Mapping:** A business model should be built on a needs analysis which includes at least three factors: an estimation of the costs that each partner is able and willing to commit; an audit of the skills which each partner brings, including overlapping or duplicated skills; and an outline plan for the strategic development of skills to meet the partnership's evolving needs.
- **Establishing and Reviewing Objectives:** Realistic and workable objectives should be established at the outset, clearly defining the remit and input required from each member of the partnership. The setting of clear objectives is closely connected with the building of ongoing evaluation and review, which do not necessarily monitor the performance of the partnership or project, but inform and directly feed into the partnership process and the project itself, thereby creating a learning and developmental model which supports the process rather than judging it.
- **Governance Structures and Communication:** Clear boundaries, together with robust and transparent governance structures and communication systems, are needed to support the effective functioning of a partnership facilitate conflict resolution. Within the governance structure, each partner's 'moving-on strategy', together with the potential dissolution of the partnership, needs to be clarified.
- **Partnership Brokers and Dependency:** It is clear from the research that partnership brokers play an important role in helping to establish effective systems of collaboration and they should be involved in every partnership to ensure smooth functioning.
- **Government Instigated Partnerships:** Governmental 'top-down' creation of partnerships should be avoided, as they can generate problems for local implementation. Local needs and constraints will be likely to conflict with the more general policy directives imposed by the former.

For further information on this research project, please visit:

EC-PREP website: www.ec-prep.org

University of Cambridge Programme for Industry website: www.cpi.cam.ac.uk

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EC-PREP is supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). In 2001, DFID, in collaboration with the European Commission, launched the European Community's Poverty Reduction Effectiveness Programme (EC-PREP). The main objective of this research initiative is to produce findings and policy recommendations that support and contribute to improving the European Community's effectiveness in attaining poverty reduction targets via its external assistance programmes. The programme has funded 13 Research Projects and 10 Commissioned Studies, which relate to one or more of the six focal areas of EC's development policy. More information about the research funded by EC-PREP can be found on www.ec-prep.org.