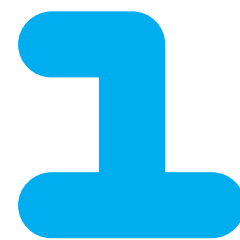# Types of relationships: Mapping your partnerships

1

Partnerships in Practice Tool

WaterAid has three key types of working relationship with other organisations: partnerships, collaborations and contracts.[i] Partnerships involve two or more organisations that enter into an arrangement based on shared goals and opportunities. Through partnerships, organisations can work together to deliver tasks that they would not be able to accomplish on their own.

Tool purpose

To clarify what we mean by the word 'partnership', we will be looking at an example of a partnership – what it means in terms of relationships, whether they are formal or informal and which resources are provided by each partner.

Practice message

Partnerships can be improved by understanding what type of relationships you are in, reflecting on who your key stakeholders are and the dynamics of the relationships.

Partnership message

Relationships between partners can be complicated and hard to manage. Project stakeholders generally dedicate too little time to assess if and how their relationships work. A more rigorous analysis and negotiation of the scope and structure governing the partnership is essential for success.

Materials

WaterAid's **Partnership Toolkit**, large sheets of paper (e.g. flipchart), different coloured pens and a digital camera (optional).

Partnerships in Practice

WaterAid

Mapping your partnerships

You can do this activity on your own, with other learners and/or with partner organisations. Select one person to facilitate the process.

1. Read the *Partnership framework*[ii] to understand WaterAid's approach to partnerships and the different types of partnerships we work with.

    > **Tip:** If you're doing this exercise with partners, explain WaterAid's view on the difference between partnerships, collaborations and contracts. This exercise is focused on **partnerships**.

2. Review your current programmes and identify the partners you currently work with. Think about one project in particular where you work with these partners.

    > **Tip:** A programme may include many different projects and involve many different stakeholders. For simplicity, think of one project where various stakeholders are involved.

3. Mapping your partnership – using the sheet of paper and colourful pens, name and draw all the stakeholders that are involved.

4. Now that you have identified all the relevant stakeholders, draw a circle around all of those that are directly involved (the **primary stakeholders**) in the partnership/ project. Those indirectly involved (the **secondary stakeholders**)[iii] remain on the outside of the circle (example to the right).
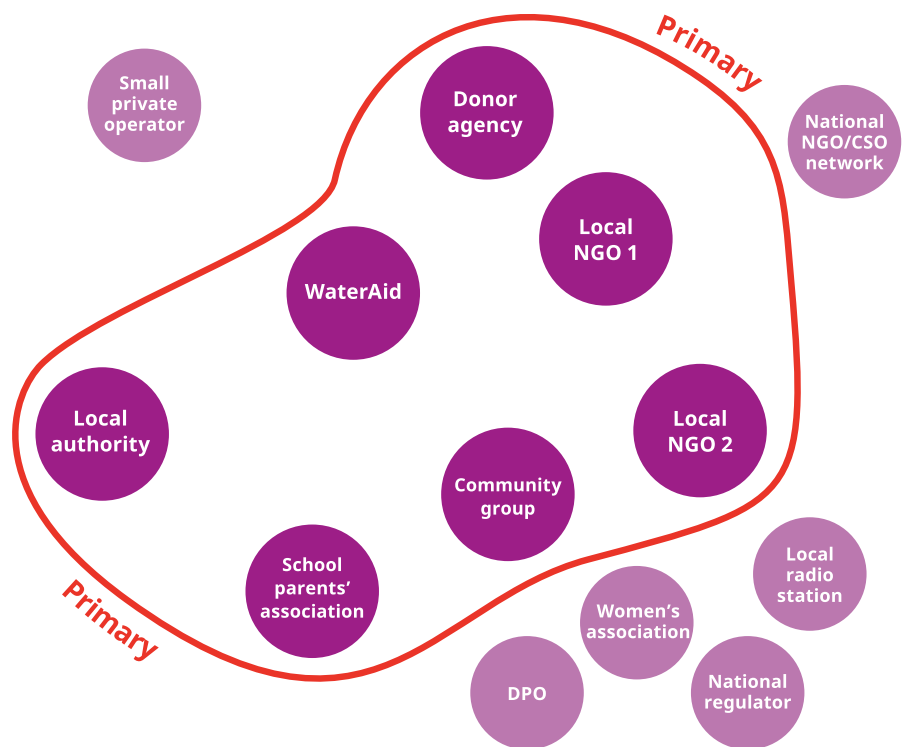
⟷ Agreement

⟷ Resource flow

● Partners involved in this project

● Examples of potential partners not currently involved in this particular project

MoU = Memorandum of Understanding

CSO = Civil Society Organisation

DPO = Disabled Persons' Organisation

5. Next, with one colour pen, draw an arrow between each of the stakeholders that are directly involved in the partnership/project that have some level of **recognised (formal or informal) agreement** between them. For example, this might be something written such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a contract or a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA), or simply an email or verbal agreement. Write what the agreement is along the arrow.
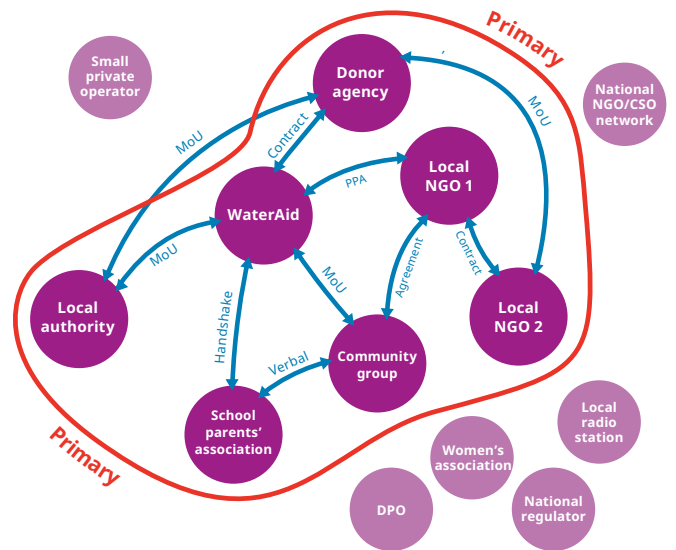
6. Using a different colour pen, draw an arrow between each of the primary stakeholders that shows the **resources** provided by each. This includes tangible resources such as money, staff time, vehicles, information/data, etc. as well as intangible resources such as profile/reputation, access to communities or policy makers, contacts, etc. This shows the overall resource flow amongst stakeholders, recognising all the different things that partners contribute to the partnership.
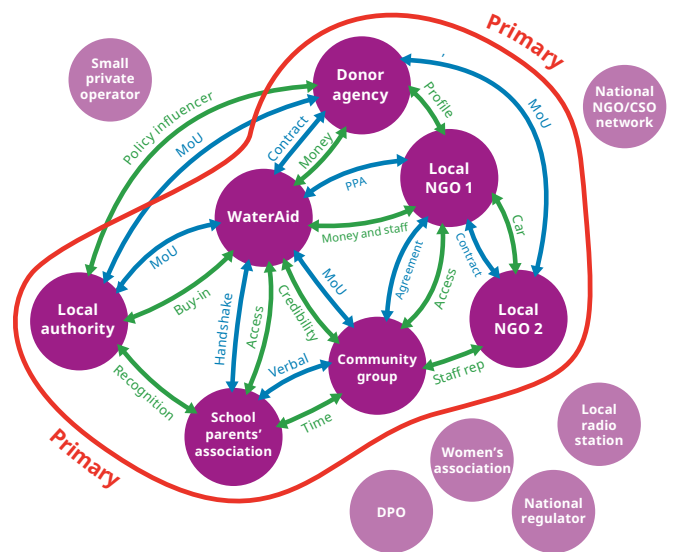
Open discussion

Now you have a colourful diagram which visually represents one of your partnerships. Using this map, reflect on (if alone) or discuss the following with your colleagues:

1. Which parts of the partnership work well and why?

2. Where has the partnership faced the most difficulties and why?

3. Were other questions raised during the mapping process, e.g. are the relationships clear? Too formal or too informal? Are resources adequate and flowing in the right direction?

4. What does the map tell you about the types of relationship you have with the stakeholders involved?

Changing practices

Thinking more about the reflections above, would you consider making any changes to the partnership?

For example:

1. Should any of the **secondary** stakeholders become **primary** stakeholders and play a more active role in the partnership? i.e. should they move inside the circle? If so, how would this happen?

2. Should some of the agreements with partners be more (or less) formalised? i.e. is there some paperwork missing?

3. Should changes be made to how resources are used or acknowledged?

Endnotes

i. **Partnerships, collaborations and contracts**

There are three key types of working relationship with other organisations in country programmes: partnership, collaboration and contract.

1) Partnerships

Partnerships are based on formal agreements between organisations that set out agreed objectives, roles, responsibilities, processes and deliverables of all parties. This includes objectives for the partnership itself, as well as for the projects that the partnership is aiming to deliver. Organisational development is often included in the partnership goals. A partnership should contribute to mutual learning and mutual accountability.

2) Collaborations

Collaborations are generally less formal than partnerships. They involve working with other organisations on a specific activity, knowledge sharing or advocacy. They usually do not involve a formal partnership agreement or significant transfer of funds, but an MoU may be developed to express the shared intent of the collaboration and the roles and responsibilities of different parties. A consortium is a type of formal collaboration with shared funding.

3) Contracts

Contracts are agreements with suppliers of goods or services, defined by a contract setting out the goods or services to be provided, the contract terms and conditions, and the payment to be made (see accounts manual for detail on contracts).

ii. The WaterAid *Partnership framework* (2019) can be found here: washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/partnership-framework

iii. **Primary and secondary stakeholders:** Stakeholders are people, organisations, groups or communities who may – directly or indirectly, positively or negatively – affect or be affected by the outcomes of projects or programmes.

When it comes to partnership practice, we use the following terms to mean:

- **Primary stakeholders** are the parties directly involved in a partnership relationship. There may (or may not) be a PPA or MoU in place that spells out how the different partners relate to each other. All are directly engaged, in some way, in the delivery of a project or action.
- **Secondary stakeholders** are those who may influence a partnership or are indirectly affected by it. They include relevant line ministries, regulators, local governments, other CSO, private sector firms, networks/associations, development agencies, etc.

References and tools

For further guidance on partnership basics, please see:

- **WaterAid's Partnership framework**
- **WaterAid's Partnership Toolkit**
- **Partnerships in Practice tools**
- **WaterAid Partnership agreements**
- **BPD's website: bpdws.org**

Partnerships in Practice

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