

# Effective consortia working:

Literature review and priorities for future research



## About the Learning from Consortia programme

The Learning from Consortia programme brings together 13 consortia formed by diverse organisations to facilitate collective learning and support consortia to deliver their outcomes. The programme aims to learn from their experiences and insights to draw out good practice in consortium working, as well as helping organisations and donors understand how they can best support consortia.

## About the literature review

This literature review has been produced as part of the Learning from Consortia programme to identify the current understanding of working in consortia, to identify the gaps in the knowledge and evidence, and to provide clarity for future research.

## About The Partnering Initiative

An internationally-recognised pioneer of the field, TPI is a global NGO dedicated to unleashing the power of partnership for a sustainable future. TPI combines cutting-edge partnering theory, policy interventions and direct action globally to support and build the capacity of organisations, partnerships and platforms to deliver effective, value-creating collaboration.

## About Bond

Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. We unite and support a diverse network of over 450 civil society organisations and allies to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice. We also deliver a range of services to help organisations be more effective and improve the quality and impact of their work.

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\*The ASPIRE consortium is registered with the FCDO as 'Building resiliency and gender equality of the most marginalised communities through multi-sector approaches to delivering quality sexual and reproductive health and rights'

\*\*The PACE consortium is registered with the FCDO as 'Effective approaches to ending the worst forms of child labour in fragile contexts (EAPAC)'

The Learning from Consortia programme is led by Bond, The Partnering Initiative, and an academic advisory board, and is funded by UK aid.

Find out more about the programme by visiting: [www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/learning-from-consortia](http://www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/learning-from-consortia)

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# Executive summary

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The consortium model has emerged relatively recently as an approach to delivering development programmes and is becoming increasingly popular – particularly with donors. Currently, there is not an agreed definition of the term ‘consortium’, which would distinguish it from other types of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Typically, however, a consortium is led by an international non-governmental organisation or research organisation, which receives funding and channels this to a group of implementing agencies, which work together with the lead organisation to design and deliver a programme. This formal structure offers greater control and predictability for donors.

The consortium model is one of a huge range of collaborative arrangements within the overall concept of partnership. Collaborative working has become increasingly common in the fields of international development and humanitarian aid, with all sectors forming partnerships to address complex development challenges and achieve common aims. Pooling resources and working across sectors can enable more participatory processes and ambitious outcomes, as well as potentially generating more sustainable and relevant long-term impacts.

However, setting up and running complex, multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as consortia, requires a serious investment of time and resources – human and financial. Multi-stakeholder partnerships also create new challenges for project evaluation, requiring novel approaches to the measurement of both the programme outcomes and the process of collaboration.

Alongside the growth in collaboration, the body of literature providing guidance, analysis and evaluation of partnerships has also grown. However, most of the literature on partnerships for international development focuses on relatively stable contexts. The Covid-19 pandemic and the mounting climate crisis necessitate an urgent rethink about best practice in the context of instability – both in terms of constraints and opportunities.

To understand and evaluate any form of collaborative working, it is necessary to understand the rationale for its creation and the specific characteristics of its structure and operation. Providing evidence that a consortium model can add value to a programme requires first a shared definition of the term that provides sufficient detail on how this model differs from the many other forms of collaborative working.

Much of the information published about consortia is not specific to the model and could equally apply to other types of partnership. To maximise the benefits of the consortium model, donor organisations need more focused research on why and how to employ a consortium approach, while those implementing development programmes need more tailored guidance on best practice for setting up, running and monitoring consortia.

An overview of the current literature on consortium working highlights some key issues and gaps for further research:

- ▶ Identifying the most appropriate forms of measurement and assessment
- ▶ How consortia learn and adapt
- ▶ Governance structures, and the tension between the centralised leadership model and the commitment to devolving power through localisation
- ▶ Where ‘expertise’ is located within consortia, and the implications for participation, capacity strengthening and sustainable impact
- ▶ Digital solutions to support communication and remote working in the context of the recent pandemic and the mounting climate crisis

Any organisation entering into a consortium – whether donor, lead agency or implementing body – needs to be thoroughly prepared in the principles, practice, challenges and opportunities of consortium working.

# 1. Introduction

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This review of the literature on consortium working represents the first stage of the Learning from Consortia (LfC) programme. LfC is a research programme that seeks to learn from the experiences of consortia currently working to address complex development challenges, and to share the results of this learning with the wider development sector. The LfC programme aims to understand more about what working in consortia can bring to development solutions, and how best to support consortia to work effectively, equitably and sustainably.

The 13 consortia supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) UK Aid Connect (UKAC) programme provide a unique opportunity to learn with and from these partnerships. Through a participative action research approach, programme partners Bond and The Partnering Initiative, supported by an academic advisory board, are engaging with the UKAC consortia to learn from their experiences, provide needs-based support, and grow the research and evidence base to support future effective consortia approaches. The lessons learned will be shared both within the consortia and with the wider sector, aiming to fill some of the gaps and needs identified in this literature review, and to inform donor and civil society practice.

Underpinning this research process, this review<sup>1</sup> brings together the key relevant literature on consortium working within humanitarian and international development programmes. It aims to identify key lessons learned, analyse gaps in current knowledge and evidence, and provide a focus for future research.

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## 2. The consortium as a form of multi-stakeholder partnership



### I. Collaborative working as a mechanism for delivering international development

In the field of international development, the 21st century has been the century of partnership. In the latter half of the 20th century, the acknowledged failings of traditional models of 'aid', characterised by the dominance of Western donor governments and their implementing agencies, prompted a search for more inclusive and equitable mechanisms of supporting development.

This sea-change in international aid funding coincided (and coalesced) with the 'participation' movement<sup>2</sup> (rapidly mainstreamed by Western donors and international organisations, though with roots in African, Asian and Latin American traditions of collaboration – see Tandon and Hall 2014) as well as many national and international campaigns for environmental protection, creating a global recognition that all forms of development now needed to be sustainable in their social, economic and environmental impact. Partnership emerged as a buzz-word at the 1992 Rio Earth summit (Tennyson 1998; Tennyson 2004) and, within a decade, had become a central concept in the field of international development. So much so that at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared:

“

*The Summit represents a major leap forward in the development of partnerships with the UN, governments, business and civil society coming together to increase the pool of resources to tackle global problems on a global scale.*<sup>3</sup>

”

By the mid-2000s, a small but influential body of material had already accumulated on the theory and practice of what was then referred to, most commonly, as 'cross-sector partnership'. This literature included general introductions to the field<sup>4</sup>; practical manuals on how to create and manage partnerships<sup>5</sup>; and more academic analyses of how partnerships were operating in practice<sup>6</sup>. In 2002, the first international, university-certificated course in cross-sector partnership was available and welcoming students from business, government and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) community<sup>7</sup>. The 'partnership paradigm' was becoming well-established as a central element in the drive for sustainable development<sup>8</sup>.

This first decade of partnership practice and study was characterised by typical first generation optimism about the potential of cross-sector partnerships to transform the development landscape radically. This is probably best illustrated by the title of Nelson and Zadek's pioneering publication, *Partnership alchemy*<sup>9</sup>. There was a strong practitioner focus in much of the early work and a commitment to shifting the balance of development activities towards a much greater inclusivity, with NGOs, community groups and the private sector moving into some of the space formerly occupied by governments and international agencies (Binder et al. 2011; Davies 2011; Prescott and Stibbe 2014)<sup>10</sup>. But, at the same time, there was already an awareness that producing evidence for the impact of these novel arrangements was a significant challenge.

Two issues in particular stood out: the *meaning* of the concept 'partnership' (framed by different ideas about the purpose of partnerships); and the *evaluation* of partnership processes, as well as the impact generated through partnerships.

The first challenge had been explicitly addressed in a number of early publications, with authors offering definitions of cross-sector partnerships<sup>11</sup>, some of which have achieved real longevity<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, the popularity of the concept inevitably led to its being applied to such a wide range of broadly collaborative

mechanisms as to risk undermining its original meaning. Consequently, as early as 2002, Harrison could describe the term partnership as being 'over-used and under-scrutinised'<sup>13</sup>. This is a problem that has not been eased by the subsequent explosion of collaboration-based programmes and the proliferation of similar terms ('association', 'alliance', 'consortium' etc) to describe these arrangements<sup>14</sup>.

The challenge was also shown to be exacerbated by the range of understandings of the *purpose* of partnerships. These include partnering to further a common agenda or solve a shared development problem, to expand networks and reach, to access critical funds, to promote organisational profiles, and to build organisational capacity by learning from other partners (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; Lasker and Weiss 2003; Johnson and Wilson 2006; Boydell and Rugkåsa 2007; Aniekwe et al. 2012). Even within a single partnership, perceptions of purpose can differ between the various partners<sup>15</sup> and, as recognised by analysts such as Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), motivations for partnering may well change over the course of the collaboration and partnerships themselves may morph into different forms as funding ebbs and flows.

Similarly, such problems of definition only intensified the difficulties faced by practitioners and academics in establishing reliable methods of measuring and evaluating cross-sector partnerships. It soon became clear to funders that working in partnership required a considerable investment of time and money to create and maintain the complex relationships involved<sup>16</sup>. This concern was probably amplified by the enhanced role played by the private sector in many early partnership activities. Analysts of the phenomenon began to look more closely at the problem of evaluation methodologies and appropriate metrics for assessing the performance of cross-sector partnerships<sup>17</sup>. Two positive outcomes of these 'first generation' challenges emerged from two very different development traditions.

First, from a new managerialist perspective, the creation of a more rigorous and objective approach to the analysis of partnerships for sustainable development generated more detailed guidelines for practitioners on the rules of engagement for collaborative working. It also created more robust guidance on good practice in operating, maintaining and assessing the partnerships themselves<sup>18</sup>. A new emphasis on tools and processes emerged with public, private and non-governmental bodies investing in tailored guidance, tools and metrics to manage their commitment to, and substantial investment in, collaborative models of working<sup>19</sup>.

Over the same period, the range of terminology had expanded and diversified: at international level, the term 'multi-stakeholder partnership' (MSP) achieved greater currency, perhaps acknowledging that the 'cross-sector' element of early partnerships was no longer either a novelty or a necessary element in collaboration; at organisational level, participating bodies adopted more bespoke terms for their specific forms of collaboration. With the launch of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, both the centrality of partnership to achieving sustainable development and the diversity of partnership approaches had become an integral part of the debate<sup>20</sup>.

Second, in contrast to the managerialist focus on *efficiency* and *effectiveness*, another set of initiatives recognised the importance of advancing fairness and *equitability*, both within and through partnerships<sup>21</sup>. Such initiatives have tended to concentrate on research-oriented partnerships between academics and other development stakeholders and have interrogated the politics of evidence and participation and the distribution of expertise within a global political economy, with implications for social, cognitive and environmental justice (Shiva 1997; Visvanathan 2005; Hall and Tandon 2017). Key to this approach has been understanding the internal processes and practices of partnerships, including cultural difference, relationships, communication and power.



## II. The place of the consortium model within this mode of working

The consortium model of working sits, therefore, within the broader field of collaborative partnership arrangements created to support and deliver international development and humanitarian aid. However, the use of the term ‘consortium’ to describe a particular bespoke form of partnership does not necessarily have a shared, accepted definition beyond each specific situation. Carter (2017) states simply that ‘working in consortia is one partnership structure currently utilised’<sup>22</sup> and quotes the definition in Gonsalves (2014) – ‘consortia are models of collaboration bringing together multiple actors... to address a common set of questions using a defined structure or governance model’<sup>23</sup> – which is so broad as to encompass virtually any form of partnership arrangement. More recent work does not offer a clearer distinction: Koelle et al. (2019) use ‘consortium’ interchangeably with ‘collaborative working’ and ‘partnership’ in their guide to forming and operating a consortium based on the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme. Macharia (2016) defines it equally broadly as ‘a grouping of organizations that jointly participate in the design and delivery of a particular objective’<sup>24</sup>.

It is clear from the existing studies that any insight into the mechanics of ‘consortia working’ not only emerged from the partnership literature but shares with it many of the challenges and benefits of working collaboratively. Indeed, working in consortia embraces the central partnership ethos of mobilising collective resources to address shared challenges and, in doing so, accepting shared risks and responsibilities. Nevertheless, it does so in specific ways that need to be identified, analysed and compared with other approaches. If we are to learn more about the effectiveness of working in consortia, then we need to define more closely what it is that makes this form of partnership distinctive. It then becomes more feasible not only to identify what contributes to the success or failure of a consortium and to the fairness and equity of processes and practices, but also (and crucially for the donor body) what benefits or drawbacks working in consortia might have compared with other forms of delivering international development aid.

For UK Aid Direct, the FCDO distinguishes between partnerships that are *implementing* (‘manage project funds and play a prominent role in project management and delivery’), those that are *collaborative* (‘play a key role in project coordination and supporting the delivery of the project, but do not directly manage project funds’) and

those that are *consortia* (where two or more organisations come together to create a new, formally constituted organisation, with its own organisational accounts)<sup>25</sup>. This is a clear internal distinction for the donor organisation but tells us little about the more complex level of differences in structure, governance and procedures of consortia as an approach to partnership working.

Macharia (2016) provides a short analysis of a fairly simple consortium set up to deal with a food security crisis in the Horn of Africa. The structure he describes can be taken as typical of many consortia: a lead agency – typically an international NGO or research organisation – receives funding and channels this to a group of implementing agencies that come together as a consortium jointly to design and deliver a programme of work<sup>26</sup>. In most cases, the lead agency is also an active participant, giving it a ‘first among equals’ role. The consortium partners then deliver the programme of work through a number of implementing agencies that, in this case, were local NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs). In the instance described, the lead agency already had access to the appropriate funds but, in many other cases, a consortium may be convened expressly to acquire funding for shared aims or to compete for publicly available funding.

Fowler and McMahon (2010)<sup>27</sup> emphasise these two distinctions of structure and purpose. Firstly, that employing a consortium as a delivery mechanism permits donor organisations to deal with a single ‘entity’ rather than manage multiple contracts. Secondly, from the perspective of the recipients, coming together into a ‘consortium’, even if that is a fairly loose alliance of common interests, provides a means of accessing new or additional resources<sup>28</sup>. The primacy of the latter is implied, perhaps, in the definition offered by the Catholic Relief Services/USAID guide to working in consortia, which defines consortia as:

“

*Organizations that operate in collaboration according to a formally stated agreement and in recognition of their enhanced ability to compete for resources as a formal association.*<sup>29</sup>

”



However, although consortia are often seen as mainly donor-driven, bringing together partners that are only collaborating to get funding, some organisations are responding to the need to partner with a variety of actors by moving towards a more strategic approach of long-term alliances. These alliances will have a strongly aligned strategic interest, and partnerships will form within them as appropriate and as funding becomes available (IOB 2019; Findlay Brooks and Porteous 2020). A related practical benefit for smaller organisations – cited both in development sector sources and in other not-for-profit sectors such as counselling provision and voluntary organisations<sup>30</sup> – is the opportunity to share resources with larger partners in order to bid for funding<sup>31</sup>. Other non-financial motivations might include extending reach through access to partners' networks and strengthening individual and organisational capacity by learning from others in the consortia<sup>32</sup>.

Streamlined contracting and funding arrangements can certainly be an important factor in programmes that are large-scale and long-term in nature and which may involve many partner organisations. The Global Trachoma Mapping Project provides a good example from the health sector of a large (\$16.5 million) global project bringing together multiple governments, international agencies, NGOs and research partners, and employing a substantial number of project staff on the ground in target countries (IATI 2015; Brooks et al. 2016; Bartlett et al. 2019).

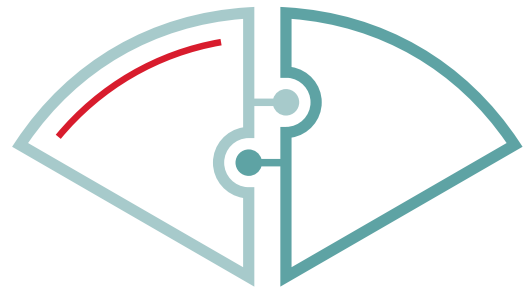
The governance structure that was put in place might be described as a stratified partnership<sup>33</sup>, in which the partnership at the level of funding and planning was represented by a central project team (supported by various specialist committees) and then dealt with a single point of contact (the NGO Sightsavers), which was the contracting body with the funder. The fairly lean project team then managed a series of country-based partnerships consisting of co-ordinating and implementing bodies, involving NGOs, government staff and community groups<sup>34</sup>.

One of the key lessons from the early partnership ventures was the need to tailor the structure, constituency and management of a partnership to the capacities and needs of the partners involved. The rejection of a 'one-size-fits-all' solution emerged from sound evidence generated by pioneering collaborations (Rein et al. 2005; Beisheim and Simon 2016). A related observation that such capacities and needs evolve over the course of a programme led to a focus on 'adaptive programming' approaches to managing development programmes (Derbyshire and Donovan 2016; IOB 2019).

Consortia models that provide longer-term funding and a streamlined governance structure with dedicated time and resources for co-creation have been one response to this perceived need for a more 'bespoke' and iterative approach<sup>35</sup>. They also address a second concern that emerged from the evaluation of early partnerships: the need for major funders to be able to monitor, control and measure the value generated by their investment in a partnership. Again, working through a consortium model may potentially offer the funder a higher degree of predictability and control in the management and assessment of the collaborative programme. Combined with greater coherence, security and flexibility, this makes consortia an attractive model for funders and implementing partners alike.

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# 3. What makes an effective partnership?



## I. Overview

Before we move on to analyse the evidence specific only to the consortium model, it is worthwhile to summarise, briefly, what can be agreed in terms of the established good practice of working in any form of collaborative arrangement for international development. Such generalised conclusions help to inform and guide us not just in terms of creating and operating collaborative working but also in defining what learning we might generate from ongoing and future programmes, and therefore what evidence needs to be defined and produced through action research and/or traditional evaluation.

It is reasonable to accept that much of the evidence on the creation, operation and value-generation of multi-stakeholder partnerships is also relevant to working in consortia. Carter<sup>36</sup> certainly takes this approach, acknowledging that the descriptive and analytical literature specifically addressing the consortium model remains limited and drawing on relevant findings related to partnership more broadly. Much of what does exist has been produced in the process of describing or evaluating consortium programmes and there appears, at present, to be a relative paucity of in-depth accounts of working in consortia from those 'in the field'.

Establishing criteria for successful partnership working has been made more difficult by the two challenges discussed in chapter 2: *meaning* and *evaluation*. The diversity of working arrangements upon which the title 'partnership' has been bestowed has frequently made it impossible for researchers to compare like with like, and there has been an understandable caution over applying the findings of one study to partnerships in general (van Tulder et al. 2016). To illustrate the scale of the problem, in 2015 a UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) database listed 1,940 'partnerships for the SDGs'<sup>37</sup>. It is inconceivable that all of these 'partnerships' were set up and operated along appropriate and comparable lines, adhering to established good practice. Some of the scepticism about the viability, or success rates, of partnerships has undoubtedly been caused by the fact that many of these arrangements have been

partnerships in name only and that few have been equipped with the resources, preparation, support and assessment recommended in expert guidance and, in most cases, essential for success<sup>38</sup>. This is the primary reason why a literature review such as that undertaken by Carter (2017) can identify examples of successful collaborative working recorded in individual case studies while noting the scepticism expressed by authors attempting to draw more general conclusions across the whole field of partnership working<sup>39</sup>. Critics have argued that the partnership literature suffers an obsession with success as well as the assumption that there is a common understanding of what success means in practice. This undermines the potential to learn from failure and further limits our understanding of what works in practice (see Fransman and Newman 2019).

At the same time, the huge range of projects and programmes that have been tackled collaboratively in the past two decades makes it impossible to impose any single form of assessment when attempting to evaluate their structures, operations or the impact of their outcomes. Evaluation is, at the best of times, a complex process where methodologies must be carefully matched to the subject, context and needs of the study. It is hardly surprising that drawing reliable – and replicable – lessons from examples of collaborative working has proved difficult to achieve. While the frequency and standard of partnership evaluation has improved as the field of endeavour has expanded and matured<sup>40</sup>, the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the mounting climate crisis have introduced new challenges both around ways of working and evaluating consortia.

In the following section, we present a summary guide to what has become considered to be best practice in running effective partnerships for sustainable development, drawing on a number of research papers and reviews of the lessons learned from two decades of partnership working. This is not intended to be either comprehensive or especially detailed, but is included here to provide further background to the operation of the FCDO consortia and the future analysis of their effectiveness<sup>41</sup>.

## II. Lessons learned

There are 12 practical lessons highlighted here, each of which should be considered when planning to convene, fund or manage any form of multi-stakeholder partnership<sup>42</sup>. These are:

- ▶ **Design:** There are underlying *principles of partnership*<sup>43</sup> but there is no ready-made template for creating a partnership. Forms of collaborative working need to be tailored to the aims, resources and participants in the process<sup>44</sup>.
- ▶ **Context:** Forming a partnership requires *sensitivity to the different contexts with which the programme or project interacts*. This includes recognising the political economies in which the partnership is situated (including the funding and administration contexts – see Fransman et al forthcoming), the concerns and competencies of the participants, and the long-term sustainability of the partnership's programme or project. *Local ownership* of agendas and support from national experts as well as local champions and institutions can often prove vital to equity, relevance and sustainability.
- ▶ **Culture:** Sensitivity to context also encompasses an *awareness of the cultural differences* (local, national and organisational) between the various actors and bodies participating. Exploring potential differences in assumptions, behaviour and work, and the power relations that order these, can help to mitigate conflict and misunderstanding.
- ▶ **Partnership readiness:** Both at the outset of the partnership, and throughout its evolution, time should be invested in *building and maintaining relationships* between the participants and developing the participants' own skills in the *process of partnering*.
- ▶ **Vision:** Participants need to have a *clear and shared vision* of what the partnership has been established to achieve and how it will attain its goals. Each partner may have unique motivations and resources but needs to share the overall aims and vision.
- ▶ **Governance:** The *decision-making structure* of the partnership needs to be clear, equitable and sufficiently flexible to allow for evolution and change. Clear lines of accountability should be established around an acceptable division of roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ **Communication:** *Channels of communication* between partners should be well-organised and equally accessible to all participants. Regular communication should be scheduled and strictly adhered to.
- ▶ **Competencies:** The partnership must, collectively, possess the *skills and knowledge* required to achieve the partnership's aims. An *audit of competencies* is a useful exercise to assess whether this is the case. At the same time, learning over the course of the partnership will develop new competencies as well as identify the need for new knowledge and skills.
- ▶ **Agreement:** Wherever possible, the principles, purposes and procedures of the collaboration should be captured in a written *partnership agreement*, which will then serve as a reference point for review and revision of these arrangements.
- ▶ **Funding:** *Funding* needs to be appropriate, reliable and clearly linked to specific agreed outcomes. *Resources* – both financial and non-financial – must be identified to maintain or replicate outcomes in a sustainable way.
- ▶ **Learning:** Processes and capacity for *review and revision* of the partnership should be part of the structure and governance. The participants and funders need to be *committed to learning* from the process and acting on that learning as the partnership evolves.
- ▶ **Sustainability:** Partners – and especially funding partners – need, from the outset, to consider their *exit strategy*. At what point will the partnership have achieved its goals? Will a programme instigated by a partnership become locally sustainable? Does the partnership have an *agreed mechanism for terminating or transforming* its activities?

# 4. What makes an effective consortium?



## I. Overview

In this section, we provide an overview of the main findings from studies that have aimed to identify the learning from evaluations of consortia programmes and from reviews of the emerging literature on consortia, both within and beyond the field of international development. The aim here is to identify the main themes and critical issues, so that these might inform any new research work. The analysis is restricted to literature dealing specifically with the consortium model as it is conceived by FCDO for the purposes of the LfC programme and pays particular attention to recent work, including publications not covered (or fully discussed) in Carter's 2017 review.

We also include in this section a brief discussion of some of the issues involved in measuring value in partnerships. This is not just because of the ever-intensifying need to demonstrate impact and value-for-money in a world where development spending is under severe scrutiny. It is also because the creation of a consortium model might be seen as a conscious attempt to create a method of working in development spending that works more *effectively, efficiently, equitably* and, potentially, *environmentally* than alternative partnership models. It represents, as discussed above, a bespoke model of collaborative arrangement designed to generate greater value. Distinguishing the benefits (or drawbacks) of working in consortia might best be achieved through a clearer understanding of how this approach adds value.

## II. Measuring the value generated by collaborative working

We have remarked above on the difficulties facing those engaged in the process of measuring the value generated by any specific partnership, let alone the model of partnership in general. This remains a critical problem. The dominant rationale for using any partnership as a mechanism for delivering

sustainable development is that more relevant, responsive, responsible and robust outcomes leading to greater impact can be achieved more easily through collaboration than through the actions of a single body. Yet, the quantity and diversity of development partnerships, the temporal and spatial scales involved, and the practical challenges of evaluation all work against consistent and reliable measurement<sup>45</sup>.

First, there is the issue of **what** is being measured. Most simplistically, evaluators might be interested in a project's *outputs* (the basic deliverables the partnership has been created to generate), *outcomes* (the benefits produced through the generation of these deliverables), or *impact* (generally regarded as any long-term and sustainable change achieved as a result of the partnership's activities). In addition, the *process* of partnership working will almost certainly be of relevance, especially when assessment is part of the integral learning process of the partnership.

Second, there is the issue of **when** the measurement is done. Is it an evaluation commissioned by donors to assess the 'success' (or otherwise) of the partnership at its completion or, as mentioned above, an internal review carried out to monitor how well the partnership is working and identify whether changes need to be made? In terms of the partnership's intended life-cycle, can judgements be made on the achievement of desired outputs and outcomes? Has sufficient time passed to permit a judgement on longer-term impact? This issue of timing can pose significant problems for consortia with multiple participants and a time-frame of four years or more. The inevitable transaction costs incurred in setting up the consortium, its documentation, communication channels, formal procedures and learning processes make it unlikely that 'value-for-money' will be evident until late into the consortium's lifecycle. Evidence of sustainable impact from the original investment might only emerge years after the programme's instigation. And, even then, given the wide range of partners involved and their networks, attribution to the consortium model will be hard to determine.

Finally, there is the issue of the added-value of adopting a partnership approach. Does evidence exist that would permit a comparison to be made between the value generated through a particular partnership (whether in terms of outputs, outcomes or impact) and the comparable value generated by an individual body tackling the same development challenge?

None of these are trivial issues.

There is also the significant issue of the purpose of the partnership – what the collaboration is aiming to achieve and what challenges or needs have prompted the partner organisations to come together. There are various ways of defining the diverse forms and purposes of partnership and many organisations will use their own internal typologies to distinguish the forms of collaboration in which they engage. Here, we adopt a threefold typology proposed for use with partnerships for the SDGs (Stibbe et al. 2019), which distinguishes between partnerships for leverage/exchange, partnerships to combine/integrate, and partnerships to transform<sup>46</sup>. It is clear from the literature that the consortium approach has been employed to support the delivery of all three of these partnership types.

For example, the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) is an example of a consortium approach used to enable *exchange* of knowledge and skills in a research network in Africa (Thompson 2013; Upper Quartile 2014)<sup>47</sup>; the Nigeria-based Coalitions for Change (C4C) programme appears to be a classic case of diverse partners combining to achieve common goals (DLP 2012); and in terms of scale, complexity and ambition, the Global Trachoma Mapping Project (GTMP) constitutes a *transformative* partnership, contributing to nothing less than the global eradication of a persistent disease (Brooks 2016).

What would be interesting – and potentially productive – to explore in future research is whether particular funding models (of which a consortium would be one) are suited to particular forms of partnership. A recent report on ‘strategic partnerships’ for the Netherlands’ Foreign Ministry (IOB 2019) makes this argument explicitly<sup>48</sup>, raising the possibility that donors could achieve greater added value through achieving a better ‘fit’ between the model of partnership and its long-term purpose – though this also poses particular methodological problems in terms of measuring the success of both the project and the partnership.

### III. Lessons learned

Carter’s literature review of consortia working (Carter 2017) highlights the difficulty in identifying factors determining effectiveness that are specific to the consortium model of collaboration. Lacking a single,

unambiguous definition of a ‘consortium’ and reviewing a diverse selection of development initiatives, many of the conclusions are readily applicable to several forms of partnership<sup>49</sup>. This is one reason why we have chosen, in this review of the field, to deal initially with the generic and well-established lessons learned regarding working in partnerships and to try and focus separately, in this section, on the distinctive characteristics of working in consortia. In this way, we seek to identify the dominant themes and critical issues around working in consortia rather than list, again, the typical, recurring challenges of collaborative working in general.

What, then, can the literature tell us about the specific challenges and achievements of working in consortia? There are seven issues we select here on the basis of the available evidence and which form the evidence for our recommendations, in the final section, for future research priorities.

**Responsiveness to context:** Consortia working brings together stakeholders operating in a wide range of dynamic political and social contexts (Pattberg and Widerberg 2014). Ensuring agendas are relevant and impact is sustainable means understanding how the different partners and the programme as a whole interact with existing structures and systems and identifying the enablers and inhibitors of change. Mapping these political economies and reflecting on which actors are or are not represented in consortia is critical for formulating meaningful pathways to impact. Achieving coherence (never mind the necessary flexibility for adaptive programming) means negotiating across difference and acknowledging the power relations that operate in all contexts, including that of the programme funders. Determining whose agendas count and creating participatory feedback mechanisms to inform (re)design of the programme is essential to ensure responsiveness to changing contexts, priorities and new learning.

**Preparedness to partner:** Participants in all forms of collaborative working need to be aware of the costs and challenges it entails and any consortium should be provided with the resources appropriate to prepare participants for these: everyone involved needs to understand how the consortium structure should work, why it is being used, and how it can be effectively managed. In other words, although a consortium is a specific form of collaborative working, some of the problems that will arise will be those problems common to all partnership models, while others may be specific to the consortium model. This approach is exemplified in some of the practitioner guides (Catholic Relief Services 2008; Koelle et al. 2019) where there is a commitment to preparing participants in terms of defining the consortium’s rationale and vision; agreeing appropriate roles and procedures; and integrating learning and adaptation strategies.

Where consortia have been well-prepared in this respect, they have found their working processes to be more effective. Where they have not, then progress on substantive work can be significantly impeded. Carter (2017) cites the problems encountered by the Enhanced Livelihoods Programme, where ‘the partners had not worked collectively before under such an arrangement and there was insufficient opportunity in the first year to develop a common sense of vision and purpose for the Consortium’<sup>50</sup>. At an administrative level, Macharia (2016) and IOB (2019) argue for additional resourcing to acknowledge the extra work required from support functions in managing and servicing the consortium, a plea echoed in other comparable accounts from different sectors (Bunting and Fleming 2015).

**Tailored learning:** Creating integral learning processes (for example, ongoing monitoring, review and feedback systems but also by developing learning cultures through regular opportunities for critical reflection) is an essential part of partnership preparedness, as is the allocation of resources to targeted measurement and analysis of outputs, outcomes and impact (Reid 2015). Where the evaluation of consortia might achieve more valuable insights is through the identification of what features make the consortium distinctive and what added-value can be attributed to the adoption of a consortium approach. This requires forms of internal monitoring and external evaluation that are tailored to the consortium’s structure and purpose.

In their evaluation of the Health Programme Research Consortia (RPCs), Culyer et al. (2015) highlight the use by the funding body of inappropriate metrics to monitor and assess the activities of the consortia: ‘There was widespread dissatisfaction, which some of the evaluation team share, with the quantitative indicators and logframe currently used by the DFID<sup>51</sup> for programme monitoring. Whilst acknowledging that these are not good measures of the effectiveness of research programmes of this nature, impact and outcome statements could be more realistic, output indicators tighter and often more challenging.’<sup>52</sup> A similar point is raised by Macharia (2016), who argues that the assessment tools available to the lead agency were not appropriate to an assessment of the consortium’s operation, and in the IOB report (IOB 2019), which highlights the use of ‘irrelevant indicators’<sup>53</sup> imposed by government funders.

Creating learning and evaluation processes that address directly the unique structure of the consortium should contribute to improved learning and enhanced effectiveness<sup>54</sup>. Brooks (2016), for example, reports the alterations in organisational roles and task prioritisation consequent upon an effective mid-term evaluation of the Global Migration and Transnational Politics (GMTP) consortium’s work<sup>55</sup>.

**Contracting:** The distinctive structure of a consortium in which the main funding body contracts with one organisation rather than with a larger group of partner organisations offers the funder a simpler, more streamlined relationship with the potential to reduce the transaction costs typical of managing complex multi-partner programmes. Value for money for the donor organisation is cited in a number of consortium evaluations<sup>56</sup> and it seems reasonable to assume that this is a primary attraction of the consortium approach. However, there is evidence that it may also have benefits for the consortium participants. The RPC’s mid-term evaluation reported, ‘The consortium structure is highly-prized because of the element of secure funding that it guarantees and the flexibility accorded to each consortium – and often, within each RPC, to the various partners.’<sup>57</sup> In other words, where the operational mechanisms linking the donor, the lead organisation and the constituent partners work well, then all parties might benefit from an arrangement that provides a level of predictability combined with a degree of local freedom.

**Shared methodology:** A frequent observation in the evaluations of consortia to date is that the structure of these programmes enables and supports a sharing of knowledge and of methodologies in targeted fields of research and practice. This is true not only of those consortia specifically established to disseminate and strengthen research activity (for example, FAC, Agricultural Policy Research in Africa – APRA, RPCs) but also of projects with other tangible outputs, such as GMTP and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), where a number of participating partnerships benefited from a standardised methodological approach or from the central dissemination of knowledge resources (Brooks 2015; Thompson 2013; Upper Quartile 2014; Bartlett et al. 2019). By enabling participants to access specialised resources through the consortium, the adoption of this approach appears to have had positive outcomes in terms of economies of scale (Carter 2017) and, as with the issue of contracting, has provided better value for the donor organisation. In terms of our partnership typology (chapter 4), consortia might be especially well-suited to leverage/exchange styles of partnership.

**Localisation:** One of the drivers for the rise of MSPs was the perceived need to move the locus of power and decision-making in development projects closer to countries in lower-income countries and to the individuals and communities to which these efforts are directed. The evidence on the consortium model appears, at present, to be ambivalent in this respect and certainly in need of further investigation. Whereas, on the one hand, the consortium structure can act as an important enabler for locally-led action (as in the issue of methodology discussed above), it might also

perpetuate the tradition in which agencies based in high-income countries set the agenda for development and retain the technical expertise as well as intellectual property for any resources produced through the consortia.<sup>58</sup> Reviewing the RPCs, Culyer found that, despite the overall success of the consortium, 'Efforts by DFID to move the locus of RPCs to LMICs, e.g. by having institutions in those countries lead RPCs or by having Research Directors from those countries, have had limited effect.'<sup>59</sup> In the Coalitions-for-Change (C4C) consortium where a local (Nigerian) team co-ordinated eight issue-based coalitions, it was locally-generated issues that were more successful than those inherited from the funder, FCDO.<sup>60</sup>

So, there may be a potential tension here within consortia around the commitment to localise control through a loose network of allied partnerships and the reality of a funding and management structure that continues to set the agenda at a remove from local organisations.<sup>61</sup> Krishnan (2017) notes the danger that local communities are excluded from consultation and the consortium model 'will replicate social power imbalances through organizational hierarchies'.<sup>62</sup> IOB (2019) explores this issue in terms of the tension between 'complementarity' and 'autonomy' – the need for donors to identify the appropriate partners set against the need to respect those partners' local autonomy of action. As they summarise it:

“

*There is potential incongruity.....between the social transformative development view and the managerial development view, which can result in misunderstanding and frustration. In the managerial view, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a means to an end, while in the transformational view, CSOs have an intrinsic value for their political role in society as well,*<sup>63</sup>

”

At the same time, with many international NGOs or consultancy firms increasingly dispersed and operating with offices or subsidiaries in lower-income countries, it becomes hard to establish whose agendas are being served by different organisations and individuals, even if they are physically based in the lower-income countries.

**Leadership:** The issue of leadership has not received much attention in analysis of consortia to date but, from some case study evidence, might be of considerable importance. Within the broader field of multi-stakeholder partnerships, leadership can be a vexed question, as the model of partnership is often seen as being characterised by collective responsibility and an equality of influence among partners.<sup>64</sup> In contrast, the structure of a consortium depends on the existence of a lead contractor directing and co-ordinating the operation of the consortium of projects or partnerships. This is intended to generate, as Brooks (2016) observed it, the 'benefits of a system where only a few individuals were at the helm'.<sup>65</sup> However, it might equally generate conflict between the lead agency and the remaining consortium partners or, as Macharia (2016) observed in an Oxfam-led consortium, 'tension between the decisions taking place in Nairobi (at head office) and their implementation in the field'.<sup>66</sup>

Evidence from other sectors highlights some of the inherent contradictions in 'leading' a collaborative group. Bunting and Fleming (2015) discuss two important issues in their analysis of consortia in the creative arts sector. First, there is the issue of accountability, both to the donor and collective. An organisation might become the lead agency due to its reputation, track record or relation to the donor but then find itself relatively isolated and unprepared for bearing sole accountability for the whole consortium's performance. Second, there is the risk of some members of the consortium feeling disenfranchised. As they summarise it:

“

*It is often not until funding has been awarded that consortia realise the extent of the role and responsibilities that the lead organisation has taken on, and the effect that the model will have on relationships and power dynamics within the group.*<sup>67</sup>

”

## 5. Priorities for further research



In this section, we identify what appear to be the areas where more evidence is required to guide the use of consortia for development. Priorities for research are proposed, with particular reference to the need to measure the value of delivering development funding through a consortium model.

There are plenty of 'how-to' guides leading both funders and practitioners through the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of setting up and running well-functioning consortium. Most of the principles of effective and equitable collaboration for sustainable development are now well-established and accessible to donors and implementing agencies. Donor organisations can provide guidelines, dedicate funding, set operational criteria and work closely with lead agencies to ensure good practice is adhered to. The challenge of working in consortia as this model enters into a more mature phase of operation is to understand how a consortium – in comparison with other forms of collaborative working – sets the parameters for effective and equitable processes that generate the desired outcomes efficiently and sustainably. We also need to explore where this particular approach might encounter internal problems that might weaken the commitment of participants and affected populations and undermine the effective value generation process.

Priorities for further research should, therefore, focus on a limited number of issues specific to the consortium form of working. From the current review of evidence, we would propose the following shortlist of issues, though this can (and no doubt will) be expanded as our knowledge improves:

**Identification of added-value:** The creation of future consortia would benefit from a more precise definition of how the consortium model operates, how it differs from other forms of partnership, and how its distinctive form adds value to the development process. In other sectors, the umbrella concept of 'consortium' already covers more than one operating model in order to distinguish different operating strategies.<sup>68</sup> Future research into sustainable development and humanitarian aid needs to define and distinguish more precisely the strategic, methodological and value-added approaches to working in consortia. Questions such as the potential of consortia to enable more responsive and adaptive programming may warrant additional scrutiny.

**Monitoring and learning:** More information is needed on the design and use of appropriate forms of monitoring, internal learning mechanisms and external assessment of consortia. Reporting structures and assessment tools need to be accurately focused on the key aims and attributes of a consortium model and more insight is needed into the significance of learning cultures, including regular opportunities for critical reflection as well as more targeted capacity development initiatives, to generate collective understandings and strengthen participation.

**Leadership and delegation:** One area where inefficiencies can arise is in the tension between a centralised direction of a programme and the commitment to empower actors at the local level. 'Lean' management might or might not be compatible with greater decentralisation of funding and control; it might get in the way of longer-term project sustainability. At a higher level of generality, funders need to know whether resources invested in consortia are contributing to the genuine redistribution of power in development programmes by which local actors assume an increasing share of control, decision-making and long-term leadership.<sup>69</sup>



**Expertise:** Related to this last point, a further key consideration relates to where the expertise is located within a consortia and what the implications are for the participation of different stakeholders (whose knowledge counts?) as well as for capacity strengthening (who is strengthening whose capacity and what does this mean for power within a programme?) and sustainable impact (where is expertise retained – in national institutions and knowledge systems within focus countries or in consultancy firms and funding agencies within the high-income countries?). There appears to be some tendency for consortia to distinguish between implementing partners (usually located in lower-income countries) and technical partners (working at an alleged 'global' level, but often based in high-income countries). This means expertise is often located/nurtured in and attributed to organisations based in high-income countries and an opportunity is missed to recognise/build on/nurture expertise in lower-income countries – for example, within Southern research institutes.

**Structure and purpose:** More evidence is needed on the question of whether the consortium model is especially appropriate for certain forms of partnership and, therefore, whether there is a measurable relation between strategic intent, consortium performance and programme outcomes. For example, are consortia the natural structures for loose alliances of researchers or for transformational partnerships where the project is large-scale, complex and multi-national? How do the circumstances under which the partners come together influence the internal effectiveness of the consortium?<sup>70</sup>

**Remote working:** Restrictions on international travel both in response to the mounting climate crisis as well as the more immediate effects of Covid-19 raise new questions about ways of working in complex consortia. As well as challenges around communication, there are also opportunities to explore the innovative use of digital technologies as well as the localisation of expertise. In these turbulent times, it is vital that development stakeholders embrace complexity and work responsively and adaptively. Does a consortium approach facilitate this and what are the implications for the definition and assessment of consortia?



## 6. Endnotes

- 1 The review builds on Effectiveness of working in consortia: A short review of the literature on working in consortia and the relevant lessons from wider research on multi-stakeholder partnerships, commissioned by FCDO and produced by K4D in 2017.
- 2 For example, Chambers (1997)
- 3 UNDP (2002)
- 4 See, for example, Nelson and Zadek (2000)
- 5 Most notably, Tennyson (1998)
- 6 See Rein et al. (2005) for an early example of a detailed academic evaluation of innovative partnership projects
- 7 Reid (2007)
- 8 See World Food Programme (2012) as an example of this change in language and approach
- 9 Nelson and Zadek (2000)
- 10 It is important to acknowledge, however, that this was in part a politically-motivated means of donors being able to exert greater influence by bypassing national governments and working directly with the private sector and civil society (see Petras 1999; Tvedt 1998; Townsend and Townsend 2004).
- 11 See Rein et al. (2005) Chapter 1 for an overview of these early debates around definition and measurement
- 12 Tennyson (1998)
- 13 Harrison (2002) p.589
- 14 Catholic Relief Services (2008) p.32 provides a glossary of terms that defines 'consortium' and 'partnership' separately but with no real tangible distinction between the two.
- 15 This is why several of the partnership resources offer targeted guidance to different stakeholders (for example, KFPE 2017 and RRC 2018).
- 16 Typically referred to as 'transaction costs'
- 17 See, for example, El Ansari et al. (2001); Warner (2002); Stern (2004); Rein and Reid (2005)
- 18 See, for example, Tennyson (2004); Davies (2011); Nelson et al. (2011); Hanleybrown et al. (2012); UN Global Compact (2013); Prescott and Stibbe (2014); Reid and Hayes (2014); UN General Assembly (2015)
- 19 While this new capacity development industry has tended to be concentrated in high-income countries, some effort has been made to localise this expertise (see the IDRC-funded Think Tank Initiative: [www.thinktankinitiative.org](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org)).
- 20 Stibbe, Reid and Gilbert (2019); Stibbe and Prescott (2020)
- 21 See Roper (2002); Aniekwe (2012); Hanley and Vogel (2012); ELRHA (2012); KFPE (2017); Brouwer et al. (2016); Mougeot (2017); Winterford (2017), UKCDR (2017); RRC (2018); Fransman and Newman (2019); Fransman et al. (Forthcoming)
- 22 Carter (ibid.) p.2
- 23 Gonsalves (2014) p.3, quoted in Carter (ibid.)
- 24 Macharia (2016) p.3
- 25 [www.ukaidirect.org/apply/partnerships-and-consortiums](http://www.ukaidirect.org/apply/partnerships-and-consortiums) (Accessed 20 July 2020)
- 26 For comparable examples beyond the development and aid sectors, see NCVO (2020); BACP (2020); Bunting and Fleming (2015)
- 27 Fowler and McMahon (2010)
- 28 Krishnan (2017)
- 29 Catholic Relief Services/USAID (2008) p.32
- 30 For example, [www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/advancing-the-profession/influencing-decision-makers/workforce/consortia-building](http://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/advancing-the-profession/influencing-decision-makers/workforce/consortia-building)
- 31 Krishnan (2017) p.473
- 32 Geogalakis and Rose (2019: 2) use the Impact initiative's 'Wheel of Impact' to identify four dimensions of change: conceptual, instrumental, networks/connectivity and capacity building.
- 33 Using the analogy of a stratified sample in research methodology.
- 34 Brooks et al. (2016) p.10. We return to this example in Section 4 of this review.
- 35 Beyond the development sector, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) lists four different models of consortia: <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/collaboration/consortia/consortium-operating-models>
- 36 Carter (ibid.)
- 37 UNDESA (2015), cited in Beisheim and Simon (2016) p.11
- 38 This is evident in Carter's discussion (2017) p.5 of studies of MSP 'effectiveness'.
- 39 Carter (2017) p. 3; Beisheim and Simon (2016)
- 40 See World Food Programme (2012) for an example of an ambitious use of a range of evaluation methodologies
- 41 Detailed 'how-to' guides to effective collaborative working are now widely available and key publications are included in the select bibliography of this review (Appendix II). For an up-to-date overview and analysis of the issues, see the joint UN/TPI publication The SDG Partnership Guidebook (Stibbe and Prescott 2020).
- 42 This summary is based on a number of papers reviewing the literature on MSPs (Bezanson and Iseman 2012; Seitanidi and Crane 2013; Dodds 2015; Beisheim and Simon 2016; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Carter 2017) and on significant practitioner reports designed to give good practice guidance (Tennyson 2004 and 2005; Catholic Relief Services 2008; Busan 2011; Nelson et al.

- 2011; Hanleybrown et al. 2012; Pfisterer et al. 2014; Reid and Hayes 2015; Koelle et al. 2019). We have not repeated each individual reference against each summary point as there is a high degree of concurrence between authors on the main elements of good practice, even though terminology and relative priorities may differ.
- 43 The principles most often quoted are equity, transparency and mutual benefit (Tennyson 1998; The Partnering Initiative) but extended versions of this have been developed for specific purposes. See, for example, the UN's Bali Guidelines on Partnership discussed in Dodds (2015) or in Catholic Relief Services (2008) p.2; the Swiss Commission's Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (KFPE 2017); and the Rethinking Research Collaborative principles for Fair and Equitable Research Partnerships (RRC 2018).
- 44 The RRC has developed resources targeted at six stakeholder groups to support fair and equitable collaboration: [www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/programme-policy-practice/resources-fair-and-equitable-development-research-partnerships](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/programme-policy-practice/resources-fair-and-equitable-development-research-partnerships). Rather than providing a ready-made template, this critical discussion guide takes a learning-oriented approach to guide partners through i) understanding contexts; ii) establishing partnerships; iii) sustaining partnerships; iv) designing/implementing research; v) communicating/ensuring impact; and vi) looking beyond the partnership: [www.comminit.com/la/content/rethinking-research-partnerships-discussion-guide-and-toolkit](http://www.comminit.com/la/content/rethinking-research-partnerships-discussion-guide-and-toolkit)
- 45 For discussions of the issues of measuring value in partnerships, see Stibbe et al. (2019); Warner and Sullivan (2004)
- 46 For a detailed exposition, see Stibbe et al. (2019) p.8
- 47 Building on the success of the original consortium, FAC now has an additional dimension with the funding of APRA, an international research consortium to analyse effective pathways to agricultural commercialisation in Africa: [www.future-agricultures.org/apra](http://www.future-agricultures.org/apra)
- 48 IBO (2019) p.20, Recommendation 2
- 49 See, for example, Carter's summary (Carter *ibid.*) p.13 of Klenk's (2012) lessons learned from evaluation of the Emergency Capacity Building consortia
- 50 Nicholson and Desta (2010), quoted in Carter (*ibid.*) p.7
- 51 In 2020, DfID merged with the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office to become the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).
- 52 Culyer et al. (2015) p.2
- 53 IOB (2019) p.22 and p.26, Finding 6
- 54 See also the comments in Krishnan (2017) p.474
- 55 Brooks et al. (2017) pp.17–18
- 56 See, for example, Culyer et al. (*ibid.*); Brooks et al. (2015) p. 10; Liberia WASH Programme (n.d.)
- 57 Culyer (*ibid.*) p.1. See also IOB (2019) p.17, Findings
- 58 See the IDRC-funded Think Tank Initiative ([www.thinktankinitiative.org](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org)) as a programme that sought to build consultancy capacity in lower-income countries.
- 59 Culyer (*ibid.*) pp.2–3
- 60 DLP (2012) pp.25–26
- 61 See the very detailed list of learning points from the Liberia WASH Programme in Richey (2010); Webster (2010) and Liberia WASH Programme (n.d.), which include observations relating to the tensions between central management and localisation.
- 62 Krishnan (2017) p.47
- 63 IOB (2019) p.18
- 64 See the discussion of leadership types in Stibbe and Prescott (2020)
- 65 Brooks (*ibid.*) p.17
- 66 Macharia (2016) p.5
- 67 Bunting and Fleming (2015) p.11
- 68 See the discussion in Chapter 2 I
- 69 See Liberia WASH Programme (undated conference paper) for a valuable introduction to these tensions.
- 70 For further discussion, see Stibbe et al. (2019); Stibbe et al. (2020); Findlay Brooks and Porteous (2020)

# 7. Appendices

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## Appendix 2 - Select bibliography (publications of particular relevance to the UK Aid Connect programme)

### A. Practitioner guides

1. Koelle, B., Scodanibbio, L., Vincent, K., Harvey, B., van Aalst, M., Rigg, S., Ward, N. and Curl, M. (2019) *A guide to effective collaboration and learning in consortia*. London: Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

Based primarily, though not exclusively, on the experience of the BRACED climate change initiative, this is a detailed 'how-to' guide for those responsible for bringing together and developing a consortium team. The emphasis on learning is a particularly valuable one and reflects the extent to which awareness of mutual learning has become an integral element in consortium working.

2. *Catholic Relief Services/USAID (2008) Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE)*. Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services

Funded by USAID as a contribution to capacity building, this is a highly detailed guide to collaborative working. Based on the main principles of partnership accepted by most development bodies, it provides step-by-step guidance on each stage of forming, preparing and managing a consortium of partners.

3. Reid, S. and Hayes, J.P. (2014) *Platforms for partnership: Engaging business in partnerships for sustainable development*. Oxford: The Partnering Initiative

Detailed research report commissioned by the FCDO for the High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) in Mexico, April 2014, and aimed primarily at a practitioner audience. Although the primary focus is on the programme to create 'platforms' to support partnerships in Africa, Asia and South America, the report provides an overview of partnership working, a review of good practice and a step-by-step guide to setting up mechanisms for supporting partnership working.

### B. Overviews of research

1. Beisheim, M. and Simon, N. (2016) *Multi-stakeholder processes for implementing the 2030 Agenda: Improving transparency and accountability. Paper for the 2016 ECOSOC Forum*. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs

An extensive overview of issues and activities for the UN system in the context of its commitment to partnerships for the SDGs. This paper provides both a review of UN partnership activity and a well-informed consideration of MSP principles and practices. Its breadth means it acts, in effect, as a 'meta-review' (a review of reviews) scoping a substantial area of work. It is based on a decade of research into 'transnational partnerships for sustainable development'.

2. Pattberg, P.H. and Widerberg, O.E. (2016) 'Transnational multistakeholder partnerships for sustainable development: Conditions for success', *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 45(1): 42–51

A fairly concise overview of (predominantly) academic literature on good practice in MSPs, in which the authors provide an overview of the main debates around partnership effectiveness and then identify nine major success factors in creating and sustaining effective partnerships.

3. Carter, B. (2017) *Effectiveness of working in consortia. K4D Helpdesk Report*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

The 2017 literature review, commissioned by the FCDO from K4D, is an excellent starting-point for further investigation into a large number of issues related to working in consortia but is hampered by not distinguishing clearly between consortia and MSPs in general (a problem Carter acknowledges) and by the (necessary) brevity of the discussion. For those establishing new consortia there are a lot of useful observations and relevant references to pursue.





## Effective consortia working:

Literature review and priorities for future research

March 2021

To find out more about the **Learning from Consortia programme** visit:  
[www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/learning-from-consortia](http://www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/learning-from-consortia)