

DPOD's PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Guidelines

1. DPOD's partnership strategy

DPOD developed a partnership strategy in 2005. The partnership strategy specifies a vision for the voluntary, long-term, equal and mutually beneficial collaboration between Danish disability organisations and partners in the south, who have shared values and a shared vision and who respect each others' contribution to the realisation of the shared vision.

A partnership has a wider horizon than individual, short-term, results-oriented projects. Partnerships include longer-term perspectives for general capacity building of the organisations, which may include secondment of staff. In a partnership the transfer of funds for individual project implementation cannot stand alone in working towards the overall shared goal of promoting the role of disability organisations in civil society.

Ideally the partnership is both an effective way of securing the rights of persons with disabilities and organisational support for the disability organisations' participation in civil society. As such, the partnership aims at strengthening both organisations through the sharing of experience and mutual learning.

A basic cornerstone of successful partnerships is trust that has been allowed to develop over time within the framework of smaller, specific projects. When organisations feel ready to strengthen their relationship they can benefit from a process devoted to the development of a partnership agreement.

2. What is a partnership agreement?

The partnership agreement sets out the principles and priorities of the partnership. It should be seen as the overall framework for collaboration between two organisations. The partnership agreement should be developed and agreed between the partners as equals, it is re-negotiable, and it is entered into voluntarily. The partnership agreement is not legally binding, but it should provide the overall frame for other, more specific and binding agreements, i.e. project agreements, terms of appointment, etc.

3. How to develop a partnership agreement?

In finalising a partnership agreement the joint process is as important as the product.

The steps can include a preparation phase where each organisation considers their own needs and wishes in relation to the partnership, followed by a workshop where both organisations are represented. All key persons and people with decision making authority in the southern organisation should join the process, but it is

equally important that many other members participate too. The Danish organisation must be represented by at least one participant, who has the mandate to make decisions on behalf of the Danish organisation. Special attention should be given to the equal gender and age distribution of the participants. Developing a partnership agreement is a core capacity development activity of equal importance for the Danish and the Southern organisation. It is highly recommended to carry out joint monitoring of the items in the agreement at least annually.

4. What is in a partnership agreement?

In order to facilitate the development of partnership agreements DPOD has developed a list of items that can be used to specify shared decisions regarding collaboration, communication, roles and responsibilities between a Danish disability organisation and a disability organisation in the south. The list is followed by a hypothetical example of a partnership agreement.

All partnerships are unique, so each item on the list should be carefully considered for relevance and accuracy, and adjusted according to decisions in the group. Based on a shared decision, organisations are free to add more items to the agreement.

Signed copies of the partnership agreement should be kept in both organisations and also submitted in copy to DPOD, who makes a funding framework available for partnership activities.

5. Summary of topics in a partnership agreement

(A detailed example of an agreement is available at DPOD)

A: Partner profiles and common history

In the beginning of the partnership workshop each of the organisations prepares and shares the following two documents. The documents will be included as annexes to the partnership agreement.

1-2 pages describing their own profile:

- Year of establishment
- Purpose of organisation
- Main target groups and number of members
- Main activities
- Description of main donors
- Description of main partners in disability politics and in development

If relevant, 1-2 pages describing the collaboration between the two organisations so far:

- Origin and development of the partnership
- Strengths and weaknesses

If partners agree the agreement can be expanded with one or more of the following sections that can be the topic of separate or combined workshops:

F: Mutual accountability and transparency

Willingness to report and reply to all questions in an open fashion is essential in a successful partnership.

- How do we manage our partnership? What decisions should be taken together and how?
- What is the delegation of authority?
- To what extent should we share our organisational and budgetary data, including consolidated annual accounts?
- Under what circumstances can the organisations speak on each others' behalf?

Accountability is the principle that individuals, organisations and the community are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others. It is the obligation to demonstrate and take responsibility for performance in light of agreed expectations. There is a difference between responsibility and accountability: responsibility is the obligation to act; accountability is the obligation to answer for an action. An organisation is accountable to both funders ('upwards') and members ('downwards').

G: Communication routines

- What should be the shared language of communication?
- How can we make all key documents available for both board members, administrators, members and volunteers?
- How do we give feedback on inquiries, reports and proposals? Time-frames?

H: Conflict resolution and dissolution of the partnership

- What should be our complaints procedure in case of conflict?
- What should be our process to terminate the partnership?

Consider whether any items or remarks should be added to the agreement regarding development workers' position and role in the partnership.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Example

**To be adapted to each new partnership relation
between a Danish and a southern disability organisation.**

A: Partner profiles and common history (to be attached in annex 1 and 2)

Names and addresses of the two organisations

The partnership will begin on 1st January 2007 and last until 1st January 2012, with possible extension. The partnership agreement may be modified at any time if both partners agree to the changes.

Partner profiles and common history are attached in annex 1 and 2

B: The purpose and scope of the partnership

Based on the shared vision of securing rights and better possibilities for persons with disabilities in X country, and seeing the Southern Organisation as an important channel for voicing the concerns of persons with disabilities at national level, the Southern Organisation and the Danish Organisation agree to a longer-term, mutually beneficial partnership. The partnership will be based on a democratic, equal and transparent relation, where both partners contribute to and benefit from the partnership.

In the efforts towards realising our shared vision both organisation can benefit from joint learning for further organisational development. The Southern Organisation will benefit from the Danish experience with organisational work. The Danish Organisation will benefit from the Southern Organisation's access to and understanding of local conditions. The joined capacities of the two organisations should lead to significant changes in the representations of persons with disabilities in local and national fora. Explicit inclusive policies at local and national level are another long-term aim of the partnership.

Our shared priorities for the future include

- to increase the visibility of persons with disabilities and the need to fulfil their rights to equal opportunities at local and national level
- to strengthen the structure and management of the Southern Organisation and its national and international network to the extent that it becomes increasingly independent and financially self-sustainable.

C: Relationship

The partnership between the Danish Organisation and the Southern Organisation is based on trust and respect for each others contributions to the partnership. But the two organisations are distinct organisations, each with their own

vision, mandate, priorities, organizational culture, and operational practices. We recognize that these differences can create conflict in a partnership. Therefore we want to identify both our differences and the measures we will take to minimize their impact.

Differences:

- One organisation has more standardised working procedures than the other.
- One organisation serves a broad target group while the other focuses on a particular community.
- One organisation is committed to political action while the other organisation claims political neutrality.
- One organisation works towards a position as a rights advocate while the other organisation has more experience as a service deliverer.

Measures we will take to reduce the possible negative impact of these differences:

- In the working procedures that are related to joint activities or projects, the two organisations will carefully discuss and describe the working procedures that the partners agree on in the Project Agreements. For activities that are not directly related to joint activities or projects the two organisations will learn from each other's experiences through workshop sessions on communication and on building a strong organisation, to ensure effective partnership
- The target groups for joint activities should always be discussed and clearly defined before activities begin.
- The differences with regard to political position and role in relation to the community should be seen as a potential for learning for both organisations. The partnership will support workshops and training as required to optimize organisational development for both organisations.

D: Roles and responsibilities of each partner

The Danish organisation contributes by

- Supporting the Southern Organisation and its partners in getting access to funding through Danida or other donor agencies.
- Supporting the Southern Organisation in its general organisational development, by sharing experience on board functions, elections and the role of members and volunteers.
- Responding to the needs for information and education materials by the Southern Organisation.
- Responding to requests for support by the Southern Organisation who is responsible for implementation and follow-up on development projects.

The Southern organisation contributes by

- Planning and implementing projects according to the terms stated in individual project agreements.

- Sharing its expertise about local political and cultural conditions and by being present at community level.
- Developing and implementing a strategy for fundraising, which will make the Southern Organisation increasingly independent from the Danish organisation.
- The selection, training and supervision of volunteers.

Both organisations are responsible for

- Immediately communicating practical and political changes that may have consequences for the overall partnership.
- Providing access to their wider national and international networks of donors and partners.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the partnership (see also E)
- Informing people involved in activities related to the partnership and its projects about this agreement and its contents.
- The selection, training and supervision of staff.

If one of the partners feel that they cannot live up to expectations and formal requirements in the present partnership agreement or any other agreement between the two partners, the organisation is responsible for communicating this at the earliest possible point in time.

E: Monitoring of the partnership relation

The partnership should be monitored annually in a comprehensive and participatory review process based on each of the items in the partnership agreement. The process should include a workshop with representation from the same stakeholders as when the partnership agreement was developed. Ideally, the meeting should be based on a brief commentary to the existing partnership agreement which has been prepared beforehand by both organisations. The process may result in revision of this agreement.

Lessons learned from successful partnership activities will be documented and shared in the networks of both organisations, including DPOD in Denmark. The specific form of documentation will be discussed on a case by case basis.

If and when the partnership is terminated, every effort should be made to make a joint evaluation and documentation of successes and failures of the partnership. Lessons learned will be valuable for the future work of both organisations.

The final evaluation should contain information as follows:

- When was the partnership initiated?
- What were its goal and objectives?
- What were the partnership's major accomplishments?
- Who contributed to these accomplishments?
- What lessons can we learn from the partnership's successes?
- What lessons can we learn from the partnership's shortcomings?

Signatories

Signed this day of , by:

on behalf of [name and title] (Southern Organisa-
tion)

on behalf of [name and title] (Danish Organisa-
tion)

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ARE EXAMPLES OF TEXT ADDED TO THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AT LATER STAGES

F: Mutual accountability and transparency

The partnership is managed on the basis of this agreement, signed by the chairperson/executive director of the Southern Organisation and the **XX chair person/executive director** from the Danish Organisation (an alternative could be designated staff). Through mail correspondence these two representatives share all major decisions (**should be specified**) that have consequences for the partnership (but not individual projects as such). Administrative staff should always be informed about decisions. Bigger decisions (**should also be specified**) should be included in the annual evaluation of the partnership, where the contents of the partnership agreement can be re-negotiated.

In the implementation of individual projects, authority is delegated according to the project agreements.

Willingness to report and reply to all questions in an open fashion is essential in a successful partnership. This implies that both partners should make documents that are relevant for planning available (**should be specified**), including annual consolidated accounts.

Short-comings in relation to the items in this agreement, including inconsistencies in management due to staff turn-over, can be addressed directly by both partners at any point in time.

As a rule the organisations cannot speak on each others behalf, except when specifically agreed upon beforehand. Both organisations, however, should refer to this partnership, whenever the opportunity arises.

G: Communication routines

English is the shared language of communication. Internal mail correspondence regarding matters of relevance to the partnership should also be written in English.

All key documents (project documents, agreements, monitoring and evaluation reports, ToR, etc) should be written in English. It is the intention to make all documents available on a database accessible by internet within two years. The database is to be maintained by the Southern Organisation.

International communication will mainly happen through e-mail. Communication will be directed at both board members and administrators. The two organisations are expected to keep their members and volunteers informed about the main contents of the international communication through newsletters, black boards, etc.

As a rule reception of all e-mail inquiries, reports and proposals related to the partnership as well as to individual projects and activities should be acknowledged in writing within a week, and the approximate timeframe for further processing should be stated.

H: Conflict resolution and dissolution of the partnership

The partners are committed to working in a cooperative manner and recognize that this requires a commitment of time and energy. As the partnership to a large extent has grown out of personal relations, the partners are used to informal problem solution. If, for some reason, this mode does not suffice, the partners agree:

- to address their differences in a timely, open and honest manner
- to attempt to resolve issues at the staffing level at which they occur
- to bring those issues which cannot be otherwise resolved to either a regular or a special meeting of the Management Committee
- if appropriate, to engage an independent mediator or evaluator to assess the partnership and or the situation either when required or as part of a formal evaluation.

As long as the terms of collaboration stated in legally binding project agreements are not violated, a partnership cannot be terminated by a unilateral decision. Open and thorough discussions are mandatory before a partnership is phased out or terminated.

The procedure should include an evaluation of the partnership collaboration as described in section G.

Whether the partnership is dissolved due to irresolvable conflicts or not, the partners will

- inform funders in writing
- provide copies of programmes and financial reports to management committees, funders and others as appropriate
- organize files and other records so the project and partnership's history is not lost
- inform all stakeholders, including Board of Directors, staff and clients as appropriate
- host a 'moving on' celebration for partnership staff, managers and funders!