



## **BOND & HaysMac Online Learning Event**

***Building Equitable Partnerships: Tools to  
Shift the Power in Development***

11:30pm to 13:30pm, Monday 28 April 2025

# Background



**Plan International UK** a leading international NGO is a signatory to the global **Pledge for Change** that commits affiliated organisations to:

- ***Shift the power*** in the development ecosystem
- ***Advance locally-led development***
- ***Make equitable partnerships the default approach*** of major INGOs by 2030

**Social Development Direct (SDDirect)** is a mission-driven social enterprise providing consultancy and research services to a wide range of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, the UN system, development banks, INGOs, and foundations.

Founded in 1999, SDDirect is a wholly-owned, independently operating subsidiary of **Plan International UK**.

# Background



- The Plan International global family and SDDirect recognise that shifting the power requires ***more equitable partnerships***.
- ***Practical tools and collaborative capacity development*** are needed to build equitable partnerships.
- In 2021, Plan UK, PII and SDDirect launched the ***Building Equitable Partnerships Initiative***, a multi-year innovation project.
- The Initiative works to realise the global ***Pledge for Change***, as well as Plan's ***locally-led, globally connected*** agenda, and influence wider change in the development system.

# Background: Equitable Partnerships Initiative

## **Purpose:**

Enhance joint learning of Plan and SDDirect on equitable partnership-building, testing practical tools and innovations and contributing to the wider knowledge base on development partnerships.



# Findings: Opportunities

- **Localisation** and the move from **operational** to **partnerships-based** approach.
- Many partnerships operate at the **transactional** level, but there is scope and energy to consider a higher level of ambition.
- **Feminist leadership, anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches** are drivers for more equitable partnerships.
- **Mindset shifts** are underway, encouraged by *Power, Privilege and Bias* training, feminist leadership principles, localisation, etc.
- **Opportunities are greater when the donors are invested in more equitable partnerships –** and less when the donor is only focused on ‘delivery.’
- Opportunity to deliver on existing **partnership principles and guidance**.
- Partnerships can **extend scale and reach**, increasing quality, impact and influence.
- **Co-ownership** and **co-creation** are more likely to deliver quality plans and outcomes.

# Findings: Seven key challenges

1. **Timeframe and scale** (time and effort needed, hard to retrofit, project duration)
2. **Money and resourcing** (underestimated costs, costs increase with ambition, weak cost/benefit analysis)
3. **People and skills** (limited resources, turnover)
4. **Risk and evidence** (compliance-based, bureaucracy, unequal risk burden, lack of evidence on partnerships)
5. **Power** (weak power analysis, built in advantage for donors/global actors)
6. **Behaviours and mindsets** (disincentives for partnering/localisation)
7. **Contextualisation** (translating language and terminology, no 'one size fits all')



# Findings: What needs to change?

## Mindsets and behaviours

- Nurture trust-building, mutual benefit and respect.
- Link to organisational change work on power, privilege, bias, diversity, anti-racism, etc.
- Strengthen power analysis and management of power relations.
- Link to wider culture shifts and systems change around locally led development.

## Sustained localisation

- Mobilise equitable partnerships approach to help drive localisation.
- Use language and concepts that are accessible/adaptable for diverse contexts.
- Integrate feminist leadership, gender transformative and youth-focused approaches/tools.

## Specialist skills

- Build capacity, skills and leadership development for partnership-building.
- Document and share learning from partnerships more effectively.



# Findings: What needs to change?



## Expectations and readiness

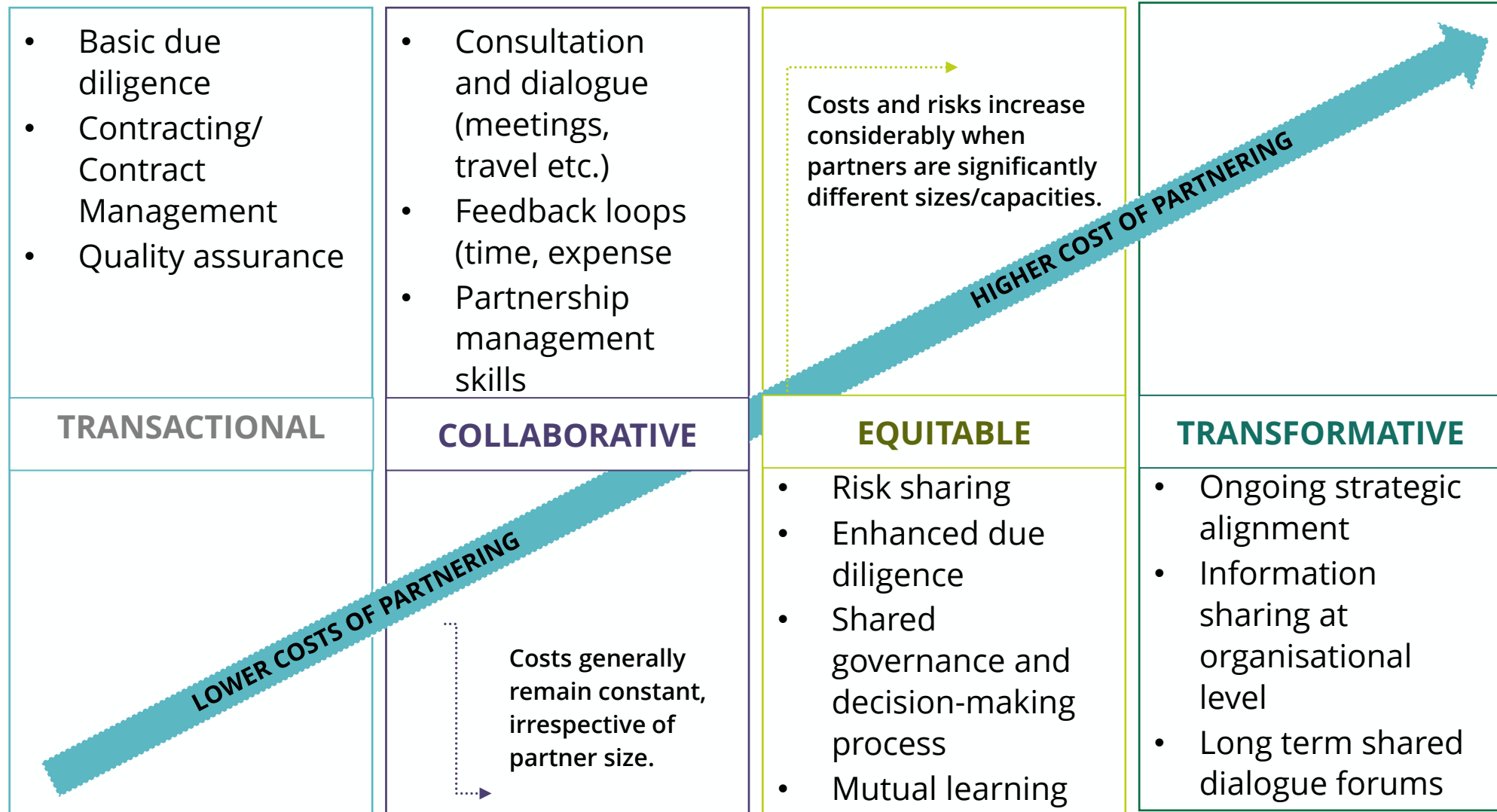
- Better analysis of different types of partnership (including different levels of ambition, timeframes and scale).
- *Right-sizing* partnerships according to purpose, organisation, context, etc.
- Clearer assessment at the start of the case for partnership (partnership readiness, added value, costs and benefits, progress markers, etc.).

## Improved tools

- Improved mechanisms for accountability, dialogue and feedback mechanisms, communications and information-sharing.
- Stronger shared risk assessment and management.
- Apply tools to set the *level of ambition* for equitable partnerships, to *assemble the value-added case* for partnership (including a *partnership readiness* assessment), and for *regular partnerships health checks*.



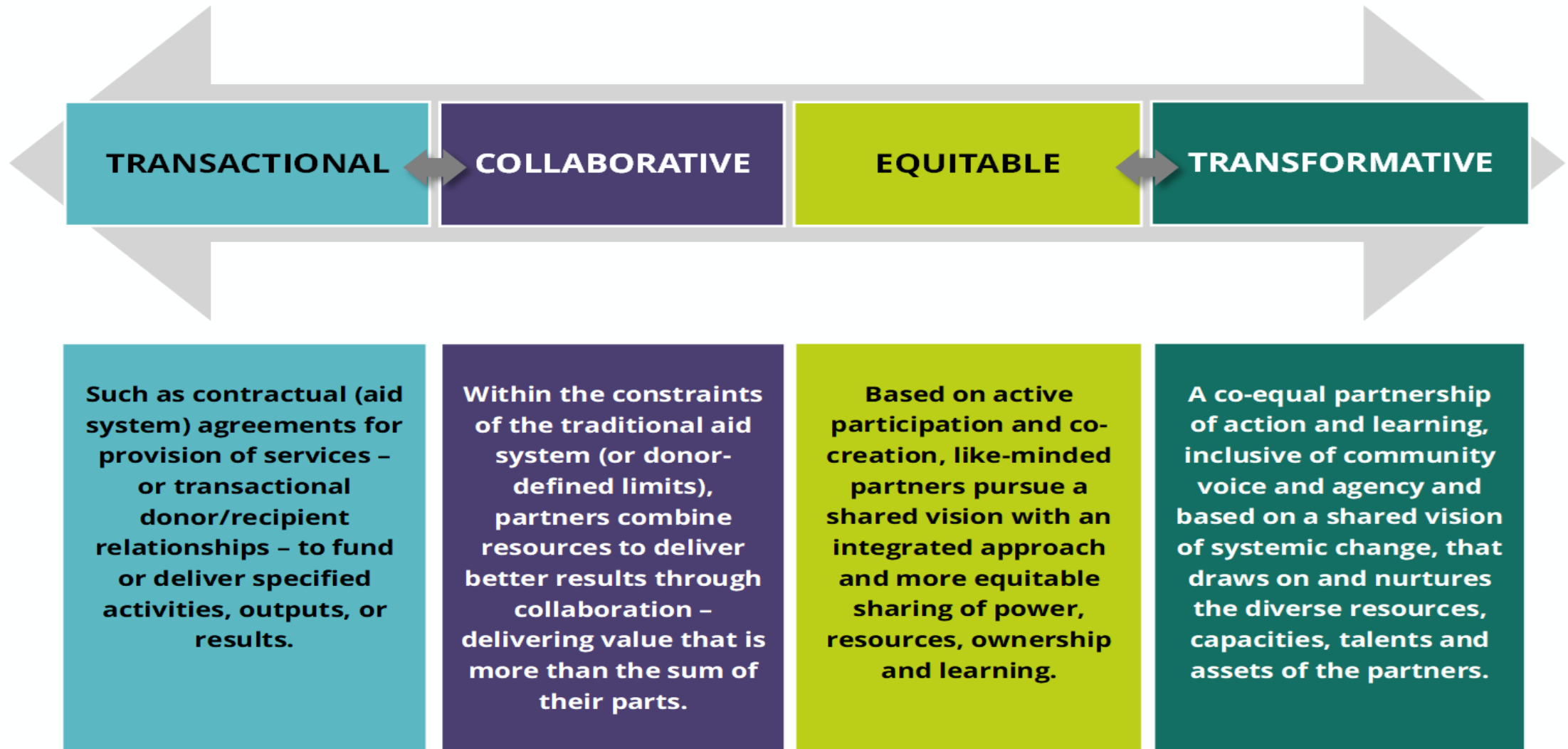
# Findings: Finance and resourcing



# The Equitable Partnerships Continuum



# Partnerships Continuum



# Partnerships Continuum

	Level of ambition			
	Transactional	Collaborative	Equitable	Transformative
<b>Motivation and expectations</b>	Shaped by practical business interests, needs and delivery priorities.	Driven by donor pipeline opportunities.	Driven by clear partnership principles and strategy.	Driven by aspiration for transformative, impact on social justice issues.
<b>Initiation and ownership</b>	Lead agency decides the programme and identifies delivery partners.	Consortium or coalition chosen and convened by lead agency, based on consultations.	Lead agency enables co-creation and co-ownership of partnership from the outset.	Commitment to long-term partnership and collaboration with shared values and agendas.
<b>Nature of collaboration</b>	Leveraging others' resources or niche services to achieve the lead agency's ends.	Lead agency plays a key role in leveraging resources, expertise and niche services of partners	Draws effectively on the complementary skills, experience and resources to deliver collective excellence.	Brings together complementary skills, experience and resources. Power dynamics surfaced to ensure equitable sharing of power.

# Added Value Case for Partnership



## Added Value Case for Partnering

This Template is intended to support you in deciding whether to enter into a partnership, by identifying the added value contributions (both financial and non-financial) of the partners, and what the partnership will achieve, above and beyond what the partners could achieve by acting independently. The Template is also a practical guide for format for developing a succinct 'added value case statement' for partnership. Initial drafts may be developed in a bullet point format.

### Summary of the Proposed Partnership (1 paragraph)

*Who are the proposed partners? What is the shared vision and purpose of the partnership?*

### 1. Strategic Case (2 pages)

*The Strategic Case provides the rationale for why partnership is required, including a description of the outcomes and the potential scope for what will be achieved.*

Motivation

- *What opportunity drives the need for partnership?*
- *How will a partnership improve on current/previous implementation arrangements?*

# Partnership Readiness Assessment

Area of Readiness	Assessment Questions	Scoring 1-5 1=absent 5=excellent
<b>Culture</b>  <i>(Embedding shared norms, values and understandings of partnership value and practice, and shared expectations.)</i>	<i>The partnership supports and enhances (or at a minimum, does not interfere with) the organisation's ability to deliver its core mission in line with its values.</i>	
	<i>There is a clear vision of the partnership's level of ambition, destination, direction, and shared values.</i>	
	<i>Our leaders are walking the talk, providing the necessary support and resources, and prioritising partnership implementation for effectiveness, equity and efficiency.</i>	
	<i>Our organisational structure and governance arrangements support the delivery of the partnership.</i>	
	<i>The organisation promotes and rewards open communication and sharing of views on partnering, including lessons learned</i>	



# Health Check

Partnership health indicator	Green	Amber	Red	N/A
1. <b><u>Vision and purpose</u></b> : There is a clear statement of shared vision and purpose for the partnership that is co-owned by all partners.				
2. <b><u>Motivation</u></b> : All partners continue to be motivated by their founding vision and purpose.				
3. <b><u>Empowerment and equity</u></b> : The partners feel committed, empowered and enabled, and are moving towards a model of more equitable and mutually beneficial partnership.				
4. <b><u>Relevance</u></b> : The partnership continues to be relevant and responds effectively to the opportunities and motivation identified at the start of the partnership.				
5. <b><u>Added value</u></b> : The partnership has 'added value,' i.e., the partnership makes it possible to achieve things that would not otherwise be delivered.				
6. <b><u>Partner contributions</u></b> : Each partner is contributing as planned, capitalising on its strengths and assets to complement the contributions of the other partners.				
7. <b><u>Partnership benefits</u></b> : Partnership benefits are shared equitably among the partners.				



Emerging lessons



# Emerging lessons from Ukraine response

SDDirect and Plan international have tested the tools in **safeguarding and humanitarian responses to the crisis in Ukraine**. Key emerging lessons

- The tools provided a useful and practical basis for **dialogue on the health and equity of partnerships** with local NGOs and CSOs.
- Helpful to analyse the current **level of ambition** and to reflect on shared goals for a higher level of ambition for an equitable partnership.
- Tools need to be **streamlined and adapted for the humanitarian settings**.
- It is important to have **trusted facilitators** to support application of the tools.

# Emerging lessons from Ukraine response

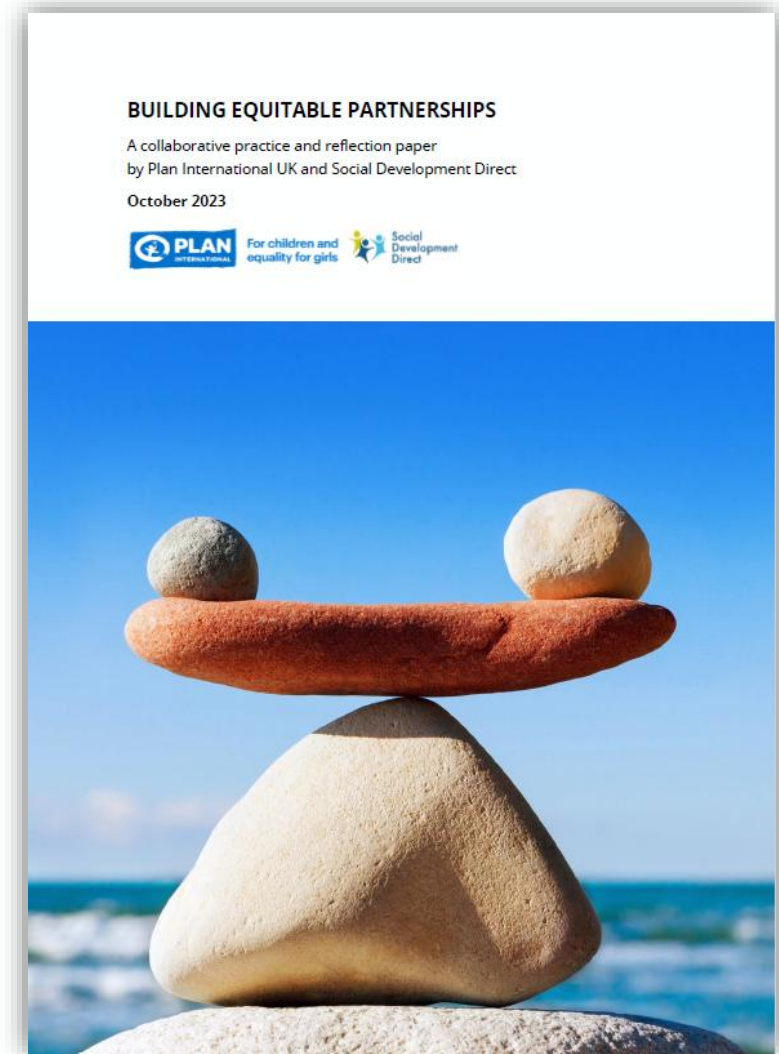
- **Tools and terminology need to be translated** into local languages and contexts.
- **High turnover of staff and participants** is a key challenge.
- In the humanitarian setting, many partnerships are **short-term and transactional**.
- Developing equitable partnerships can be a **time- and resource-intensive process**.
- Provision of **adequate budget, time, dialogue space and process facilitation** is critical.
- The tools provide a platform for on-going **dialogue, reflection and real-time problem-solving** – that can add value to programme results.

# Equitable partnerships practice paper and toolkit

***For more information see our recent practice and reflection paper at:***

***<https://www.sddirect.org.uk/resource/building-equitable-partnerships>***

***For our equitable partnership toolkit see: [insert link]***



# Reflections from the South: Shehnaaz Moosa, SouthSouthNorth





# Learning dialogue



Summing up and close

