Partnerships in Practice Tools
Roles & responsibilities – Who does what?

Background: Working in partnership requires effective coordination and collaboration, with clear roles and responsibilities identified for each partner. Sometimes the roles overlap which can lead to confusion, frustration and even project failure. Also, partners' roles and responsibilities can change over time.

Tool purpose: To highlight which partner plays which role within the partnership and who is responsible for what. It also highlights any gaps / unfulfilled roles and current capacity needs.

Partnership message: Partners' roles and responsibilities can change over the lifetime of a partnership – with some partners taking on more responsibilities than others. Ensuring all roles and responsibilities are clear and adequately resourced leads to successful partnerships.

Practice message: Partnerships can be improved by reviewing roles and responsibilities and by pro-actively addressing any capacity gaps.

Materials: large sheets of paper (e.g. flipchart), coloured pens (or coloured paper, glue and scissors), digital camera (optional)

Clarifying roles and responsibilities

This activity is designed as a group exercise to do with partners (e.g. implementing partners, research colleagues, advocacy network members, etc.). Select one person to facilitate the process.

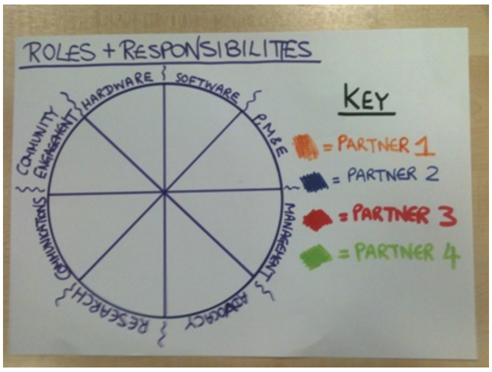
1. Start by asking the group to reflect on a specific partnership or project you all work on together.

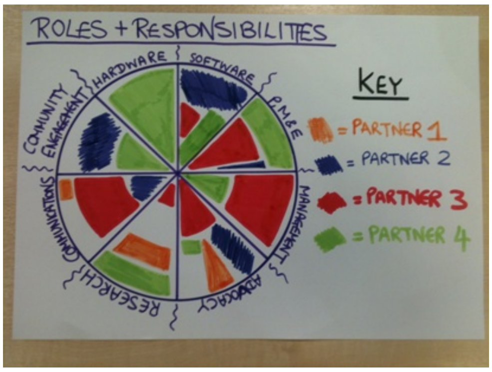
Tip: If there is no specific partnership / project, consider something you all work towards – such as influencing policy to improve basic services for communities, or lobbying for the recognition of the Right to Water & Sanitation, or writing a joint position paper, for example.

2. Once the group has agreed a partnership / project / joint goal to use for the exercise, brainstorm all the **different functions or activities** that have to take place to make it work successfully. This may range from project implementation (building hardware, delivering software activities, buying vehicles, community liaison, contracting service providers, M&E, etc.) to coordinating people, research and learning activities, to leading advocacy campaigns, etc. List on a flipchart all of these functional roles that have to be played.
3. Reflect on the list of functional roles and categorise them into 8 groups in a way that makes sense to everyone. For example: fundraising / financing; project management; P, M&E and reporting; hardware; software; community engagement; advocacy / policy influence; research / learning; external communications; etc.

Tip: The idea here is about prompting discussion and therefore a greater understanding of partners' roles and responsibilities rather than coming up with a definitive list of tasks and categories. Don't worry if some functions / activities aren't included in the final categories.

4. On a sheet of flipchart paper, draw a circle – like a pie, cake or chapatti! – and dissect it into 8 segments. Name each segment with one of the 8 role categories agreed above. Give each partner a different colour pen (or different coloured paper) and create a key which shows who is who. (See top picture overleaf.)





5. Taking each category segment in turn, discuss as a group: 1) who has a role to play (and what it is) and 2) how big this role is in comparison to others who may also play a role. Using the allocated coloured pens or coloured paper (cut it up & glue it on), 'colour' in a bit of the segment. Through discussion with other partners, you should be able to agree how big each different coloured area is for each partner. E.g. if all partners play a communications role, those with the most responsibilities will have the largest bit to colour in! (See picture bottom right.)

Tip: Although this sounds easy and can be fun, there is also a serious amount of partner discussion and negotiation going on. Clarifying roles and responsibilities in this way helps everyone understand the different commitments made by each partner and their approach to delivering on those commitments.

6. Once each segment is complete, reflect on where there are any **gaps** or where resources need to be targeted (e.g. capacities, time, management, etc.).

Open discussion

Now you have a picture which shows how different partners contribute to the overall delivery of the partnership (or project / joint goal). It also shows who plays which role and the degree to which they are responsible for delivering on their commitments. Discuss the following with your colleagues:

1. Is there sufficient capacity for each partner to deliver on their commitments?
2. If not, how can this be addressed? Through capacity building for instance? Or through bringing in new partners?
3. Can existing partners fill any gaps? What would happen if they are not able to?

Changing practices

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

1. How might partners change their roles and responsibilities?
2. Might changes result in amendments to partnership agreements / paperwork?
3. If you did this exercise again in 6 months, might roles be different?

References and tools

For further guidance on partnership basics, please see:

- WaterAid Partnership Toolkit
- BPD's website: www.bpdws.org