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World Summit on the Information Society

Partnerships in Development Practice: Evidence from multi-stakeholder ICT4D partnership practice in Africa



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on the Information Society

Tim Unwin

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Preface

Since its inception, UNESCO has understood the importance of “partnering” in order to meet its goals. This is illustrated by the 329 non-governmental organisations that are officially accredited to UNESCO and by the effort that is made at the programme level to engage with civil society, including drawing on the expertise of academia and professional groups and being informed by the perspectives of the NGO Community.

More recently, in the context of the battle against poverty and marginalisation, UNESCO has recognized that other forms of partnerships have a vital role to play in the development agenda. In order to reach the “critical mass” needed to bridge the digital and knowledge divides, there is a need for more concerted effort, greater collaboration, alignment of inputs and a leveraging of resources and effort. UNESCO has therefore extended its partnering efforts to work proactively with the private sector to accelerate social and economic development, particularly for developing countries, and especially in Africa. This reflects the call by the international community to be more innovative and committed to using partnerships for development, articulated in the eighth Millennium Development Goal and in the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS).

It is in the context of WSIS that UNESCO welcomes reflection on the complex issue of partnerships for development or “ICT4D” (Information and Communication Technology for Development). This is a major theme of the World Summit and is an important element in the call for “digital solidarity” that has been debated throughout the Summit process. Looking beyond WSIS, UNESCO will continue to work on mobilising partners. However, we recognize from our own experience that fulfilling the promise of multi-stakeholder partnerships is not a simple matter – to work effectively in this form raises issues

of shared vision, leadership, trust, partnership design and the extra effort and resource needed to manage the relationship and the range of diverse interests that converge in a multi-stakeholder partnership. When these partnerships occur in development practice, there is even more complexity. The understanding of ICT4D partnerships is still at the formative stage. We can expect, as a result of the increasing focus on collaborative effort and partnerships resulting from WSIS, a growing need to understand different partnership perspectives and experience.

UNESCO's mandate is very much concerned with the sharing of information and knowledge. The opportunity to draw on specific African experience is timely, given the needs of and the focus on the African nations. This work is not intended to be an UNESCO reflection; rather, we recognize that in the spirit of WSIS, it is very important to record and share development experience, good practices, lessons learned and deepen the debate on and understanding of partnerships for development. Therefore, we welcome this work as an important contribution to the dialogue on the role of partnerships and hope that it will add to the range of perspectives on this increasingly important topic.

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Acknowledgements

UNESCO has maintained a long-standing commitment to working together with national governments and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, the private sector and academic institutions, in seeking to deliver educational initiatives across the world, focusing particularly on ways in which new technologies can be used to enhance the learning experiences of poor and marginalised people and communities.

Between 2001 and 2004, I had the privilege of leading *Imfundo: Partnership for IT in Education*, one of the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's special initiatives based within the UK's Department for International Development (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk> - accessed 6th September 2005) and designed to create partnerships to deliver educational activities in Africa through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this process, our team came to know and appreciate the extensive work that UNESCO has been doing in this field, and we were delighted to forge a formal partnership arrangement with the organisation. Partnerships are absolutely essential for the successful delivery of ICT-based educational activities across the world, particularly so when we are seeking to deliver such programmes for the benefit of poor and marginalised people and communities. However, there have been few formal attempts to analyse the success factors involved in such partnerships, and on the eve of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis I am delighted that UNESCO has agreed to publish this paper which seeks to draw out some of the lessons learnt from Imfundo's partnership model.

Much of the empirical evidence upon which the paper draws was gained while I was working in the *Imfundo* team (see <http://imfundo.digitalbrain.com/imfundo/> - accessed 6th September 2005; for DFID's ongoing work in this field see <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/research/imfundo.asp> - accessed 6th September

2005). The paper therefore draws heavily on personal conversations with politicians, civil society organisations, academics, government officials, those working in the private sector, colleagues from donor organisations, consultants, and both teachers and pupils in schools across Africa. For reasons of confidentiality, none of the many people who proffered such valuable insights are named. I do, though, particularly wish to thank Nicola Brewer, Lúdia Brito, Jean-Paul Clemente, Bob Day, Geraldine de Bastion, Ed Holcroft, Hugh Jagger, Sandy Johnstone, Dorothea Kleine, Charles Laba, Andrew Law, Liz Longworth, Peter Rave, Sally Reynolds, Michelle Selinger, Bill Souders, Peter Upton, Mathy Vanbuel, Mark Weber and Myles Wickstead, all of whom have provided me with specific ideas and commentary concerning some of the issues relating to partnerships that are addressed in this paper.

Tim Unwin

21st October 2005

Executive Summary

The central aim of this paper is to problematise the notion of partnership in development practice, with particular emphasis on partnerships in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D). It seeks to challenge taken for granted ideas concerning such partnerships, and it argues that those involved in such initiatives need to have in place formal concepts about their structure, organisation and intention.

More specifically, it has three main objectives:

- to highlight the diversity of interpretations of partnerships in the global community;
- to explore some of the literature relating to the successful delivery of partnerships, focusing especially on ICT4D; and
- to draw on the experiences of one such initiative, *Imfundo: Partnership for IT in Education*, to provide insights into the practice of multi-stakeholder partnerships in development.

The paper concludes that seven key practical elements need to be in place for ICT4D partnerships to be successful. The first, and most important of all is that partnerships must be based on *trust*. Second, it is important for all partnerships to have a clear *focus*. Partnerships must actually deliver clearly defined objectives and outputs if they are to be worthwhile, and a fine line needs to be drawn between the efforts involved in shaping partnerships and then utilising those partnerships to produce an output that is worthwhile for marginalised communities. Third, all partnerships must have enthusiastic leaders, who will act as *champions* for their particular cause. A fourth fundamental element of partnership

that is all too often ignored is the need to focus on *sustainability* from the very beginning of the design of any activities. Very few ICT4D initiatives across Africa have as yet shown themselves to be sustainable, and most rely heavily on the input of external resources to make them at all viable. This issue of sustainability is closely related to the fifth key element that needs to be in place for successful partnerships, namely a *balance between demand and supply*. This is not an easy objective to achieve, but all the evidence suggests that activities that are supply led, and that do not sufficiently take into consideration the real needs and aspirations of poor communities will rapidly fail. Sixth, it is important for partnerships to invest time in *networking* activities. While such activities are to some extent tied in with reinforcing trust, it is also important for partners to be kept regularly informed of a partnership's activities. A final important practical issue is the need for *transparency and a sound ethical basis* upon which any partnership is formed. If all of these elements are in place, then a strong basis for implementing effective ICT-supported educational partnerships will have been established.

Introduction

'Partnerships' are widely acclaimed as being of central importance to development practice in the 21st Century. The concept has become so generally accepted as being fundamental for the success of poverty 'elimination' that its presence in increasing numbers of official publications now passes almost without notice. Like the concept of 'sustainability', it is used with equanimity to refer to a wide range of different kinds of relationship, often with insufficiently rigorous assessment being applied either to its meaning or to its substance. This general acceptance of 'partnerships' in the 'development community' is all the more remarkable given the substantial critique that there has been of 'public-private partnerships' in the more affluent countries of Europe and North America (see, for example, Bovaird, 2004; Spackman, 2002; Kernahan, 2004) as well as the sustained critique of the involvement of global capital in 'development' by radical academics (see, for example, Escobar, 1995; Peet and Hartwick, 1999; Mercer et al., 2003). This paper seeks to tread a middle path between these two extremes. It argues that real partnerships can indeed be of positive significance for appropriate 'development' practices that serve the interest of poor people and poor countries, but that all too often inappropriate political or economic exigencies lie behind the use of the concept. There is a fundamental difference between the rhetoric and the reality of development partnerships.

The paper begins with an overview of the diversity of meanings attributed to the word 'partnership' as used in development practice. This emphasises that different 'partners' often conceptualise the term in contrasting ways, thereby making the successful implementation of effective partnerships difficult to achieve. This section in particular provides a short review and critique of two important recent studies, by Warner and Sullivan (2004) and the Global Knowledge Partnership (2003) which use a range of empirical examples, largely drawn from the fields of natural resources and from Information and Communication Techno-

logy (ICT), to develop theoretical frameworks for the implementation of development partnerships. The substantive part of this paper then draws on the practical experience of implementing ICT-based partnerships in support of educational initiatives in Africa to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these overviews. In so doing, it identifies seven important requirements of good practice in the implementation of 'development partnerships'. It also develops a model that outlines the specific kinds of interest that different partner organisations have in entering such agreements. In conclusion, the paper highlights some of the most significant lessons that appear pertinent for the future successful implementation of partnership initiatives using ICTs to reduce poverty in Africa.

Meanings of partnerships in development practice

The notion that beneficial development practice should involve different groups of people and institutions is nothing new. As Mercer (2003; p.743; see also Slater and Bell, 2002) has so rightly observed, ‘partnerships for development have appeared in the Pearson Report of 1969, the Brandt Report of 1980 and the 1996 Development Assistance Committee of the OECD report on development co-operation’. However, the emphasis placed on these partnerships has changed significantly with the emergence in the 1990s of an increasingly hegemonic view of ‘partnership’, particularly among the donor community and neo-liberal commentators.

Two main ways in which the term ‘partnership’ is used in development practice can be identified:

- the relationship between donors and recipient governments (usually global partnerships);
- and tri-sector initiatives combining the private sector with government and civil society (often partnerships at a national or regional scale).

In addition, the term partnership is sometimes used to refer to activity-focused projects that draw on the expertise of various stakeholders, invariably at a local or national scale. In some instances, all three usages coalesce, but failing satisfactorily to distinguish between the interests behind each of these approaches to partnership can lead to confusion and can also have damaging effects on the ability of poor people to enhance their lives. Moreover, it is important to recognise that each of these definitions has a tendency to be scale specific. Links between

donors and recipient governments are thus normally at an international scale; practical initiatives between governments, the private sector and civil society usually operate at a national, or sometimes regional scale; and the stakeholder view of partnership is essentially linked to what is seen as good project management at a local, or sometimes national scale.

2.1 The neo-liberal development agenda and the emergence of a hegemonic view of partnership

The impetus for a new rhetoric of partnership has arisen in the wake of free market liberal democracy's victory over state socialism and the command economy of the Soviet experiment in the late 1980s (see for example, Pickles and Smith, 1998; Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Pickles and Unwin, 2003). The apparent success of the political structure and economic mode of North America and Western Europe paved the way for a new relationship between donor and recipient governments. No longer did the 'West' have to fear Soviet involvement in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Instead, the leaders of the most powerful economic states in the world could seek to expand the markets and recruit cheap labour for enterprises based within their borders by working in 'partnership' with the governments of the poorer countries of the world (see Stiglitz, 2002; Sachs, 2005).

This section explores the role of the Development Assistance Committee in shaping the rhetorics of partnership in the 1990s, and then highlights the use of the term in the contexts of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the work of the Commission for Africa which reported in 2005. The next section then examines the ways in which donors have increasingly come to use the term partnership to refer to their relationships with recipient countries at the start of the 21st century.

2.1.1 The role of the Development Assistance Committee

During the 1990s, it is possible to see two strands of partnership thinking beginning to come together in the policies and practices of the World Bank and

bilateral donors: on the one hand, donors would redefine their relationship with recipient countries as being ones of partnership; and on the other, partnerships between civil society, the private sector and multilateral institutions were to be encouraged within developing countries themselves.

This coalition of interests is well captured in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s policy statement issued in 2001 and entitled *Rising to the Global Challenge: Partnership for Reducing World Poverty* (DAC, 2001; see also OECD, 2002). Within its preamble, this states that 'Developing countries must assume leadership and formulate effective national strategies for reducing poverty. These strategies should integrate economic, social, environmental and governance concerns within a comprehensive approach to development at the country level. We pledge to help them meet this challenge, in partnership with civil society, the private sector and multilateral institutions' (DAC, 2001, p.1). Although this document speaks eulogistically about partnerships, it is remarkable that it does not actually define what these are, nor how they might operate.

The emergence of this policy emphasis can be traced from the DAC's short 1995 statement entitled *Development Partnerships in the New Global Context* that was attached as an annex to their *Shaping the 21st Century Strategy: the Contribution of Development Co-operation* (DAC, 1996). This latter document in turn was an important contributing element to the emergence of the International Development Targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) enunciated in 2000 (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> - accessed 6th September 2005). Again, though, these documents are surprisingly vague about precisely what they actually mean by 'partnership'. Thus, the two-page *Development Partnerships in the New Global Context* document does not actually define what it means by partnership and remarkably only mentions the words 'partner' or 'partnership' four times.

The DAC view of partnership primarily focuses on an agenda that sees all governments working together to achieve shared goals, particularly focusing on security issues. This was expressed as follows: 'Within this new context, thriving developing country partners will contribute to greater prosperity and greater security in their own regions and globally' (DAC, 1996, p.19). As Table 1 (p. 76) indicates, partnership was conceived essentially in terms of the responsibilities of developing countries (the 'former' recipient countries) and of external partners (the erstwhile donors). This Table also indicates with great clarity the DAC's

strident neo-liberal, growth focused agenda designed to create free market economies and liberal democracies in the ‘developing countries’ (for discussion of issues surrounding the so-called ‘Washington consensus’ see Williamson, 1990; Sachs, 1990, 1995; Naím, 2000; Stigliz, 2002).

Such a vision of partnership has come to dominate many of the relationships between erstwhile ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ countries, as well as the internal development policies of the ‘recipient’ countries and regions themselves. This is well exemplified in the creation of NEPAD and in the work of the Commission for Africa.

2.1.2 The New Partnership for Africa’s Development

One significant outcome of the recent discourse on partnership in the African context has been the creation of NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, in 2001 (see <http://www.nepad.org> - accessed 6th September 2005). Table 2 (p. 78) provides an overview of NEPAD’s principles and priorities, and a comparison with Table 1 indicates the clear way in which these reflect the agenda initially formulated by donors through the DAC in the mid-1990s, focusing in particular on governance agendas, on economic competitiveness, on partnership, and on the Millennium Development Goals.

NEPAD has been the subject of many discussions (see for example Chabal, 2002; de Waal, 2002; Tikly, 2003). Chabal (2002) underlines the inadequacy of political changes in Africa during the 1990s to create conditions for successful development to take place, and Tikly (2003) emphasises that, while NEPAD does indeed represent an attempt to formulate a truly African response to globalisation, it is yet to recognise fully and resolve the tensions involved in such a project. In a balanced critique, de Waal (2002, p.464) comments that ‘NEPAD is both a “big idea” and an umbrella for best practice’. He concludes that ‘the initiative can easily be read either as Africa’s best hope or another futile grand plan. The institutions and processes are broadly encouraging, while the political and economic trends are at best mixed’ (de Waal, 2002, p.475). However, NEPAD’s success will be determined as much by the policies of donor countries as it will by events in Africa. Despite their rhetoric of partnership, it remains uncertain as to whether donors will be willing to provide sufficient funding support for ideas and initiatives

that emanate from African people and governments. This challenge has recently been highlighted explicitly in the work of the Commission for Africa discussed in the following section. Given the relative small populations of many African countries, and the implications of this both for market size and labour, there is undoubtedly a need for much greater regional collaboration within Africa, and if NEPAD is able to bring together sufficient and appropriate partners to deliver appropriate collaborative initiatives it may indeed contribute significantly to the continent's development.

2.1.3 The Commission for Africa: partnerships as a solution to poverty

The Commission for Africa, initiated in 2004 by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, emphasised the new era of partnership in two main ways: first by highlighting the importance of working together in partnership (Commission for Africa, 2005, Section 1.3), and then in Section 10.2 by linking African leadership with world partnership (Commission for Africa, 2005, p.359). The significance of partnership to the work of the Commission for Africa (2005, p.11) is immediately apparent from the very first paragraph of the executive summary: ‘... Recent years have seen improvements in economic growth and in governance. But Africa needs more of both it is to make serious inroads into poverty. To do that requires a *partnership* (my emphasis) between Africa and the developed world which takes full account of Africa's diversity and particular circumstances’. In part, though, this use of the term partnership to refer to a relationship between Africa and the developed world is elided with notions of a particular kind of economic agenda, involving public-private partnerships. Thus the report goes on to say, ‘The developed world must support the African Union's NEPAD programme to build public/private partnerships in order to create a stronger climate for growth, investment and jobs’ (Commission for Africa, 2005, p.13). One of the undoubted appeals of the notion of ‘partnership’ is that within one word it brings together these two notions at the heart of the neo-liberal hegemony. This is neatly encapsulated in the assertion that ‘Growth will be driven by the private sector, but government creates the condition for this – the challenge is to build a strong partnership’ (p.71).

Although the report (Commission for Africa, 2005) goes on to speak about the need for stronger partnerships (p.63), the ways in which the private sector

can be involved in partnerships (p.45, p.221, p.228, p.236), the need for African governments to take the lead in partnerships by ensuring good governance (p.82, p.359), the desirability of global health partnerships (p.182, p.185, p.187), the value in partnerships with religious leaders (p.199), Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU (pp.279-280), and the need to establish partnerships to strengthen African parliaments (p.135, p.148) it is remarkable that partnership is never really defined, and no detailed models of successful partnership relationships are actually given. There is not even a heading for ‘Partnership’ in the report’s detailed glossary. The nearest the Commission’s report comes to defining partnership is as follows: ‘The partnership must be one of solidarity and mutual support founded in a common humanity and a recognition that a strong and prosperous Africa is in the interests of the whole world. The partnership must recognise the responsibility of Africa and its countries to take the lead in shaping their strategies. It is for Africa to create the conditions where the entrepreneurship and creativity of its people can flourish and drive growth’ (Commission for Africa, 2005, p.85).

The Commission for Africa’s report therefore continues to propagate the idea that partnerships are somehow good things that we should all be involved in, but without stating exactly what kinds of partnerships it really means, and providing no critical evaluation of their costs and benefits. As this paper goes on to show, partnerships are incredibly hard to deliver successfully, and we need to have in place detailed models that we can turn to so that we can know whether and how best to proceed in implementing partnerships that will truly benefit poor and marginalised communities. The lack of a clear definition of partnership in the Commission’s report is in part because those involved had a clear shared understanding of what they meant by the notion. In essence, this reflected a fundamental shift away from the previous emphasis by donors on *conditionality*, to one of *equality* in the relationship between erstwhile ‘recipients’ and ‘donors’. Nevertheless, the fluidity of the notion enables it to be used readily by people and organisations when they may actually mean rather different things. If ‘partnership’ is not clearly defined, donors and recipients may well be referring to it in very different ways, and this is a recipe for future confusion, misunderstanding and possible retribution. The following section of this paper therefore explores in more detail the ways in which donor governments are actually using the concept and implementing their partnership practices.

2.2 Donor rhetorics of partnership

Despite its undoubted pre-eminence in the global development arena, the DAC view of partnership has been widely criticised (see for example, Craig and Porter, 2003, Crawford, 2003; Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 1998; Maxwell and Christiansen, 2002; Slater and Bell, 2002). As Mercer (2003, p.742) has commented, ‘The framework of aid relations have recently been recast as a more benign form of “partnership” which serves to conceal continued conditionalities. In this sense, partnership operates as a more insidious, covert and subtle expression of donor and IFI power’. Building on the work of Slater and Bell (2002), Mercer (2003) has in particular drawn attention to the way that although recipients are now referred to as partners, in that they own the reform process and are agents of their own development, donors still maintain a dominant position of power through the practices of surveillance and selectivity, whereby they choose to support those governments with policies designed to implement democracy and neo-liberal market reform.

Although such a critique is not the main focus of this paper, it is important to emphasise that while donors may be espousing a beneficial view of partnership, many of their officials continue, at best, to have a poor understanding of what implementing partnerships in practice may mean. Throughout the late 1990s and the start of the 21st century, the relationships between donor and recipient governments in Africa all too often remained dominated by donor officials telling recipient governments what they ‘must’ do if they wished to continue to receive new tranches of ‘aid’, especially in the form of budget support (see Unwin, 2004a). This is despite the rhetoric of documents such as the Commission for Africa (2005, p.177) report which emphasises that ‘strong action by donors is crucial. Donor funding must align with national priorities through partnerships with African governments’.

The way in which the word ‘partnership’ has slipped into official documentation, whilst as yet having only a marginal effect on how donor agencies truly think and act, is well indicated by official donor government publications and practices. The UK, Sweden (Maxwell and Christiansen, 2002) and the Netherlands have been among the donors most committed to working in partnership, and yet the reality of their practices has yet to catch up with their rhetoric.

‘Partnerships’ are one of the ten main policy priorities of the Dutch government. The Dutch Directorate General for International Cooperation in 2003 thus emphasised that:

‘Partnerships will be sought with citizens, private enterprises, knowledge and research institutes, civil society organisations and government authorities. Substance and harmonisation are the key words, with respect for each partner’s responsibilities and close monitoring of quality, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. More scholarships, exchanges and placements will encourage young people to become more involved in development cooperation. New initiatives will be developed to promote cooperation with the private sector, with a view to public-private partnerships’ (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, p.4).

They go on to emphasise that partnership is ‘an attitude, a working method and a means’ (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, p.8) and that it is closely related to the notion of ‘connected citizenship’. There is much to be praised in their approach and openness, but it is pertinent to note that despite the importance they attribute to partnerships they admit that ‘the implications, such as the responsibilities and roles assumed within the various partnerships and the forms they take, will be worked out in more detail over the coming months’ (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, p.8). A policy has been put in place, in line with general DAC approaches to ‘good development practice’, without its full implications being sufficiently thought through.

This is apparent in the more detailed account that the Dutch government provides of the three kinds of partnerships in which it intends to be involved: bilateral partnerships, international partnerships and partnerships at home. The paragraphs on bilateral partnership (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, pp.9-10) are particularly salient. Nowhere do they suggest that the Dutch will explicitly seek to listen to, or understand, the interests and wishes of their so-called bilateral ‘partners’. Instead, the rhetoric is based almost entirely on what the Dutch will do and will require, focusing almost exclusively on the need to ensure that partner countries have ‘good governance’. The rhetoric is that partnership is to be based on a complementarity of interests, and yet the text focuses almost

exclusively on what partner countries must do if they wish to be recipients of Dutch aid, including statements such as:

‘the Netherlands will be asking its partner countries to focus on their broad development agendas, including those elements linked to sustainable development’ (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, p.9)

‘In developing countries or countries in transition, weak governance is by definition an obstacle to effective poverty reduction ... if partnerships are to be effective, countries must at least show willing to pursue good governance, and combine their good intentions with measures to bring about improvement’ (Ministerie von Buitenlandse Zaken, 2003, p.9)

The UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) has also increasingly adopted a rhetoric of partnership in its dealings with African countries, in particular seeking to sign formal partnership agreements through which development assistance can be disbursed. It has nevertheless been quite cautious in the way in which it has expressed these partnerships in its official documentation, and by 2004 formal Country Memoranda of Understanding had only been signed with Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone (DFID, 2004). In summarising its country level partnerships, DFID (2004, p.119) has emphasised that it

‘continues to work hard at the country level to develop partnerships with governments which give practical effect to the commitments made at the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey in 2002 and in the Rome Declaration of the DAC High Level Forum of 2003. Our country partnerships are based on a number of principles.

- Transparent commitments from each party, with partners able to hold each other to account for progress;
- Country ownership of the development process where governments articulate clear priorities, often through Poverty Reduction Strategies, linked to budgets;

- Government leadership of more co-ordinated donors, including by setting out preferences for aid;
- Commitment from donors to longer-term engagement, providing more predictable support that is clearly aligned to country priorities;
- Movement towards a single framework for assessing country performance’.

Although the meaning of some of these principles, notably the third, is opaque, their emphasis on reciprocity undoubtedly represents recognition by DFID of the need for relationships between recipient and donor countries to be placed on a more equal footing. Nevertheless, equally clear is DFID’s view that this can best be achieved through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process in the context of budget support mechanisms, both of which have been the subject of recent critiques (see Unwin, 2004a). Furthermore, in a 2005 policy paper on partnership, DFID (2005) tends to re-interpret partnership primarily through the notion of three types of conditionality: fiduciary conditionality, policy conditionality and process conditionality. DFID’s earlier statements on partnership have now been refined to a focus on three shared objectives:

‘We believe that an effective aid partnership is based on a shared commitment to three objectives:

- a) poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals;
- b) respecting human rights and other international obligations;
and
- c) strengthening financial management and accountability, which reduces the risk of funds being misused through weak administration or corruption’ (DFID, 2005, p.8).

DFID (2005, p.10) then succinctly comments that:

‘In its aid relationships, the UK will be guided by five principles:

- developing country ownership;
- participatory and evidence-based policy making;
- predictability;

- harmonisation; and
- transparency and accountability’.

Such principles neatly encapsulate many of the earlier DAC deliberations, and are indeed generally desirable objectives, reflecting as they do a considerable shift in rhetoric towards the real interests of the governments of poor countries. However, it is salient to note that while this DFID document highlights conditions under which it will still consider reducing or interrupting aid (Section 1.7, DFID, 2005, p.3), it completely fails to consider the conditions under which so-called ‘partner countries’ might also seek to refuse to accept such aid; the partnership still remains one-sided. Moreover, this expression of DFID’s views on partnership represents an entirely different discourse to that associated with the delivery by multi-stakeholder partnerships of practical activities on the ground in poor countries; it is merely a logical outcome of its concerns with efficient delivery of budget support mechanisms.

Any problems with the theoretical conceptualisation of partnerships as expressed in official publications, are vastly magnified when staff from donor organisations seek to implement such policies on the ground in Africa. Throughout many donor organisations, there remains an entrenched institutional belief that they know best how to implement ‘beneficial’ development practices, and it will take five to ten years for this to change, even if there is actually a desire by senior management to achieve this. Anyone working with African governments for any length of time will be able to cite numerous examples of enthusiastic, and often highly committed, advisers from bilateral and multilateral donors simply telling African Ministers and government officials what they ‘must’ do if they wish to receive donor funding. Examples where such ‘advisers’ encourage African officials to identify their own appropriate solutions and then seek to devise mechanisms through which such aspirations can be funded remain rare indeed.

Moreover, there is little evidence in the internal training programmes of most donor organisations that they are serious about partnership. Although such information is difficult to come by, initial enquiries of donor human resources departments have not yet revealed any formal training programmes for their staff concerning partnership policies and practices. Indeed, their staff are rarely if ever trained in partnership practice, and little guidance is given to them on how to implement real partnership activities. While it is difficult to identify all donor

practices in this area, correspondence with several major donors in 2004 indicated that none of them had implemented such training programmes, although one donor indicated that it was aware that several institutes did indeed provide such training. The UK's Department for International Development also reported in 2005 that it 'will produce operational guidelines for DFID staff' about its partnership procedures (DFID, 2005, p.19). If donors are serious about working in partnership with African people, there is a strong argument that their staff should be rigorously trained in the meaning and practice of partnership, and that African people should be involved in delivering such training.

On a more positive note, it is equally clear that many African officials are fully aware of the reality of partnership rhetorics, and seek to manipulate such discussions to their own advantages. Whilst such manipulation may not always be in the interests of the poor and marginalised in their own countries and communities, the undoubted recognition of existing power relationships by African officials and the ways in which donor resources can be subverted for other purposes, at least gives rise to the hope that the balance of power may indeed be shifting more extensively than might at first sight appear.

2.3 Tri-sector partnerships

The second main way in which the term 'partnership' has recently been used in the practice of 'development' has been in terms of partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society organisations. These are increasingly being referred to as tri-sector partnerships (see for example Warner and Sullivan, 2004). As part of the neo-liberal development agenda, alongside formal partnerships between donor and recipient governments, 'developing' countries are now being expected to ensure that the private sector and civil society organisations are more closely involved in the development process (see also Commission for Africa, 2005). There are at least four main positive reasons for encouraging the private sector and civil society to be involved in such arrangements:

- they have much experience in actually delivering changes that can benefit poor people;

- they have resources over and above those that can be made available through bilateral aid;
- they are crucial in delivering the twin pillars of economic growth and democracy that underlie the dominant global consensus on eliminating poverty; and
- they are important in helping to ensure the sustainability of ‘development’ initiatives.

The involvement of the private sector in development initiatives has been widely criticised by those opposed to the neo-liberal research agenda (Escobar, 1995; Slater and Bell, 2002; Unwin, 2004a). At their extreme, such arguments assert that the accumulation of profit by the private sector requires the existence of poverty (see Unwin, 1994), and therefore that the interests of the private sector can never be compatible with the principles of poverty elimination. From a Marxist perspective, global capital requires a pool of cheap labour for the accumulation of profit by the owners of the means of production. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s nevertheless precipitated a radical rethink of such critical perspectives, and the subsequent emergence of Third Way politics (see Giddens, 1998, 2000) has underlain much of the rhetoric and practice of private sector partnership in development. Central to the Third Way vision is the creation of new partnerships between states and the private sector.

The involvement of civil society organisations in development practice has, in contrast, generally been seen in a much more positive light, particularly through its emphasis on popular participation (Clark, 1995), on bottom-up initiatives, on the practical engagement of relevant stakeholders, and for its concern with governance agendas (Hyden, Okoth-Ogendo and Olowu, 1999). Nevertheless, the incorporation of certain civil society organisations into the global ‘partnership agenda’ has not been without its critics, and very real challenges face ‘Southern’ civil society organisations in getting their ideas and agendas implemented (see Mawdsley, Townsend, Porter and Oakley, 2002; Mercer, 2003).

In this context, it is important to emphasise two kinds of partnership engagement with civil society organisations in the ‘development process’. On the one hand are the formal partnerships through which donors provide funding in

support of international civil society organisations, typical of which are DFID's Partnership Programme Agreements with organisations such as Christian Aid, Save the Children and Voluntary Services Overseas (DFID, 2004). On the other hand is the requirement that the donor community is placing on governments of 'poor countries' to involve civil society organisations as partners in their internal development process, through engagement in activities such as the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) process. One result of this has been an increasing tension between international and local civil society organisations. This has been particularly well documented by Mercer (2003) in her perceptive study of the changing role of NGOs in Tanzania. As she comments, 'With the shift towards the model of partnership in aid relations, the position of international NGOs has become more ambiguous. While they may claim allegiance with other actors in "civil society", and purport to represent the interests of the poor, they often choose to exercise their agency in ways distinct from local NGOs, aligning themselves with the interests of donors and IFIs' (Mercer, 2003, p.755). Her conclusions are worth citing at length, for their wider relevance across much of Africa:

'The poverty of partnership as experienced by Tanzania's elite NGOs during the formulation of the PRSP and the CG [Consultative Group] reveals the contradictions inherent in the idea of development partnerships. Donors and international NGOs have cherry-picked a handful off elite NGOs which become further professionalized and disciplined in the process of policy reform, while the majority of NGOs are excluded due to their perceived "weakness". Those NGOs which deviate from the main script also find themselves sidelined. They are unable to act as equal partners in a governance structure in which power relations are skewed towards an international elite of development professional spread across government, donors, IFIs and international NGOs. These actors are not interested in what Tanzanian civil society has to say if it does not chime with their overall view of development' (Mercer, 2003, p.759).

One of the main catalysts for implementing partnerships between government, business and civil society was the preparatory conference held in Bali in 2002 as input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This drew up ten main principles (Table 3) (p. 80), the so-called Bali Principles, which have subsequently

generated more than 290 partnerships for sustainable development (<http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/search/browse.do> - accessed 2nd September 2004). Two recent studies, by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP, 2003) and by Warner and Sullivan (2004) have sought to draw conclusions about the efficacy of such partnerships, and their findings provide a valuable framework for understanding the ways in which they operate.

2.3.1 Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs): the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP)

The Global Knowledge Partnership was founded in 1997, and towards the end of 2004 comprised 93 members from 40 countries (www.globalknowledge.org accessed 2nd September 2004). As part of its contribution to the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first phase of which was held in Geneva in December 2003 (<http://www.itu.int/wsisp/>), it commissioned a report on the role of what it referred to as multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) and their contribution to development (GKP, 2003). This concluded that ‘The concept of MSP as an instrument for achieving development goals is sound, particularly when stakeholders with unique complementary strengths or core competencies add value to development efforts and pool their resources and assets in solving problems. But while many laud the virtues of MSPs, most are struggling to make them work’ (GKP, 2003, p.iii).

Although referred to as multi-stakeholder partnerships, the GKP (2003, p.7) report was effectively only referring to strategic alliances between three sectors: business, government and civil society. It thus defines Multi-stakeholder ICT partnerships as being ‘alliances between parties drawn from government, business and civil society that strategically aggregate the resources and competencies of each to resolve the key challenges of ICT as an enabler of sustainable development, and which are founded on principles of shared risk, costs and mutual benefit’ (GKP, 2003, p.13). Drawing on a range of experiences, the GKP report highlighted seven main principles for their successful implementation in the field of ICT (see Table 4) (p. 83). These focus largely on the mechanisms necessary to ensure that partnerships can operate effectively internally, but the principles pay negligible attention to mechanisms whereby poor and marginalised communities

can indeed be assured to benefit from such partnerships. The principles have been developed primarily in terms of the interests of the private sector, government and civil society, and it is disturbing that so little attention is actually paid to their ‘development’ implications. As well as focusing on these key principles, though, the GKP (2003, pp.21-25) also draws on its experience to highlight three important stages in the partnering process: partnership exploration, partnership building, and partnership maintenance. As the report summarises, ‘Bringing these strands together, effective partnerships have to manage cultural differences, build trust and satisfy underlying interests’ (GKP, 2003, p.22). The ways in which these principles can be seen to have applied across the fields of regulatory frameworks, risk management, business models, technology delivery customisation, livelihood-critical information and ICTs for social capital, are then illustrated through six case studies of the GKP itself, the e-Asean Forum, the Peru Telecoms Investment Fund, Grameen Village Pay Phones in Bangladesh, Ericsson Response and Dikahotole Digital Village in South Africa. Based on these case studies, three key lessons are drawn: the need for a strategic approach to developing design parameters for such partnerships; the importance of business partners understanding the commercial case for entering the partnership; and recognition by the public sector that subsidies or concessional rates may be needed if poor communities in remote areas are to be reached.

2.3.2 The National Resources Cluster of Business Partners for Development

One of the most comprehensive studies of partnership practice that has emerged in the wake of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 has been Warner and Sullivan’s (2004) substantial account of experiences gained while working for the Secretariat of the Natural Resources Cluster (NRC) of the Business Partners for Development programme which ran between 1998 and 2002, whose aim was ‘to enhance the role of oil, gas and mining corporations in international development’ (Warner and Sullivan, 2004, p.9). At the heart of their approach is that ‘each sector in society has core competences and resources that, if appropriately arranged, are complementary to one another’: governments thus provide strategic co-ordination, give access to budgets and play a role as broker; oil, gas and mining companies can provide employment, share

knowledge of procurement, give access to international practices and build local infrastructure; and civil society organisations have local knowledge, the capacity to mobilise community participation and can offer independent monitoring (Sullivan and Warner, 2004, p.19).

In essence, their partnerships framework is based on the creation of activities that reflect the interaction between partnership themes and outcomes. Such tri-sector activities can operate at different levels of society (from local, through regional, to policy) and at different operational phases of projects (from exploration to exit). The key partners in their framework are government (regulators, public service departments and international development agencies), business (corporations and financial institutions), and civil society (including community groups, NGOs and small-scale businesses). Within the partnership theme, they also differentiate between structure (objectives, tasks/workplan, skills/resources, and responsibilities) and management (exploration, building, maintenance and evaluation). Their framework envisages three different sets of outcomes: for business (risk mitigation for business unit, social licence to operate, enhancement of corporate reputation), for governance (increased legitimacy of public office, aligned social policy, more visible revenue generation), and for development (an enabling development context, and higher quality and more-sustainable social investment) (Warner, 2004, p.25).

It is not possible to do full justice to the much greater detail that Warner and Sullivan (2004) adduce in this important work, but three points can immediately be noted about this framework. First, the focus is primarily on the role of the private sector, and particularly on the ways in which oil, gas and mining corporations can contribute to development. It is salient to note, for example, that their framework does not include a section on 'outputs for poor people'. It thus adopts primarily a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach to development practice. Second, as in most attempts at systematisation, some of their categories are problematic. Thus, international development agencies and recipient governments are lumped together as 'government', whereas in reality their interests and roles are very different, and can frequently be in conflict. Third, whilst their work indeed represents a very welcome move away from a rather simplistic view of public-private partnership, its attempt to force a tri-sector partnership approach (government, business and civil society), as with the GKP approach, is itself too

constraining, and tends to omit certain critical groups, such as universities and research institutes from its analysis.

Despite such problems with their overall framework, the case studies that they present provide valuable insights into the ways in which certain kinds of partnerships have been initiated and implemented, and their conclusions are worth quoting at length. Above all, the evidence they draw upon suggests that partnerships can ‘under the right conditions, yield better results for communities and for business than alternative approaches to community development’ (Sullivan and Warner, 2004, p.262). Nevertheless, importantly they go on to comment that ‘partnering is not a panacea, and there may be situations where other approaches to community development are preferred’, particularly in conflict zones (Sullivan and Warner, 2004, p.262). They also emphasise the important point that ‘It may also be that the time and cost associated with negotiating effective partnerships may outweigh the expected benefits’ and therefore that ‘before entering into a partnership, it is critical that all potential partners carefully consider the costs and benefits of partnering against the other approaches to community development that are available’ (Sullivan and Warner, 2004, p.263).

Multi-stakeholder partnerships in Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)

Just as the Johannesburg summit of 2002 spawned a series of partnership initiatives for sustainable development, so too have the processes associated with the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, <http://www.itu.int/ws/> accessed 15th July 2005) led to an explosion of interest in partnerships that use ICT for development. As well as overviews of partnership practice produced by bodies such as the UN ICT Task Force (2003) and the work of the GKP (2003) already summarised above, many private sector companies have sought to work in partnership with governments and civil society organisations to deliver broadly ‘development’ oriented outputs. This section provides an overview of some of the best known IC4D partnerships, focusing particularly on some of the work in which UNESCO has been involved, and then provides a brief overview of the activities in which the Imfundo partnership team were engaged between 2001 and 2004. These provide the background against which the discussion of a framework for ICT4D partnerships is developed in the next main section.

3.1 ICT4D partnerships

There are very many different kinds of ICT4D initiatives that have used the term partnership to refer to the ways in which they operate, but very few of them have actively sought to create a formal partnership model. In most instances, such partnerships have been based on a coalescence of interests, often led by the private sector. Indeed, the dominant organisational mode for such initiatives has been

through the simple creation of a business plan or letters of intent, that have then been signed off by the relevant management tier of the ‘partner’ organisations involved. However, increasingly, private sector organisations have sought to work with governments and international organisations in delivering shared strategic objectives. This section of the paper seeks to highlight some of the wide diversity of such initiatives that have been launched within the last five years, before focusing more specifically on some of the ‘partnership’ work in which UNESCO has recently been involved in the field of ICT4D.

3.1.1 The Jordan Education Initiative

One of the best known ICT4D partnerships is the World Economic Forum’s Jordan Education Initiative, which has some 44 partners led primarily by Cisco Systems and Computer Associates (<http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/Jordan+Education+Initiative%5CPartners> - accessed 20th April 2005; http://www.mckinsey.com/clientservice/nonprofit/ourwork/pdf/20050615_Jordan_Education_Initiative.pdf - accessed 8th September 2005). This initiative has identified ten keys to success (Table 5) (p. 85). These factors, though, concentrate primarily on the characteristics of the project rather than the partnerships. In reviewing the first 20 months of this initiative, McKinsey & Company (2005, p.2) have provided a useful and succinct summary of the case for public-private partnerships in economic and social development: ‘They can bring an injection of extra resources into the public sector. Equally important, the private sector can contribute skills (e.g., innovation, project management, performance measurement, technical expertise) that will help the public sector in tackling critical issues. The private sector can benefit from a strengthened position and reputation within society, a long term “return” on social investment in the form of a more prosperous economy, and the opportunity to innovate and test new products and services’. This quotation is important, since it emphasises the core principle that the private sector can both contribute and benefit from such partnerships, but it also emphasises once again a focus on purely the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ sectors, thus ignoring the important contributions that civil society and other types of organisation can contribute.

In exploring the partnership model of the Jordan Education Initiative, McKinsey & Company (2005) note that the structure is highly flexible, with there

being a range of different working structures. In essence, although they write about a partnership model, they never fully define it, and their review concentrates primarily on what the initiative has achieved, rather than discussing the lessons learnt about partnership. The initiative has in effect been led by a Program Management Office (PMO), and it is this that has co-ordinated partner contributions to the work. McKinsey and Company (2005) note here that although the PMO has been resourced as a ‘light’ structure, it has in effect had to play a ‘heavy’ role in execution. As they emphasise, ‘Under a “light” PMO scenario, there is an obligation on the partners to drive program execution and take responsibility for results. With a “heavy” coordinating mechanism, the partners participate in execution but the PMO has greater responsibility for fixing problems and achieving results’ (McKinsey & Company, 2005, p.33).

Significantly, the report’s final chapter on lessons learned does not include a section specifically on partnership practices and structures, but instead focuses on country conditions, vision/objectives, partner inputs (primarily focusing on the uses to which the private sector’s \$22 million financial inputs have been put), program activities, co-ordinating mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation, and governance (noting the threefold governance mechanisms adopted, including a stakeholder committee, a steering group, and an executive steering committee). One of the report’s most interesting observations is that ‘Somewhat surprisingly, foundations and other NGOs have not been a major contributor to the JEI’ (McKinsey & Company, 2005, p.25). However, given that it was set up primarily as a public-private partnership, this should not actually be particularly surprising. As the final parts of this paper illustrate, the involvement of civil society organisations, academic institutions and global entities must be planned coherently and in a structured way from the beginning if they are to be successfully incorporated into multi-sector partnerships.

3.1.2 The UN ICT Task Force and the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative

A second partnership based initiative has been the work of the UN ICT Task Force (<http://www.unicttaskforce.org> - accessed 5th February 2005), established in 2001 in response to the growth in the so-called digital divide. This largely took over the earlier remit of the G8’s Digital Opportunities Task Force (DOT Force)

which had been created following the G8's 2000 summit in Okinawa (see <http://e-com.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inecic-ceac.nsf/en/gv00133e.html> - accessed 20th April 2005).

At the heart of both of these Task Forces was a belief that public-private partnerships have a significant role to play in enabling ICTs to benefit the poor and the marginalised (see also Gilhooly, 2005). As José Maria Figueres-Olsen (UN ICT Task Force, 2003, p.7) has argued 'There is no doubt that the private sector could be a great asset to ICT initiatives in developing countries', and that 'If public-private partnerships are built on complementarities between the profit motive of the private sector and human development goals, we can achieve sustainable results and the harmonious development of a global networked society'. In its second annual report, the UN ICT Task Force (2004, p.7) thus emphasised once again that 'Partnerships, and the synergies they can produce, are at the core of the Task Force's mandate', and drew attention to the networking, facilitating and mobilization activities in which it had been involved. However, the Task Force has, perhaps deliberately, been rather vague about precisely what it means by partnerships. Even one of its most substantial products, the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI), tends to adopt a very broad concept of partnership, describing its 'Structured Partnerships' as follows:

'Building focused partnerships is crucial to sustainable success and to the success of GeSCI.

GeSCI invites collaboration with skilled partners who share a vision for the potential of ICT development and bring insight, knowledge, and support to advancing ICT in education and communities initiatives. In particular, GeSCI is interested in partnerships that offer complementary strengths and fresh approaches to addressing the immense challenges facing education, literacy and community development worldwide.

Existing GeSCI partners consist of a broad range of key stakeholders in the donor, private, multilateral and non-profit sectors' (<http://www.gesci.org/gesci/publisher/index.jsp?pID=93&nID=96> accessed 20th April 2005).

GeSCI's partnership structure thus involves three main groups: *Local and governmental partners*, including government ministries, NGOs, private companies and academic institutions; *Growth partners* including private companies, philanthropic organisations, governments, and individuals; and *Knowledge partners* namely experts from all sectors, including NGOs and academia. This is a very different kind of structure from many previous partnership frameworks based largely on 'sectors', and instead seems to be derived from a pragmatic approach involving those on the ground delivering the activities (the local partners), those providing funding (the growth partners), and those providing expertise and knowledge (the knowledge partners).

Another of the ICT Task Force's recent initiatives has been the proposal for a Global Alliance for ICT and Development (see <http://www.unicttaskforce.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1493> - accessed 20th April 2005), the design and consultation process for which is ongoing in the run-up to the second phase of WSIS in Tunis in November 2005. Further discussion of this proposal took place prior to the Eighth UN ICT Task Force meeting in Dublin in April 2005, and was followed by a Global Forum, convened with GeSCI, considering a multi-stakeholder approach to harnessing the potential of ICTs for education. All of these initiatives once again address important aspects of partnership, but all too often fail to ground them in a sufficiently rigorous analytical framework. Against this background, the remainder of this paper seeks to provide some insights about partnerships building on an attempt by the UK government to create partnerships to deliver ICT-based initiatives for education in Africa (for a wider account, see also Unwin, 2004b).

3.1.3 NEPAD's e-Africa Commission and the Information Society Partnership for Africa's Development (ISPAD)

Although lacking much of the financial wherewithal to deliver many of its aspirations, NEPAD's e-Africa Commission has played a significant role in catalysing support for ICT4D initiatives across the continent (http://www.eafrica-commission.org/About_1-Origin.html - accessed 1st September 2005). In 2003 the Commission proposed six major initiatives to the NEPAD Heads of State Implementation Committee, focusing both on the establishment of an adequate infrastructure and ensuring that the African population has sufficient ICT skills.

One of the Commission's top priorities has been its e-Schools initiative, designed to provide computers, connect schools to the Internet, and train teachers in their use. Central to this initiative has been NEPAD's e-schools demonstration projects, in which six schools in each of up to 20 countries will be equipped with the package (<http://www.nepad.org/2005/news/wmview.php?ArtID=36> - accessed 8th September 2005). In order to fund and deliver these demonstration projects, NEPAD created a partnership network known as the Information Society Partnership for Africa's Development (ISPAD), in which HP, Microsoft, INMARST, Oracle and Cisco Systems were the initial lead private sector partners (see also SAP's viewpoint in 2004 at <http://www.sapinfo.net/index.php4?ACTION=noiframe&url=http://www.sapinfo.net/public/en/print.php4/article/Article-1042540862af2f01bb/en> - accessed 8th September 2005; IMARSAT later withdrew and is being replaced by Advanced Micro Devices as a consortium lead). Each consortium has between 10 and 15 partners, and is responsible for deploying and operating an appropriate education and health ICT solution for approximately 20 schools at their own cost.

In June 2005, Ghana was the first country to sign the NEPAD e-Schools memorandum of understanding which articulates a common approach for co-operation between NEPAD, the Government of Ghana and Oracle, the lead partner (http://www.eafricacommission.org/ghana_eafrica_mou.html - accessed 8th September 2005). Oracle is reported to be providing most of the funding for this, with other partners in their consortium being Sentech, Mecer, Fujitsu-Siemens, Xerox, Multichioce Africa, Learnthings, CompuTainer, Cambridge-Hitachi and Intel. The package of resources will include connectivity, ICT equipment, software and a digital content solution, as well as a teacher and community development programme. By September 2005 five other Memorandums of Understanding had been signed, initiating work in Senegal (lead Microsoft), Uganda (lead HP, http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/back/balancing-act_264.html - accessed 8th September 2005), Lesotho (Oracle Consortium), Kenya (Microsoft and Oracle) and Rwanda (Cisco and Microsoft). The project as a whole will be evaluated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), using a context, input, process and product model, the findings from which will then be used to help formulate the roll out more widely across Africa.

It is too early to judge the impact that NEPAD's ISPAD model will have in delivering its objectives, and NEPAD has not yet publicised the details of its

partnership structure particularly widely. Nevertheless, in brief this model involves a hierarchy of responsibility, with the e-Schools Demo Office in the e-Africa Commission providing the base for coordination, the e-Schools Coordinating Body (comprising nominated representatives from participating governments) approving the strategies and workplans, and national implementing teams being responsible for in-country delivery. Each ISPAD consortium appoints a relationship manager, and they both represent the consortium and act as the interface with other key partners (<http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=13128> - accessed 8th September 2005).

3.1.4 The Digital Partnership

Another of the ICT initiatives in Africa that has used the term ‘partnership’ particularly visibly has been the Digital Partnership, established by the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), a UK based international charity (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/about_model.htm - accessed 5th September 2005). Their core role has been to try to provide ‘a platform for a wide range of partners to contribute resources, technology (pre-used PCs and equipment), training programmes and technology assistance’ (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/about_model.htm - accessed 5th September 2005).

Unlike some other initiatives, they have deliberately sought to create tri-sector partnerships that involve not only the government and the private sector, but also the non-profit sector. However, their so-called ‘Breakthrough Model’, actually says very little about partnership mechanisms. The Digital Partnership’s description of their partnership model thus covers nine features designed to achieve affordability, integration, scale and sustainability: lowest possible cost access to hardware; bulk provision through linking with technology disposition programmes of major corporations; low cost global logistic chain; localised low-cost refurbishment; integration in a holistic model; development agents competent to roll out locally owned programmes; lowest cost and scalable capacity building and training; support for infrastructure and end of life disposal through local partners; and release of what they call a ‘network effect’ (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/about_model.htm - accessed 5th September 2005).

It is remarkable that this official account mentions almost nothing about the actual partnership principles and mechanisms involved. Its focus is thus more on the implementation of a particular model of delivering refurbished computers, than it is on partnership (for other refurbishment programmes see for example, Computer Aid <http://www.computer-aid.org/home.htm> - accessed 8th September 2005; and Digital Links International <http://www.digital-links.org/> - accessed 8th September 2005). Nevertheless, its web-site records that the Digital Partnership has some 23 corporate partners (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/partners_corporate.htm - accessed 8th September 2005), 5 community partners (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/partners_community.htm - accessed 8th September 2005), and two government partners, the Department of Communications and the Department of Education in South Africa (http://www.digitalpartnership.org/partners_gov.htm - accessed 8th September 2005).

Two of the early practical initiatives in which the Digital Partnership was involved were (1) the programme set up in 2003 with Microsoft, Comparex Africa, Anglo Platinum, and Telkom Foundation to equip three Rustenburg schools with technology (<http://www.microsoft.com/southafrica/community/digital.htm> - accessed 8th September 2005); and (2) the e-learning centre in Soweto set up in 2002 with Vodacom (http://www.vodafone.com/article_with_thumbnail/0,3038,OPCO%253D40002%2526CATEGORY_ID%253D209%2526MT_ID%253Dpr%2526LANGUAGE_ID%253D0%2526CONTENT_ID%253D70142,00.html - accessed 6th September 2005). An interesting feature of such initiatives, though, is that while it is easy to access information about their high profile launches, it is very much more difficult to find out anything about their long term effects. Far too rarely are comprehensive monitoring and evaluation structures put in place when such initiatives are launched, and this is an observation that applies very much more widely than just in the case of these two examples. The Digital Partnership, however, also agreed in 2003 to collaborate with UNESCO in the development of global standards for refurbishment and deployment (<http://www.digitalpartnership.org/news.php?id=19> - accessed 8th September 2005).

3.1.5 Other examples of ICT4D partnerships

There are numerous other examples across the world of ICT4D partnerships. Indeed a brief Internet search using Google provides some 123 'results' for

the phrase ‘ICT4D partnership’ (accessed 8th September 2005). This serves to emphasise how extensive the notion of partnership is in this particular arena. Typical of such acclaim has been the emphasis that the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh placed in April 2005 on the use of multi-sector partnerships in rural development: ‘Stressing the need for a multi-stakeholder approach for rural development, the Prime Minister further said “The task of managing agriculture in the future cannot be adequately addressed by the public sector alone, but will require the combined strengths of a multi-agency system in which the private corporate sector, farmers’ organisations, co-operatives, NGOs, para-professionals, small agri-business, self-help groups, input dealers and suppliers, media and information technology can reach contribute according to its own strengths and capabilities”’ (<http://www.digitalopportunity.org/article/view/109210/1/> - accessed 6th September 2005).

Another interesting use of the word partnership has been in the Beijing declaration on ASEAN-China ICT Cooperative Partnership for Common Development, agreed on 12th May 2005 (<http://www.aseansec.org/17452.htm> - accessed 5th September 2005). This recognises the important contribution that ICT can make to ‘development’, and commits China and the ASEAN countries to ‘establish an ICT cooperative partnership for common development’. This partnership is intended to be wide-ranging, and will focus on cooperation in the fields of infrastructure development, universal service, human capacity building, network and information security, trade and investment facilitation, and intergovernmental dialogues and exchanges. However, once again, very little is actually said about what this notion of partnership actually means, nor about how it will be implemented in practice.

At a global scale the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) initiated a somewhat similar Partnership on Information and Communication Technologies in 2004. The aim of this partnership is ‘to build concrete strategies to improve access to and use of ICT applications to enhance the economic competitiveness of developing countries’, (http://www.unctadxi.org/templates/Press___901.aspx - accessed 4th September 2005) focusing on measuring the information society, e-tourism, ICT policies, e-finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, and free and open-source software.

Different elements of the programme will involve different groups of partners. Thus, partners in the ICT measuring field include the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNCTAD, UNESCO, the United Nations Regional Commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA), the World Bank and the UN ICT Task Force. In the field of e-tourism, UNCTAD is working with the World Tourism Organisation (see <http://www.etourism.unctad.org> - accessed 8th September 2005), and on ICT policies they are collaborating with ePol-Net, with partners including the Governments of Ireland, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, and the UK, as well as international bodies such as ECA, ITU, UNDP, OECD the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) and Accenture.

As with so many other initiatives, though, the partnership arrangements remain vaguely defined. Thus, for the ICT indicators programme, the project document states simply that 'Equality among partners is one of the key guiding principles of this partnership. Each of the partners has its own work programme on ICT statistics, based on the organization's mandate and reflecting its specific area of competence. This partnership brings all of the ongoing activities together to achieve common results and proposes future activities to advance the development, production and availability of ICT indicators and statistics globally, while avoiding duplication of effort' (UNCTAD, 2004, p.4). This was initiated through letters of intent between lead partners, with formal memoranda of understanding to be signed subsequently. The project document itself then merely provides a brief indication of some of the responsibilities and contributions that partners were to deliver. Significantly, under the final section on monitoring and evaluation the report states that 'Regular (biannual) progress reports will be prepared. (to be determined)' (UNCTAD, 2004, p.11).

A further extremely ambitious partnership initiative is "Mission 2007: every village a knowledge centre" (<http://www.mission2007.org/>) - accessed 5th September 2005), inspired in large part by the work of the MS Swaminathan Foundation (<http://www.mssrf.org/> - accessed 8th September 2005). This intends to create village knowledge centres across India so that there will be a self-propelling, self-replicating and self-sustaining model of ICT for rural regeneration and prosperity. It intends to mobilise the power of partnership (<http://www.mission2007.org/partners/> - accessed 8th September 2005) through informal structures at the national, state, district and local levels which will create a 'platform for symbiotic

partnership at each level'. Although some 174 members are already listed on their Partners' Directory, the precise mechanisms through which these partnerships will operate remain to be developed in a formal and structured manner.

3.2 UNESCO'S commitment to partnerships in ICT4D

For many years, UNESCO has been a leading international advocate of the value of partnerships. One of the reasons for this has been the need for UNESCO to attract funding for initiatives that its staff believe are of importance, and this has meant that the organisation has built up considerable expertise in working together with other organisations. Within the field of ICT4D there have been very many initiatives in which UNESCO has worked together with partners to deliver particular initiatives, ranging from 'networking rural women and knowledge' to supporting the use of 'ICTs for visually impaired in Ethiopia' and a 'low cost ICT literacy programme in Brazil'. It has also supported an extensive programme of publications. It is therefore difficult to generalise about the overall character of its partnerships, which differ enormously in scale, content and purpose.

Nevertheless, in the field of ICT, UNESCO places particular emphasis on co-operating with private sector partners, including 'small and medium enterprises (SMEs), multinational, foundations, professional, administrative or economic association, philanthropist organisations and individuals' (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17587&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html - accessed 8th September 2005). The usual mechanism for delivering these partnerships is through the creation of joint ventures, and the policy framework in which these are developed derives from the guidelines adopted by the United Nations in 2000. 'This is underpinned by the Global Compact whose nine universal principles provide a framework of standards for the business world and facilitates the integration of social values into the processes linked to the production of commercial goods and services. These partnerships serve to illustrate the close link between sustainable development and the creation of wealth through commercial activity' (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17587&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html - accessed 8th September 2005).

Among the highest profile partnerships UNESCO has signed in the field of ICT has been that with Microsoft signed on the 17th November 2004. Although UNESCO explicitly states that this agreement is not mutually exclusive of other arrangements, this did not stop many in the Free and Open Source Software movement from severely criticizing the initiative on the grounds that it could tend to favour proprietary software in future UNESCO programmes and initiatives. Significantly, Bill Gates chose specifically to comment that the emphasis of the partnership was above all on digital inclusion, and that it was not simply designed to boost the company's market share (http://www.businessindevelopment.nl/article-1012.1938.html&q_type=news&q_max=8 - 4th September 2005). The text agreement itself is also interesting because of its breadth (covering eight main areas of co-operation), and the fact that it does not define the partnership's mechanisms involved in any real detail. In essence, the agreement focuses on the institutional aspects of the partnership, details of current projects and initiatives, a structure for future cooperation and conditions that will govern projects undertaken by both partners (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/file_download.php/b7f2222250ce9411b5420c2b296e28adUNESCO+MS+Agreement.pdf - accessed 8th September 2005). Its core emphasis is on the way in which both organizations will work together on specific projects, while also suggesting avenues where they might cooperate in the future.

This project focus is typical of UNESCO's partnership agreements, and can be replicated at lesser scales by many other examples. Thus, in Mali in June 2005, UNESCO, together with the Open Knowledge Network/Jamana Multimedia Cooperative, and local communities have begun to work together in partnership to use ethnographic action research to empower women and young people through the use of ICTs (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19266&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html - accessed 8th September 2005). Likewise, in November 2004 UNESCO signed an agreement with Intel Corporation to work together to develop a model curriculum and syllabus to improve the use of ICT in classrooms across the world, focusing particularly on teacher technology training (http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23462&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html - accessed 8th September 2005). Again, a memorandum of understanding was used to cement the partnership, and under this UNESCO will co-operate with Intel and other stakeholders to develop a syllabus that sets standards of ICT

knowledge and skills, which can then be used to design training content that could be delivered in a diversity of ways by different providers.

Some of UNESCO's most exciting collaborative and partnership activities in the field of ICT in education have been led by their Bangkok office, whose web-site at <http://www.unescobbkk.org/education/ict> (accessed 8th September) provides a wealth of information on the use of ICT in policy, teaching and learning, teacher training, indicators and technology. One of their most recent initiatives has been the Next Generation of Teachers project in the Asia-Pacific Region which is designed to help Teacher Education Institutions to prepare the next generation of teachers to use new technologies effectively (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19535&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html - accessed 8th September 2005). This is being developed in partnership with Microsoft through their Partners in Learning programme, and a range of other organizations are being invited to join the initiative.

3.3 Building on Imfundo: Partnership for ICT in Education

The above examples emphasise the very wide range of ICT4D partnerships, particularly in the field of education, that have emerged in the last five years. However, they have also illustrated that there is little firm agreement on the key criteria necessary for the successful implementation of partnership initiatives, and that very often the term partnership is used simply to refer to the situation where two different organisations are working together on a single project.

In 2000, the UK government had recognised the important contribution that such partnership could make to education in Africa, and the Prime Minister therefore launched an initiative called *Imfundo: Partnership for ICT in Education* (see Unwin 2004b; DFID 2001a, 2001b). In essence, this represented a commitment by the UK government to explore the role of partnerships in delivering ICT-based educational activities in Africa. Based within DFID, a team was charged with undertaking three main activities: developing and implementing a partnership network through the creation of a ResourceBank; developing a knowledge sharing facility, its KnowledgeBank (<http://imfundo.digitalbrain.com/imfundo/>

web/papers/welcomekb/ - accessed 28th April 2005); and in implementing activities in support of the aspirations of African governments and people (see http://imfundo.digitalbrain.com/imfundo/web/activities/activity_home/home.htm?verb=list - accessed 28th April 2005). The remainder of this paper concentrates primarily on the first of these, Imfundo's partnership experiences, to shed light on key issues to be encountered in trying to deliver appropriate and sustainable ICT partnerships in Africa.

Imfundo had in 2000 initially been conceived as a public-private partnership organisation (DFID 2001a, 2001b). Recognising the need for any development focused partnerships to be much broader than this, the team appointed to implement Imfundo early in 2001 immediately broadened the conceptual framework to include not only the private sector, but also civil society organisations, academic institutions, international organisations and other bilateral donors. At Imfundo's heart was therefore a recognition of the value of *multi-dimensional* partnerships in implementing ICT for education initiatives in Africa. To deliver this, it focused on three key elements: a set of ethical guidelines, a benefits framework, and memorandums of understanding with potential partners. All of these elements appeared to the team to be somewhat innovative within DFID's practices at that time.

The ethical guidelines and benefits framework were intended to help identify which organisations would make the most appropriate partners. Despite much rhetoric about ethical policies, it is remarkable how few bilateral agencies across the world actually had formal ethical statements during the 1990s. In shaping their guidelines, Imfundo therefore turned not only to existing general statements about DFID's overall objectives, as laid out in its Annual Reports and White Papers, as well as DFID's internal procurement practices, but also to the work of organisations specifically concerned with ethical business practices such as the Ethical Investment Research Service (<http://www.eiris.org/> - accessed 28th April 2005). The ethical guidelines provided the overall framework within which Imfundo's partnerships were shaped, and they required all partners to agree to a core set of principles as well as to lodge a copy of their business or corporate ethics policy with Imfundo, so that these could then be shared with relevant partners and governments in Africa. One of the interesting features of this approach was that some potential partners did not already have in place their own ethical policies, and members of the Imfundo team were therefore able to provide them

with guidance as to how to go about shaping such policies. Already, at the beginning of such relationships, this indicated the fundamentally reciprocal nature of Imfundo's partnership approach.

Within the context of these ethical guidelines, the Imfundo team then sought to identify the types of partner that would be most appropriate to deliver the various requirements needed for successful ICT for education activities in Africa. As these discussions took place, a benefits framework gradually emerged, whereby the inputs or resources that different types of organisation could contribute were listed, alongside the sorts of benefits that they might gain from being within the partnership. This again seemed to have been a novel approach within DFID, and many of the organisations invited to become partners likewise commented that they too had not previously considered partnerships in quite such a formal and structured manner. The use of this framework nevertheless proved to be immensely helpful in seeking to convince partners to participate in Imfundo's work, and it provided a clear and transparent summary of the anticipated gains that could be expected from partnership.

Once the ethical guidelines and benefits framework were in place, potential partners were invited to contribute resources in principle to Imfundo's ResourceBank through the signing of Memorandums of Understanding. The information contained therein was collated to provide a list of all of the resources that Imfundo's partners were willing to contribute to delivering ICT for education activities in Africa, and this was then shared with DFID country offices and African governments interested in funding and developing such programmes. Once the ResourceBank was in place, Imfundo then sought to work with African stakeholders to identify the most appropriate activities within which these resources could best be utilised. This process therefore also led to the creation of networks of Local Partners in African countries, with and through whom activities were to be implemented. Imfundo thus acted as a kind of broker, bringing together its ResourceBank partners with African governments and agencies, facilitated through DFID colleagues in regional and country offices in Africa. Imfundo, though, did not only act as a broker; it also sought to help both ResourceBank and Local Partners to implement appropriate and sustainable activities that would help poor people make a difference to their lives.

The Local Partners were absolutely fundamental to Imfundo's mode of operation, and were intended to ensure that any activities that were initiated would be as relevant and sustainable as possible. A particular concern of the team was that its work should not merely be a series of 'technology drops' that might have damaging effects on existing ICT initiatives in the places where it was working, but rather that its initiatives would help build local capacity, and train people in the appropriate use of a range of ICTs. The resources and expertise of its ResourceBank partners were intended to be made available to African governments, organisations and educationalists to help them develop their own sustainable solutions (see Unwin, 2004b for more information).

The Imfundo partnership network can therefore be seen as originating in a somewhat top-down and supply-led fashion, initiated as it was by the UK Prime Minister. The team took the view that it was essential to begin by identifying the contributions and resources that its partnerships could offer African governments as well as DFID colleagues across the continent before embarking on any specific activities. It was important to be able to show that Imfundo had something real to offer, over and above fine rhetoric and technical advice. Perhaps rather naively, it was assumed that once the benefits of partnership were understood by colleagues elsewhere in DFID, they would readily be willing to help implement relevant activities that would make a substantial contribution to delivering the Millennium Development Goals related to education in Africa. At the same time as the ResourceBank partnerships were being built up, members of Imfundo nevertheless also visited Africa at the invitation of colleagues in DFID country offices to identify the activities that would be most appropriate for them to engage in. There was thus a very conscious decision to try to combine the demand and supply sides in delivering activities that would indeed be appropriate. These processes led to the exploration of potential activities in some eight African countries.

In hindsight, Imfundo's original aims were perhaps too far removed from DFID's core agendas for it ever to be successful, and in 2004 after the first three years of its existence the core team that had been largely responsible for creating the partnerships and shaping the activities in which it sought to be involved was disbanded. The activities that it had initiated in four African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa) were then taken over by the DFID offices in those countries, and its core role of partnership shaping and brokering was abandoned. At one level this reflects the lack of understanding in DFID about real

partnerships that was discussed earlier in this paper, but it was also a logical consequence of the Department's increasing focus on budget support mechanisms in the early 2000s. At a time when DFID country offices were increasingly trying to deliver their country assistance plans based largely on the implementation of budget support mechanisms, activities such as those being promulgated by Imfundo were all too easily dismissed as being irrelevant 'projects' by DFID staff eager to promulgate the dominant ethos emanating from London.

The short-lived Imfundo experiment nevertheless provided many useful insights into the challenges facing those who seek to implement ICT for education activities in Africa. Many lessons were learnt, and the final section of this paper seeks to combine those experiences with the wider literature on partnerships in ICT already discussed to offer a tentative framework that it is hoped will be of assistance in enabling future initiatives to be more successful. The justification for focusing on Imfundo's experience lies in the words of some of the African respondents who contributed to the output to purpose review of Imfundo conducted in 2003:

- 'Best networkers in the donor community. We like the networking and partnership approach – and they are less geopolitical'
- 'Imfundo has proved more accessible ... and highly knowledgeable regarding the technology and education issues. It has been a learning experience to work with them'
- 'Imfundo is the only member of the international community that has shown any interest in us' (comment from a black start-up company)
- 'They show much more interest in the longer term outcomes, especially in genuine sustainability'
- 'Strategic partnership approach and transparent, participative, networking processes are excellent, as is direct involvement of Imfundo with relevant expertise. Most other donors don't work like this'
- 'Imfundo do NOT appear to be pushing their own agenda, rather guiding the multiple parties involved'

- ‘Although it takes more time and energy in the short term, in the longer term the networking/partnership strategy establishes a platform for much broader future development’
- ‘Imfundo’s emphasis on working with the poorest of the poor communities, and collaborating with black SMMEs is exemplary. It is making a difference already, and could have much greater impact as the networks grow’
- ‘The partnership model was cited as the best example for DFID’s work in general’

While Imfundo by no means got everything right, it is hoped that this publication will enable the experiences it gained in seeking to implement partnerships for the benefit of poor and marginalised communities across Africa to be shared more widely in the international community.

Towards a framework for multi-sector ICT4D partnerships

Table 6 (p. 87) provides an overview of the conceptual framework derived from these experiences. It is based on three overarching principles.

- First, partnerships work most effectively when there is a clear and transparent acknowledgement and understanding of the different interests that the partners have in being involved in a partnership. This can usefully be thought of in terms of the contributions that the partners can make to any particular initiative, and the benefits that they expect to gain from being involved in it.
- Second, as emphasised throughout this paper, it is crucial to recognise the importance of combining both the demand and the supply sides of partnerships. All too often ICT4D initiatives have been supply-led, either by the private sector or international agencies, and the failure sufficiently to understand the constraints and realities of the demand side has been one of the main reasons that such initiatives have often failed.
- Third, we need to move away from the rather simplistic ‘public-private’ or ‘tri-sector’ conceptualisations to recognise that a diversity of types of partner need to be involved if we seek to deliver appropriate and sustainable ICT4D initiatives. It is primarily for this reason that the term ‘multi-sector’ is specifically used here to differentiate the model from ‘multi-stakeholder’ approaches to partnership that can simply include numerous stakeholders from a single sector.

4.1 Partners: demand and supply

Many different kinds of organisation are involved in ICT4D partnerships, depending in large part on their interests and in the types of activity in which they are participating. Table 6 (p. 87) nevertheless aims to provide a broad framework in which it is possible to consider these various interests and the benefits that they can deliver. In proposing such a framework, though, it must be recognised that the actual exemplification of partner types and the various interests and benefits that they might have are purely indicative, and by no means encapsulate all of the possibilities.

4.1.1 The importance of demand

Unless there is sufficient demand for ICT4D initiatives, they will never be sustainable. Table 6 thus deliberately places the demand element in the first columns, to emphasise its over-riding importance. To be sure, neither demand nor supply can be considered quite as separately as this might suggest, and one of the very real difficulties in implementing appropriate ICT4D initiatives is in enabling potential beneficiaries to understand how they can indeed use ICTs to enhance their life experiences. Hence, capacity-building initiatives that pave the way for delivery of innovative and appropriate solutions are of critical importance. However, by placing the end beneficiaries at the forefront, the intention is to emphasise that this is where any ICT4D programmes must begin. It is crucial that the demands of the local communities are first listened to, and that technologies appropriate to delivering that demand are then utilised efficiently and effectively. Only in this way will the wasteful implementation of high profile, yet invariably under-utilised or indeed entirely failing, projects be avoided. There is, for example, little point in planning to place one computer in every school in a country, when the majority of schools do not even have electricity. In such circumstances it may well be more appropriate to begin with the use of local and community radios as the most effective information and communication technology (see for example Farrell, 2004; <http://radioafrica.oneworld.net> accessed 21st April 2005).

Furthermore, given the '4D' element of such programmes, it is also very important that the most appropriate end beneficiaries are indeed identified. Gilhooly's (2005) recently edited collection of papers resulting from the UN ICT

Task Force's Berlin meeting in 2004 thus emphasises very clearly the importance of ensuring that ICTs do actually deliver on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs; see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (see also Haqqani, 2003). As Gilhooly (2005, p.2) stresses: 'ICT have an especially significant role to play here for it is only with the strategic, widespread, intensive and innovative use of ICT in development policies and programmes that the ambitious agenda of the MDGs becomes that much more possible to achieve'.

Insufficient research has yet been undertaken on precisely who the optimal end-beneficiaries for ICT4D programmes actually are. How this issue is approached depends very largely on the wider theoretical framework that one adopts to issues of 'development' which are beyond the remit of this paper (but see for example, Unwin, 2004a). Nevertheless, it is logical to assume that there is little need for ICT4D partnerships in circumstance where the profit-seeking motive of the private sector is already delivering solutions for those rich enough to pay, even in poor countries.

One of the essential arguments of this paper is that partnerships are therefore necessary to go the last few hundreds of kilometres to deliver appropriate solutions for the poor and marginalised. This in the end is a profoundly ethical issue, premised on the moral argument that everyone should be able to take advantage of the 'development' benefits of ICTs. One of the roles of any government is to ensure access of its people to basic needs. Increasingly these fundamental needs are being taken to include education, health and good governance, as for example in the Education For All initiative (see <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/index.shtml> - accessed 21st April 2005), and it is in the delivery of these benefits that ICTs have such an important role to play. ICT4D partnerships are thus required to take these benefits to those for whom the private sector is usually unable or unwilling to deliver economically viable solutions. The Imfundo partnership was thus particularly committed to finding appropriate and sustainable ICT-based educational solutions for some of the most marginalised African people, such as those with disabilities as well as young people at risk of living and working on the streets (Casely-Hayford and Lynch, 2004).

The second main category on the demand side includes the other local partners who are critical to the actual delivery and success of any initiative. These range from national, regional and local governments, to key individuals and

champions, local private sector companies and civil society organisations. Many such companies and NGOs are already affiliates, or at least have close links, with global equivalents on the supply side, and it is therefore not always easy to separate their benefits and interests. However, it is the demand from local partners that will help to ensure that any activities are sustainable well beyond the short-term inputs of external partners, and they are crucial for the building of local capacity to enable further indigenous solutions to be developed and implemented.

Significantly, the benefits of ICT4D are often recognised and understood by African governments, companies and civil society organisations far more readily than they are by some external partners, and particularly by many funding agencies. The high level of demand from African governments is, for example, visibly demonstrated in the detailed ICT policies and strategies that many countries have already developed, as highlighted by the contributions to the e-strategies for development conference convened in Maputo in 2003 (http://www.infopol.gov.mz/africa_conference/ - accessed 21st April 2005). Dandjinou (2003) thus notes that at that time 16 African countries already had an ICT policy in place, and 21 were in the process of developing such a process. As he rightly comments, it is crucial to distinguish between policies and strategies, but at the same time we need to recognise that countries such as Mozambique are already far advanced in gaining support for and implementing their ICT strategies (see for example <http://www.infopol.gov.mz/> - accessed 21st April 2005).

It is all the more remarkable that senior staff in some donor organisations working in such countries do not even know what ICTs are, let alone that such strategies exist. The paucity of donors at the UN ICT Task Force's meeting in Dublin in 2005, with the notable exceptions of representatives from Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland, the USA and Finland, was thus a clear affirmation of their lack of understanding of, and commitment to, the use of Information and Communication Technologies for influencing the lives of poor and marginalised communities. Furthermore, the plethora of regional and civil society initiatives advocating the use of ICT for developmental purposes, such as those initiated by NEPAD's e-Africa Commission (<http://www.eafricacommission.org/> - accessed 21st April 2005) and SchoolNet Africa (<http://www.schoolnet africa.net> - accessed 21st April 2005), is ample testimony to the demand from African people and organisations for fair access to the benefits that ICTs can bring.

4.1.2 Supply partners

On the supply side, there are five main types of partner who can contribute significantly to ICT4D initiatives. The role of funding agencies is crucial, since they provide much of the financial support for initiatives specifically designed to deliver appropriate solutions that will benefit the lives of poor people. Estimates suggest that Development Assistance Committee countries thus provided around \$78.6 billion of aid to developing countries in 2004 (http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,2340,en_2649_34447_34700611_1_1_1_1,00.html - accessed 21st April 2005). Not only are the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and bilateral donors needed as potential partners therefore, but so too are the major charitable foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with its endowment of some \$28.8 billion (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/AboutUs/> - accessed 21st April 2005). Some authors (Unwin, 2004a) have expressed concern about the effect of bilateral donors increasingly moving towards budget support mechanisms as their main vehicle for aid delivery, and the implications of this for the delivery of ICT4D initiatives. However, if increased funds are indeed going to be available for African governments to use as they wish in pursuit of their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and processes, then it may be that donors will actually have a somewhat less important direct role to play in (adversely) influencing the uses to which this funding is put in the future, and that as a result the involvement of other partners who can provide knowledge, experience and expertise in the practical delivery of programmes may become of much greater importance. Given the lack of understanding of the role of ICT4D amongst many donors, this may paradoxically therefore not be a negative prospect, but it is important that other partners recognise this, and also that the vast development experience of donors can still be utilised appropriately in the development of realistic ICT4D strategies and programmes.

To date, many ICT4D initiatives have been driven by the international private sector, often through a sense of frustration in their recognition of the very real benefits that ICTs can contribute to the development process (see for example UN ICT Task Force, 2003). While such activities have by no means been without their detractors (see for example, Thompson, 2004; Ya'u, 2004), global corporations such as Cisco, Microsoft, HP, IBM and Sun Microsystems provide much of the hardware, software, networking, infrastructure as well as a considerable amount of the content for ICT4D initiatives, and it is not

realistic to separate them from the equation as some more radical advocates would suggest.

Alongside the private sector, civil society organisations, based primarily on notions of voluntarism, separation from the state, not-for-profit activities and philanthropy, also have a central role to play in ICT4D initiatives. While the meanings of 'civil society' are contested, the definition proposed by the London School of Economics' Centre for Civil Society (LSE CCS) provides a useful starting point for considering it as 'the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated' (http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm - accessed 21st April 2005).

Against this background, there are many organizations that are specifically concerned with implementing appropriate ICT4D initiatives, including for example the Association for Progressive Communications (<http://www.apc.org/english/about/index.shtml> - accessed 21st April 2005), OneWorld (<http://oneworld.net> - accessed 21st April 2005), SANGONeT (<http://sangonet.org.za> - accessed 21st April 2005) and Kabissa (<http://www.kabissa.org/> - accessed 21st April 2005) (for a comprehensive listing see <http://topics.developmentgateway.org/ict/rc/BrowseContent.do~source=RCContentUser~folderId=3126> - accessed 21st April 2005). However, many other civil society organizations increasingly utilize ICTs as instruments in delivering their wider strategic objectives, as for example in the work of VSO (<http://www.vso.org.uk/about/> - accessed 21st April 2005) or Muslim Hands (<http://www.muslimhands.org/> - accessed 21st April 2005) to take but two UK examples.

Such uses of ICT by civil society organizations have also not been without their critics, with Mercer (2004) for example arguing that the use of ICTs by a minority of largely urban NGOs has served to widen the gap between them and the majority of small rural NGOs in Tanzania. A further important aspect of civil society involvement in the use of ICT4D are the Free Software and Open Source movements (see for example <http://sourceforge.net/>, <http://www.gnu.org> and <http://www.fossfa.net> - all accessed 21st April 2005). While this is not the place to go into a detailed exposition of these diverse movements (see also [54](http://www.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

unesco.org/webworlwd/portal_freesoft/index.shtml - accessed 21st April 2005) nor enter the debate about the relative benefits of free and open source as against proprietary software (see for example <http://www.globalknowledge.org/ict4d/index.cfm?menuid=74&parentid=52> - accessed 21st April 2005), the central point to grasp about them is that they offer a communal model for software development that fits closely within the LSE CCS definition of civil society's emphasis on collective enterprise.

The final two categories of partner on the supply side are research institutions and international organizations. Of these, the role of international organizations, such as UNESCO and the UN ICT Task Force is the less controversial, since they have been established by the international community to help deliver on global agendas such as poverty. Moreover, some of their work has already been discussed above. However, the role of universities and research institutes does require some brief consideration, in large part because this has changed dramatically in recent years.

The second half of the 20th century was a rare period in global history when state funded universities were deemed by many governments, at least in Europe (both capitalist and communist) to be valuable in their own right, with access to them being made freely available to students of sufficient ability to attain the entrance qualifications. Academics were therefore effectively paid by the state to produce knowledge that was then made freely available both through their teaching and through publications in journals for which they received no monetary recompense. In essence, the state funded innovation in thinking and the generation of new knowledge, and this was then made freely available as a global good.

However, by the end of the century increasing concerns over the cost of such a system, especially when combined with a desire to increase the participation rate of young people within institutions of higher education, has led to a dramatic reconceptualisation of university funding, perhaps nowhere more so than in the UK (see for example <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/> - accessed 21st April 2005). Driven by their governments, increased interest by senior higher education managers in gaining financial benefit for their Universities from the production of knowledge has transformed the very essence of their being. Whereas in the past universities might readily have been willing to offer the time and expertise

of their staff as a free or quasi-free global good to ICT4D initiatives, this opportunity is now being dramatically curtailed in the face of the commoditisation of knowledge. Universities across the world nevertheless have an immense role to play in contributing the knowledge, innovation and research abilities of their staff to ICT4D initiatives; the challenge is to develop mechanisms to enable such resources to be delivered for poor communities at a feasible cost.

4.2 Partner contributions

The essence of partnerships is that they bring together organisations and people with differing skills, expertise and resources to enable something to be achieved that either could not otherwise be undertaken, or which would be of lower quality, less efficient or of greater cost without the partnership. They are therefore intended to create situations in which all partners benefit, and where the whole is greater than the parts that make it up.

Table 6 seeks to provide an indication of the sorts of contributions that different partners can make to ICT4D initiatives. Although its emphasis is based primarily on educational and health activities, it is intended to be generic in principle. It should also be emphasised once again that the contents of each cell are merely indicative and are not meant to be comprehensive. It is the framework that matters. One immediately apparent feature of such a framework is that while there are only some types of partner that can readily provide certain resources, such as substantial amounts of financial support, there are other skills and resources that can be provided to varying degrees by several different partners, as with the capacity building and training expertise of universities, civil society organisations and the private sector. In delivering any particular type of activity, various different combinations of partner resources can be called upon.

The sorts of contributions required for effective ICT4D initiatives can broadly be grouped into five main types: human resources, physical ICT resources, social networks, physical infrastructure, and financial resources. These are listed in an approximate order of importance, and reflect a particular conceptualisation of the character of ICT4D initiatives. This suggests that such initiatives should be above all about information and communication; to be effective, they should not therefore be technology led. Hence, the physical resources and infras-

structure are actually less important than the human resources. Moreover, direct external financial assistance can be seen as being of much less importance than all of the other factors; if an initiative really has sufficient demand, people will themselves often find ways of funding it. The finance is necessary primarily to extend such initiatives to the poorest and most marginalised people who do not have the wherewithal to gain access even to the most basic of information and communication opportunities.

With respect to human resources, effective ICT4D partnerships bring together local demands and understandings with the skills and expertise in new technologies that are often absent among poor communities. Most ICTs have been developed in the richer countries of the world, and such partnerships are fundamentally therefore about technology transfer. However, this should not simply be a one-way transfer. For them to be effective, those on the supply side must understand and listen to the specific demands and cultural sensitivities of the communities with which they are working. They must also seek where possible to integrate within existing structures and initiatives. There is, for example, little point in developing a completely new ICT-based teaching training system parallel to existing Ministry of Education pre-and in-service training structures (see for example Unwin, 2005). It is therefore absolutely essential for partnerships that want to be effective to involve the end beneficiaries and relevant local partners in the conceptualisation and design of such activities from the very earliest stages.

Turning to the physical ICT resources, Table 6 indicates that it is invariably the private sector that has most to contribute. Indeed, without the contribution of private sector technical resources it is difficult to see how any ICT4D initiative can be truly effective. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the beneficiaries and local partners often have much that can be contributed, particularly in terms of existing, upgraded or newly constructed buildings and facilities. Thus in Imfundo's programme of assistance to children at risk of living and working on the streets in Ethiopia one of the key contributions of the local partners was to make available the basic facilities within which hardware would be provided by private sector partners such as Cisco and HP. At a broader scale, national governments in poor countries have an absolutely crucial role to play in providing the infrastructure, both physical and regulatory, to enable effective ICT4D programmes to operate. Cross governmental co-ordination that brings together ministries responsible for power and telecommunications, alongside those charged with

delivery of health and education programmes, are thus essential contributions to any initiative.

The importance of social networks is often underestimated in ICT4D partnerships, but is of critical importance. Most organisations are already involved in a diversity of networks, and bringing well-networked partners together can often lead to additional net benefits to any one particular partnership. This was well illustrated by two of Imfundo's KnowledgeBank activities, the development of a CD ROM on malaria prevention and treatment (http://imfundo.digital-brain.com/imfundo/homepage/malaria_cd/malaria1.htm - accessed 21st April 2005), and the creation of an on-line interactive database of HIV-AIDS related materials (<http://hiv aids.digitalbrain.com/hiv aids/homepage/home/> - accessed 21st April 2005). In the former, the Ministry of Health in Tanzania contributed existing documentary resources, and one of Imfundo's partners, Atticmedia (<http://www.atticmedia.com>) then gained the further support of some of their other partners (notably the UK's Teacher Training Agency <http://www.teach.gov.uk> and Automatic Television <http://www.autotv.co.uk/flash/>), with whom Imfundo had not previously had any contact, to contribute additional resources to enable the CD to be produced. With the HIV-AIDS database, the Interactive Health Network, one of Imfundo's partners, utilised their links with UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) to enhance the content of the eventual product.

Social networks are, though, fragile things, and require very considerable expertise in terms of maintenance and support. While new technologies can indeed help in these processes, it is generally important for one partner to take a lead role in facilitating and supporting the network. In the example of Imfundo, based within DFID, it was the funding agency that took on this role, but any of the partners with the relevant skills can contribute in this way. Indeed, from what was said above about donors' general lack of knowledge about the implementation of partnerships, the DFID example between 2001 and 2004 was unusual, and it may well be that partnerships led by civil society organisations or private sector corporations with particular strengths in this field could be more successful.

4.3 Partner Benefits

At the centre of this model of partnership is a belief that the extent to which partners will engage in an activity depends largely on the benefits that they envisage they will gain from so doing. Understanding and delivering on these expected benefits is therefore of critical importance in making a partnership work. However, there is a very real added cost in terms of the staff time required to manage such additional partnership expectations. Only where the tangible benefits from delivering activities through partnerships outweigh these added costs will the implementation of activities through such a partnership framework be desirable and achievable. It may well, for example, be that purely in immediate economic terms it is much more cost effective simply to pay an organisation to deliver an ICT activity than it would be to create a partnership network to deliver it. However, in any successful partnership, there is much more to be gained from the less tangible, non-economic benefits associated with working together than such a simple analysis might suggest. There are four main related categories of benefit in such partnerships: corporate identity, networking, economic returns, and research and development opportunities.

Most organisations, be they in the private sector, government or civil society, have clearly defined strategies relating to their corporate identity and the targets that they seek to deliver. Increasingly, these strategies include a significant dimension of corporate social and environmental responsibility (CSE) (see for example McIntosh, 1998; Eweje, 2001; Schaefer, 2004; Cramer, 2005; Fombrun, 2005), and contributing to ICT initiatives in poor countries is a very practical way in which such agendas can be delivered. There are, though, two extremes in the practice of CSE. On the one hand are organisations that simply allocate a percentage of their profits to 'good causes', without there being any fundamental change in their business operations, whereas on the other there are those where particular social and environmental issues become embedded across an organisation's corporate practices.

While most corporations fall somewhere between these extremes, it is salient to note that the directors and senior managers of many companies involved in the ICT field are indeed personally committed to making a fundamental difference to poverty, and in contrast to some other sectors there is an immense amount of good will that can be drawn upon in delivering such initiatives. From

Imfundo's perspective, though, a key lesson to be learnt is that 'charity' by itself is of little good in developing sustainable and scalable ICT activities. It is much better to deal with the business arm of an organisation, and to develop activities with a sound long-term business model in place than it is to initiate programmes that are based on short-term, one-off gifts or charitable donations.

If delivering on corporate identity objectives is often the initial main driver for engaging in ICT4D activities, it is the networking benefits that begin to yield real practical returns for organisations (Table 6). For organisations in poor countries, the benefits of increased knowledge sharing about the latest developments in the field of ICT are obvious, but more importantly such organisations can play a key role in helping to ensure that such initiatives are developed in ways that will truly be of benefit to them, and that are not merely parachuted in to serve externally perceived needs.

Donors and multinational organisations likewise have much to learn from networking with private sector and civil society organisations, notably about the practical delivery of activities on the ground, and from the opportunities that such linkages offer for future collaboration. A further key networking benefit for all those involved is that it helps limit the tendency towards duplication of effort, and overlap of delivery. Far too often those involved in ICT activities across Africa have spent too much time reinventing the wheel. Poor people and countries cannot afford such wasteful experimentation, and if organisations can share their experiences and expertise in partnerships, then the overall costs of delivery can be much reduced. In this context it is important to note that business competitors who might normally be highly competitive in buoyant markets, have proved to be remarkably open to working together to deliver ICT4D activities. This co-operation is particularly to be noted in activities such as the Jordan Education Initiative (World Economic Forum, no date), the work of the UN ICT Task Force (2003) and some of the GKP's (2003) programmes.

A further benefit of truly multi-sectoral partnerships is that it provides the private sector with much enhanced understanding about the issues involved in delivering programmes that might make a difference to poverty. Imfundo's experiences, for example, suggest that many leading private sector companies are remarkably ignorant about 'development' agendas, and the realities of poverty in Africa. By working closely with such companies, it is possible to develop better

shared understandings of the issues involved, and one of the benefits for the private sector of working with Imfundo was undoubtedly the insights that they gained about poverty and working effectively with donors, international organisations and African governments.

Many will consider strange the suggestion that economic returns only appear third in importance after the delivery of corporate identity objectives and the benefits to be gained in networking from ICT4D partnerships. However, although these are of undoubted importance, my experience of working with many different types of partner suggests that such interests are indeed of lower importance where ICT initiatives are being initiated for development purposes. One reason for this is that most corporate organisations have very short term accounting periods, and any direct benefits that they might accrue from investment in such ICT activities will be over a much longer time frame. In part this explains why some companies tend to implement such activities from their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or CSER budgets, thereby contributing both to a company's immediate visibility, but also hopefully in its much longer term interests in building up a market in a country where their visibility and penetration are as yet limited. Certainly, initiatives such as HP's i-community in Mogalakwena in Limpopo Province in South Africa (<http://h40058.www4.hp.com/icomunity2/index.asp> - accessed 29th April 2005), launched by HP's then Chairman Carly Fiorina and South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki, have widely been seen as being as much public relations exercises as they are attempts to increase a company's long-term economic interests or opportunities to make a significant difference to the lives of poor people living in their vicinity.

Being involved in partnerships, with other organisations sharing the costs associated with innovation and access, does though enable companies to operate beyond their normal economic bounds of profitability, and it is this that represents one of the most exciting opportunities of involvement. By working together, the risks are shared, and although direct profits are non-existent in the short-term, the longer-term interests are seen as being significant. The extensive debate over Microsoft's activities in Africa (see for example the work of bridges.org, 2003/2004, http://www.bridges.org/software_comparison/proprietary_vs_oss.html - accessed 29th April 2005) and the role of Open Source solutions (see for example the work of the Free and Open Source Software Foundation for Africa

<http://www.fossfa.net/tiki-index.php> - accessed 29th April 2005) is clearly of relevance here, but is beyond the immediate scope of this paper.

For other partners involved in ICT4D activities there are also clear incentives, notably through the benefits to be gained from cost and risk sharing. Thus, by working together, donors and international organisations can make their budgets go very much further than if they embarked on such activities individually, and there are also real savings to be made through minimisation of the transaction costs involved. At the most basic level, for example, if African governments can have a single meeting with 20 partners willing to contribute to their ICT4D strategy, then this saves enormously over having 20 separate meetings with the private sector or donors each interested in their own particular objectives and strategies.

A final area where partners of all kinds deem there to be benefit in working together is through the occasions that this can provide for shared capacity building and research and development opportunities. One of the key challenges facing ICT4D initiatives is thus to engage the very best academic institutions across the globe in helping to shape programmes in ways that take advantage of the knowledge and research potential contained therein. Much consultancy work undertaken in the field of ICT4D does not yet engage sufficiently with the expertise available in the world's leading universities, and there are many opportunities to enhance the quality of research and practice from increasing dialogue between all those who can contribute. Particularly in the fields of education and health, it is crucial that ICT4D partnerships work closely with universities and research institutes to deliver optimal solutions. Furthermore, by engaging in ICT4D partnerships, the private sector and civil society organisations can also considerably enhance their own understandings of relevant research agendas in a poverty context, and can thereby seek to deliver novel solutions. One such solution, for example, has been HP's 441 desktop solution (<http://www.hp441.com> - accessed 29th April 2005), which they developed to provide four terminals running from one single computer. Another has been the work of the Massachusetts Media Laboratory in seeking to create a \$100 laptop (see for example <http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,1415713,00.html> - accessed 29th April 2005), and yet another has been the focus on thin-client solutions for African schools (see for example the work of NetDay South Africa <http://www.netday.org.za/> and SchoolNet Namibia <http://www.schoolnet.na> - both accessed 29th April 2005).

Conclusions: delivering partnerships in practice

This paper has sought to open up discussion on ICT4D partnerships in three main ways: by highlighting the diversity of interpretations of partnerships in the global community; by exploring some of the literature relating to the successful delivery of partnerships, focusing especially on ICT4D; and by drawing on the experiences of Imfundo to provide further insights into the practice of multi-stakeholder partnerships in development, focusing particularly on ICT4D initiatives in the field of education.

One of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the first part of the paper is that different types of organisation tend to define and consider partnerships in very variable ways. In particular, donors' conceptualisations of partnership are often at very considerable variance from what the private sector and civil society consider partnerships to be about. By addressing both the notions of partnership as perceived by donors, and also the much more practical considerations of partnership as explored in the second part of the paper, it is hoped that it may contribute to more positive interactions between donors and potential partners other than the governments of poor countries.

While some donors are now indeed beginning to engage much more actively with the private sector (see for example CCIC, 2002; Holden and Brown, 2003; DFID, no date; for SIDA's Partner Point see <http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=2263> - accessed 29th April 2005), there is still a serious lack of understanding of the real benefits that they can gain through being involved in multi-sector ICT4D partnerships. In part this reflects the political left traditions within which many people working within donor organisations were educated,

but it also reflects an arrogance and myopia that still persists within some of them that they know best how ‘development’ should be delivered. Furthermore, when donors do move beyond the notion of partnerships with poor country governments, there is still a tendency for them to focus on rather simple notions of public-private partnerships. As a recent report for DFID (Holden and Brown, 2003, p.10) thus boldly comments, public private ‘partnerships fulfil two functions: they provide a mechanism for sharing costs with the private sector, and for coordinating research across different organisations (thereby avoiding wasteful duplication of effort)’. This paper has sought to argue that multi-sector partnerships can achieve very much more than this.

In conclusion, it is worth drawing on the information in Tables 1-6, and combining this with the experiences gained in seeking to deliver Imfundo’s activities in Africa, to re-emphasise seven key practical elements that seem to be essential for successful partnerships to operate. The first, and most important of all is that partnerships must be based on *trust*. While, there are many ways in which such trust can be gained, it has to be recognised that this is generally a very time-consuming process. Nevertheless, without a basis of trust, it is highly likely that problems will emerge down the road in the process of delivery. For this reason, some of the most successful ICT4D partnerships are those that build on experiences already gained between partners who have previously worked together on successful initiatives. Trust is also something that is based on personal relationships, and this can be problematic when people leave organisations. It is therefore crucial for organisations involved in partnerships to work together effectively to ensure that linkages are built between people involved at all levels in the organisation, from the most junior technical staff to the CEOs’ personal assistants! Despite the importance of trust, though, it is interesting to note that the word does not feature in any of the guidelines on partnership featured in Tables 1-5.

Second, it is important for all partnerships to have a clear *focus*. Partnerships must actually deliver something if they are to be worthwhile, and a fine line needs to be drawn between the efforts involved in shaping partnerships and then utilising those partnerships to produce an output that is worthwhile for poor people. There can be a tendency to spend too much time focusing on the partnership discussions, and not enough in actually delivering practical benefits on the ground. In this context, while the various gatherings of the UN ICT Task

Force and the meetings associated with the World Summit on the Information Society are indeed of importance in helping to shape collective understandings, one cannot but help wonder whether spending a little less time and money on talking, and rather more on delivering in practice would not in the end be more of more benefit to poor people.

Third, all partnerships must have enthusiastic *leaders*, who will act as champions for their particular cause. One of the most striking lessons of ICT4D initiatives in Africa is the way in which they have been most successful where senior government officials or CEOs of organisations have taken a personal interest in their delivery. This is, for example, as true of past-President Chissano's emphasis on ICT in Mozambique (<http://www.infopol.gov.mz/> - accessed 1 May 2004), as it is of CEO John Chambers' determination that Cisco Systems should contribute to African development, and of Executive Director Shafika Isaac's espousal of the value of SchoolNet Africa (<http://www.schoolnet africa.net/> - accessed 29th April 2005). In ICT4D partnerships, it does not matter so much where they come from, but what does matter is that there is a competent, experienced and charismatic leader able to keep all of those involved focused on delivering the partnership's objectives. Again, it seems surprising that so few accounts of partnership stress the key importance of this element.

A fourth fundamental element of partnership that is again all too often ignored is the need to focus on *sustainability* from the very beginning of the design of any activities. Very few ICT4D initiatives across Africa have as yet shown themselves to be sustainable, and most rely heavily on the input of external resources to make them at all viable. Partnerships are usually time-bound, and cannot therefore continue to provide such resources indefinitely, which is one of the main reasons why well-intentioned activities all too often founder after a few years. The poorest and most marginalised people are usually unable to afford to pay for the information and communication services offered by new technologies, and so it is incumbent on those involved in designing and initiating such services that they identify ways in which such activities can continue to be funded effectively.

The issue of sustainability is closely related to the fifth key element that needs to be in place for successful partnerships, namely a *balance between demand and supply*. As highlighted above, this is not an easy objective to achieve, but all the

evidence suggests that activities that are supply led, and that do not sufficiently take into consideration the real needs and aspirations of poor people will rapidly become white elephants. The private sector has many advantages, not least its ability to make something happen swiftly and effectively. However, in their frustration to deliver practical activities on the ground, companies often fail to implement initiatives that are of real benefit to the people they claim to be working for. While developing a clear understanding of the demand side can take considerable time, it has to be time well spent, particularly when Africa can ill-afford too many ICT failures. Linked to this, it is essential for any ICT4D partnership initiative to invest time and resources in helping to build local capacity, particularly in understanding the enormous potential that ICTs have to offer in delivering enhanced lived experiences for poor people.

Sixth, it is important for partnerships to invest time in *networking* activities. While such activities are to some extent tied in with re-enforcing trust, it is also important for partners to be kept regularly informed of a partnership's activities. It is frequently the case that partnership activities do not necessarily reflect an organisation's core business; if they did, there would be little need for the partnership. Therefore, it is essential that those involved in leading the partnership develop and implement effective means for communicating information about the partnership's activities to all of the members. It is crucial to maintain continued involvement of partners throughout the life-span of an initiative, especially when particular contributions of any one partner might only be required at some point down the line. In Imfundo's case, the team thus provided a monthly newsletter of its activities from April 2001 to March 2004 (<http://imfundo.digitalbrain.com/imfundo/web/imfundo/newslettercentre/> - accessed 29th April 2004), but although the initiative continued thereafter, only one further newsletter was produced in October 2004. Failure to communicate with partners was one of the factors that effectively led to the end of the partnership.

A final important practical issue is the need for transparency and a sound ethical basis upon which any partnership is formed. Shared ethical principles are again important for the establishment of trust between organisations, and this can be facilitated considerably through the use of a benefits framework of the kind illustrated, albeit partially, in Table 6. It must be recognised that partners have resources to contribute and also benefits that they seek to gain from being involved, and transparency in welcoming this is crucial for a partnership's

success. In delivering *all* of the partners' aspirations, it is possible to create effective ICT4D initiatives that can make a significant difference to the lives of poor people.

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Tables

Table 1
Partner responsibilities as defined in the Development Assistance Committee's 1996
Shaping the 21st Century policy statement

Joint responsibilities	Developing country responsibilities	External partner responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Create the conditions conducive to generating adequate resources for development; — Pursue policies that minimise the risks of violent conflict; — Strengthen protections at the domestic and international levels against corruption and illicit practices; — Open up wide scope for effective development contributions from throughout civil society; — Enlist the support of rapidly-developing countries and regional development mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Adhere to appropriate macroeconomic policies; — Commit to basic objectives of social development and increased participation, including gender equality; — Foster accountable government and the rule of law; — Strengthen human and institutional capacity; — Create a climate favourable to enterprise and the mobilisation of local savings for investment; — Carry out sound financial management, including efficient tax systems and productive public expenditure; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Provide reliable and appropriate assistance both to meet priority needs and to facilitate the mobilisation of additional resources to help achieve agreed performance targets; — Contribute to international trade and investment systems in ways that permit full opportunities to developing countries; — Adhere to agreed international guidelines for effective aid, and monitoring for continuous improvement; — Support strengthened capacities and increased participation in the developing country, avoiding the creation of aid-dependency;

Joint responsibilities	Developing country responsibilities	External partner responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Maintain stable and co-operative relations with neighbours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Support access to information, technology and know-how; — Support coherent policies in other aspects of relations, including consistency in policies affecting human rights and the risks of violent conflict; — Work for better co-ordination of the international aid system among external partners, in support of developing countries' own strategies.

Source: derived from DAC (1996).

Table 2
The New Partnership for Africa's Development

The Principles of NEPAD	NEPAD Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Good governance as a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development; — African ownership and leadership, as well as broad and deep participation by all sectors of society; — Anchoring the development of Africa on its resources and resourcefulness of its people; — Partnership between and amongst African peoples; — Acceleration of regional and continental integration; — Building the competitiveness of African countries and the continent; — Forging a new international partnership that changes the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world; and — Ensuring that all Partnerships with NEPAD are linked to the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed development goals and targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Establishing the Conditions for Sustainable Development by ensuring</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Peace and security; — Democracy and good, political, economic and corporate governance; — Regional co-operation and integration; — Capacity building. <i>b. Policy reforms and increased investment in the following priority sectors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Agriculture; — Human development with a focus on health, education, science and technology and skills development; — Building and improving infrastructure, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Energy, Transport, Water and Sanitation; — Promoting diversification of production and exports, particularly with respect to agro-industries, manufacturing, mining, mineral beneficiation and tourism;

The Principles of NEPAD

NEPAD Priorities

- Accelerating intra-African trade and improving access to markets of developed countries;
- The environment.

c. Mobilising Resources by

- Increasing domestic savings and investments;
- Improving management of public revenue and expenditure;
- Improving Africa's share in global trade;
- Attracting foreign direct investment; and
- Increasing capital flows through further debt reduction and increase ODA flows.

Source: www.nepad.org (accessed 1st September 2004).

Table 3

Guiding Principles for Partnerships for Sustainable Development ('type 2 outcomes') to be Elaborated by Interested Parties in the Context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

- 1. Objective of partnerships.** Partnerships for sustainable development are specific commitments by various partners intended to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD (Programme of Action and Political Declaration) and to help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals.
- 2. Voluntary nature/respect for fundamental principles and values.** Partnerships are of a voluntary, 'self-organizing' nature; they are based on mutual respect and shared responsibility of the partners involved, taking into account the Rio Declaration Principles and the values expressed in the Millennium Declaration.
- 3. Link with globally agreed outcomes.** Partnerships are to complement the intergovernmentally agreed outcomes of WSSD: they are not intended to substitute commitments made by governments. Rather they should serve as mechanisms for the delivery of the globally agreed commitments by mobilizing the capacity for producing action on the ground. Partnerships should be anchored in the intergovernmentally agreed outcomes of WSSD (Programme of Action and Political Declaration) and help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals.
- 4. Integrated approach to sustainable development.** Partnerships should integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their design and implementation. They should be consistent, where applicable, with sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction strategies of the countries, regions and communities where their implementation takes place.

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5. **Multi-stakeholder approach.** Partnerships should have a multi-stakeholder approach and preferably involve a range of significant actors in a given area of work. They can be arranged among any combination of partners, including governments, regional groups, local authorities, non-governmental actors, international institutions and private sector partners. All partners should be involved in the development of a partnership from an early stage, so that it is genuinely participatory in approach. Yet as partnerships evolve, there should be an opportunity for additional partners to join on an equal basis.
 6. **Transparency and accountability.** Partnerships should be developed and implemented in an open and transparent manner and in good faith, so that ownership of the partnership process and its outcomes is shared among all partners, and all partners are equally accountable. They should specify arrangements to monitor and review their performance against the objectives and targets they set and report in regular intervals ('self-reporting'). These reports should be made accessible to the public.
 7. **Funding arrangements.** Available and /or expected sources of funding should be identified. At least the initial funding should be assured at the time of the Summit, if the partnership is to be recognized there.
 8. **New/value added partnerships.** Ideally, partnerships for sustainable development should be "new", i.e. developed within the framework of the WSSD process. In case of on-going partnerships, there has to be a significant added value to these partnerships in the context of the WSSD (e.g. more partners taken on board, replicating an initiative or extending it to another geographical region, increasing financial resources, etc.)
 9. **Local involvement and international impact.** While the active involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of partnerships is strongly encouraged (bottom-up approach), partnerships should be international in their impact, which means their impact should extend beyond the national level (global, regional and/or sub-regional).
 10. **Follow-up process.** Partnerships should keep the Commission on Sustainable Development informed about their activities and progress in achieving

their targets. The CSD should serve as a focal point for discussion of partnerships that promote sustainable development, including sharing lessons learnt, progress made and best practices.

Source: United Nations (2002).

Table 4

Seven Principles of Multi-stakeholder ICT partnerships

1. 'Knowing when to apply a multi-sector ICT partnership approach is about recognising the confluence of the following three features:
 - a. Those aspects of the sustainable development agenda to which ICT can act as an enabler
 - b. The persistent challenges to the deployment of ICT as an enabler of sustainable development, in particular, cases where the design of solutions by single parties in society or by contractual relationships have failed
 - c. Those persistent ICT4SD challenges that, because of their complexity, require the strategic alignment of resources and competencies from across business, government and civil society' (GKP, 2003, p.16)
2. 'Before agreeing to enter into partnership, its projected value in satisfying the main drivers for participation should be objectively weighed against the available alternatives and risks' (GKP, 2003, p.17)
3. 'A multi-stakeholder ICT partnership will work best when it is in the self-interest of each party to pro-actively seek solutions that will satisfy the interests of the other parties, i.e. when the partnership is mutually reinforcing' (GKP, 2003, p.17)
4. 'Successful partnerships are built on complementary competencies and resources that, in combination, meet the parameters of some strategic design' (GKP, 2003, p.17)
5. 'The resources and competencies contributed to the partnership need to be drawn from as close as possible to the core "business" of the partner organisations, in order to both retain the relevance of the partnership to the objectives and day-to-day activities of the organisation, and to exploit the

efficiencies of partners contributing from their existing, i.e. variable, costs base, rather than introducing new, fixed, costs' (GKP, 2003, p.17)

6. 'Regardless of the type of multi-stakeholder ICT partnerships, prior consensus should be sought for some form of written document identifying, at a minimum: the shared vision of the partnership; the objectives of each partner for the partnership, and the division of roles and responsibilities. The moral and legal status of the document will be dependent on circumstances' (GKP, 2003, p.17)
7. 'When evaluating the outcomes of multi-stakeholder ICT partnerships, care should be taken to identify the incremental contribution of the partnership activities over and above external factors and the next most likely alternative, i.e. Added Value of Partnership = \sum Value of Partnership Outcomes - (External Factors + Most Likely Alternatives)' (GKP, 2003, p.17)

Source: Global Knowledge Partnership (2003).

Table 5

The Jordan Education Initiative's Keys to Success

1. **Scalable** Project can be scaled up and/or rolled out on a national level or in other countries, both from a point of view of economic viability and operational practicality.
2. **Achievable** Project plan defines the scope, schedule, cost and approach for an achievable project. If the plan is only barely possible at the outset, then it is not realistically achievable.
3. **Replicable** Project can be reasonably recreated with new applications, in new environments or in other countries.
4. **Sustainable** Project contributes directly to building innovative business models and maintains local knowledge, management capacity, acceptance and buy-in.
5. **Action Oriented** Project has initiative and is relentlessly proactive in achieving project goals and identifying and overcoming barriers as they arise. Entrepreneurial spirit and “time to market” are key to achieving this.
6. **Resourced** Project is well staffed with quality resources and experts in thought leadership, appropriate senior management, and sufficient funding allocated to ensure quality output.
7. **Multi-Stakeholder** Effectively seek out and engage all relevant stakeholders in the process. These can include both the public and private sector, international and local partners, NGO's, teachers and students.
8. **Driven** Establish strong leadership and clear ownership of well-defined tasks. Foster an environment geared towards team driven success.
9. **Holistic** Look across the boundaries of projects and tracks within the JEI to capture and realize benefits in other related areas, therefore holistically working towards the achievement of wider outcomes.

10. Building Capacity Project methodology and approach geared towards building capacity in Jordan, in the education and ICT industries in general, and specifically within the JEI partner organizations aimed at promoting local knowledge and skills transfer.

= Measurable Results Identify intermediary and final outcomes that can be measured continuously. Report on meaningful metrics for status, cost, schedule, quality and risk as related to the project goals.

Source: <http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/Jordan+Education+Initiative%5CKey+to+Success> (accessed 20th April 2005).

Table 6
A framework for ICT4D partnerships

Demand		Supply				
End Beneficiaries	Local Partners	Funding agencies	Private Sector	Civil Society Organisations	Research Institutions	International Organisations
Local communities; people with disabilities; teachers; health workers; learners	National and regional governments; local private sector; local civil society organisations; religious groups; key individuals	Multilateral and bilateral donors; International Financial Institutions; Charitable foundations	Companies providing hardware, software, networking, content, infrastructure, media organisations	Community action groups; non-governmental organisations; voluntary organisations; international advocacy and relief agencies; religious groups	Universities; consultancies; knowledge providers; innovators	Global organisations such as UNESCO; GeSCI; UN ICT Task Force
Partnership Contributions						
Human resources						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of relevant demands – Linguistic skills – Cultural sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Technical support – Indigenous knowledges – Cultural sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expertise in ‘development’ practice – Procurement expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff skilled in technology – Media skills – Project management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expertise in delivery of practical activities – Local knowledge and networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Generic research skills – Knowledge of information and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expertise in ICT and ‘development’ – Expertise in delivery of educational initiatives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labour - Knowledge of relevant health and educational initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linguistic skills - Labour - Capacity building skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisory capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network engineering skills - Training expertise - Research and development skills - Staff secondment - Technical support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of development practices - Project management - Linguistic skills - Advocacy skills - Staff secondment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching and capacity building skills - Monitoring and evaluation skills - Staff secondment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobbying expertise
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Physical ICT resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings and facilities - Some mobile telephony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings and learning facilities - Existing content (education, health) - Provision of some existing hardware and software - Telephony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some limited video-conferencing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hardware (computers, screens, radios, TVs) - Virtual conferencing equipment - Software (Operating systems and programmes) - Networking - Content (digital, online, CD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Software (Operating systems and programmes) - Content (digital, online, CD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings and learning facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some video-conferencing and on-line learning facilities
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- Buildings and earning facilities

Social networks

- | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local and communal social networks - Indigenous social systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government communication systems - Local business networks (Round Tables) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaison across donor government departments - Links with recipient governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links with other private sector partner networks - Web skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links with global and national civil society networks - Virtual and real networks - Web skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research networks (both virtual and real) - Web skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy and strategy conferences at global level - Virtual networks |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|

Physical infrastructure

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision and maintenance of local infrastructures (schools, community centres, health centres) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of energy systems - Telecommunication systems - Existing educational and health infrastructures (schools and hospitals) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of some infrastructure projects (but increasing shift to budget support) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of physical networks and telephony systems |
|---|---|---|---|

Financial contributions

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some limited ability to pay – Helping to ensure sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National budgets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Budget support – Project funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provision of resources at reduced profit margins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some ability to deliver resources, often in kind and usually project based | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some resources for specific activities |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|

Benefits of Partnership

Corporate Identity

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity for enhanced visibility of poverty agendas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raised international profile for local businesses and organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to deliver on core mission to reduce poverty – Through local partnerships helping to ensure relevance and sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivery on Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility targets – Raising brand identity internationally – Visible contribution to a country's economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivery on core mission to reduce poverty through ICT activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased international visibility – For some, opportunity to deliver on commitment to Knowledge for All | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to deliver on core mission to reduce poverty – Through local partnerships helping to ensure relevance and sustainability |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|

Networking benefits

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Increased experience of dealing with international organisations and private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Opportunity to influence policies of other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Minimisation of duplication of effort – Enhanced knowledge of activities of other partner categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Contacts with governments – Potential new initiatives – Opportunity to shape partnership agendas and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – New opportunities arising from working in partnership – Opportunity to shape partnership agendas and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Opportunities for academics to learn more about management systems and practices in other sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Benefits from information rapidly shared through the partnership – Shared implementing of initiatives, thus avoiding duplication
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Economic Returns

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ability to implement activities impossible without partnership resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Substantial influx of human and technical resources to support delivery of key strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared costs in implementing activities, thus making budgets do further 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity for increased market share – Opportunity for identifying potential employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Higher visibility in core areas of activity leading to increased income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhanced visibility in market place for undergraduate and post-graduate students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared costs in implementing activities, thus making budgets do further
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhanced local capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Longer term economic benefits from increased involvement of private sector, donors and civil society – Enhanced local capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Widening and deepening customer base through building local capacity – Economic growth resulting from enhanced political stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential future synergies with private sector and other funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to sell content and benefit from Intellectual Property Rights – Opportunities for experiences to enhance teaching – Development of collaborative funding initiatives
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Research and Development Opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to shape international research agendas – Opportunity to benefit from latest research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to shape international research agendas – Opportunity to benefit from latest research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunities to gain insights from latest research – Chance to identify leading researchers for future initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunity to experience new challenges for innovation – Staff development opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhanced staff expertise through working with other partners – Easier and quicker access to research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhanced funding for research activities – Opportunity to link academic research with practice and policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunities to gain insights from latest research – Chance to identify leading researchers for future initiatives
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End Beneficiaries	Local Partners	Funding agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research findings that can be used to enhance competitiveness elsewhere 	Civil Society Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emergence of new research ideas – Opportunities for researchers to participate in ongoing activities 	International Organisations
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Source: Author, but conceptually derived in part from Imfundo’s partnership framework created in 2001 as well as the literatures consulted in preparation of this paper.