

PARTNERING WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOR SDG 17

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

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INTRODUCTION: *Partnerships a Goal*

We live in a world which is experiencing complex challenges of poverty and inequality in the availability and consumption of resources. This is a world where economies have internationalised; people are increasingly linked across borders through markets, formal and informal networks, politics, capital and social media. Given the interconnectedness and interdependence the social challenges call for collaborative action which are gender inclusive and politically contextualised (Tandon, 1991).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to collaborative action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.

An ambitious and interconnected global development agenda requires a new global partnership – this includes financing development, connecting people through information technology networks, international trade flows, and strengthening data collection and analysis. Therefore it was agreed in principle that a successful sustainable development agenda requires multi-stakeholder partnerships between business, NGOs, communities, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Governments, the United Nations and other actors would be crucial in the achievement of these goals (Dodds, 2015). These 17 ambitious goals and the complex challenges they seek to address fit neither neatly demarcated sectors, nor national borders. For example; climate change is global, and businesses are just as important to fighting it as governments. Innovation can't happen without universities and scientists and certainly not without exchange of knowledge across continents. Gender equality is as much about communities as it is about legal instruments. If our epidemics are global, their solutions are too. Inclusive partnerships built upon a shared vision and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level (UN India 2018).

In the September of 2015, with the adoption of the SDGs, a separate goal 'SDG 17 Partnerships For The Goals', was created reiterating the importance of partnership in the achievement of the SDGs. There had been euphoria about partnerships since the 1990s, as it was looked at as a 'means' to achieve socio-economic development goals. This was the first time that partnerships were looked at as a 'goal'. Goal 17 calls for partnerships to mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries.

This paper will focus on exploring the role of HEIs in achieving the SDGs and their roles in multi stakeholder partnerships. Given the emphasis of the intergovernmental agencies on partnerships including various stakeholders and its growing relevance in solving local development challenges, the second section of the paper will provide a historical account of partnerships. The third section will concentrate on the lessons of partnerships in the past two decades. Following which the paper will present the findings of a survey conducted by PRIA to understand the nuances of partnerships in present times. The final section will analyse the implications for Higher education institutions in achieving the SDGs.

HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIPS: *A means for socio-economic development*

Practitioners and scholars have used the term 'partnership' to describe collaboration between state and non-state actors or between two or more non-state actors such as business and civil society (Pattberg and Widerberg, 2015). In the context of this paper, "Partnerships" can be voluntary multi-stakeholder or multi-institutional initiatives, organised around a common purpose, and administered as their own entity, distinct from their constituent partners. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are unique in both character and substance. They are collaboration between stakeholders who are affected by a common problem but have different interests, perspectives, access to resources, approach and style to understand the problem. A successful partnership is one which utilises these differences to achieve the defined goals of the collaborative venture. Multi stakeholder partnerships are generally directed at the problems and challenges of sustainable development, from environment protection and management, to social inclusion and sustainable economic growth. They have a shared vision, maintain a presumption in favour of joint problem-solving, promote a work ethos that exploits mutual self-interest, and adds value beyond that achievable by the principal alternatives.

At the end of the Cold War, the world saw the rise of international markets and world trade, and the meteoric development of information flows and transportation systems which helped in creating an interdependent world. These factors favoured increased activity and influence of the civil society which started playing more national and transnational problem-solving roles (Brown, 2004). At the onset of the 1990s, the Participation Committee of the NGO Working Group on the World Bank decided to advocate the need of bottom up participatory development model within the Bank in its own projects and policies (Long, 2001). Such movement also encouraged participatory approaches and fostered the growth of partnerships.

In this background, multi-stakeholder partnerships were seen as a means to achieve socio-economic development at the global level during the 1990s and have become part and parcel of many countries' developmental strategies. They have been employed as instruments in issues ranging from environment, health, and development cooperation to social rights and security (Schäferhoff et al. 2009).

A variety of multi-stakeholder coalitions, initiatives, and councils, were active in the run-up to the Earth Summit and beyond, at both the global and national level. 1990 saw the World Conference on Education for All, which was the first of its kind to witness concerted NGO participation. This was followed by the World Summit on Children in 1991 (Tandon, 1993). Interest in partnerships generally continued to build throughout the 1990s, as both NGOs and business became increasingly involved in sustainable development and searched for recognised niches and ways to contribute, as well as to collaborate with each other. The first categorical call for active engagement of various social groups was made by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992. It was a follow up of Agenda 21¹ of the Earth summit, where Agenda 21 called for a "Global

¹ Agenda 21 acknowledged nine stakeholder groups who could contribute substantially in developing policy and implementing what was decided. Those groups were: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples,

Partnership for Sustainable Development” and alluded to multistakeholder partnerships between “public, private and community sectors” to boost implementation (UNCED 1992).

A decade later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg reiterated the message, and the so called Type II² or Johannesburg partnerships were created. An emphasis was made to be cognizant of the social, environmental and economic aspects of the Sustainable Development in both design and implementation phase. After WSSD, the multi-stakeholder approach became a recurrent theme in various forums. This was a prominent theme in the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico. The increasing role and capacity of private capital was acknowledged and it was proposed to increase their involvement with checks and balances by the civil society organizations. The private sector and the CSOs together played an integral role in strengthening and organizing multi-stakeholder platforms on crucial development issues. Some other forums like World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005 made this approach stronger.

More recently, in 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20), the central role of partnerships was emphasized in the outcome document: “The Future We Want” (Pattberg and Mert 2013). The conference resulted in over 700 voluntary commitments as a part of all the stakeholders coming up and making concrete promises towards sustainable developments. Consequently, multistakeholder partnerships have become integral to achieving socio-economic development goals. These partnerships are unique because they include and utilize the competencies of a wide array of stakeholders on a large scale in finding solutions to socio-economic problems which are complex and interdependent. According to IDR (Institute of Development Research, 1992), ‘many are the product of interacting systems of problems that are mutually reinforcing.’ Self-regenerating interactions of poverty, poor health, unemployment, and poor quality of education are some of the examples.

To understand, and act effectively to solve such complex problems requires more resources than are available to any single agency. Partnerships allow organizations to pool their resources, including name-recognition and legitimacy, to bring heightened and focused attention to a specific theme, goal, or objective. Institutions create partnerships in order to multiply impact and accelerate change — though their effectiveness in this regard is disputed (Atkisson, 2015).

TWO DECADES OF PARTNERSHIPS: *The lessons learnt*

As multi stakeholder partnerships have become the norm in addressing the socio-economic development challenges of our times, their effectiveness has been of key concern to practitioners, policy makers and academics.

A detailed review was undertaken by the International Civil Society Centre (ICSC) in 2014 of 330 of WSSD multi stakeholder partnerships(MSPs) (Pattberg et al. 2012). The study found:

Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community and Farmers.

² Type II partnerships characterized more inter and intra national collaborations along with the involvement of civil society and private actors. These groups collectively formed voluntary transnational agreements to meet some sustainable development goals.

- Thirty-eight per cent of all partnerships sampled are simply not active or do not have measurable output. Twenty-six per cent of all partnerships show activities but those are not directly related to their publicly stated goals and ambitions.
- Second, partnerships fail to deliver on the promises rehearsed by many of their advocates.
- Partnerships fail to foster inclusiveness and participation of previously marginalized.
- Most partnerships appear to lack the organisational capacity, resources, and transparency to implement their goals.
- Fourth, MSPs are “not just neutral instruments for implementing internationally accepted sustainability norms, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21, but rather sites of contestation over distinct ideologies, perspectives and practices” (Mert and Chan 2012).

An underlying problem was that many MSPs have vague goals and lack appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms, making it difficult to connect between their output and impacts on the ground, and their monitoring is not always independent (Beisheim & Liese 2014). There is a need for a transparent, accountable, efficient, participatory and qualitative governance structure in order to increase the effectiveness of MSPs.

Martens (2007) observed that most multi stakeholder partnerships tend to concentrate in areas where technical solutions can lead to quick wins such as vaccines programmes and renewable energy systems. Partnerships such as the GAVI Alliance that enhances the dissemination of immunization or the standard setting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have proven highly effective in problem-solving (Beisheim and Liese 2014). Overall, however, concluding from recent analyses, partnerships have a limited track-record in terms of effectiveness (Schäferhoff et al. 2009).

Based on the foregoing analysis of the history of development partnerships over the past three decades, it was decided to undertake a quick survey of the existing networks of PRIA and UNESCO Chair to get a sense of current state-of-play in partnerships. The following dimensions were assessed in the survey:

- How frequent are partnerships?
- What are the main reasons for building partnerships?
- Which types of actors and institutions participate in such partnerships?
- What are some of the key challenges faced by partnerships in realising their goals?
- What approaches have been found effective in dealing with such challenges?
- What is the role of leadership in conflict resolution?

The following section presents the findings of the survey³ conducted last month on the above dimensions.

³ A quick survey was conducted in March 2018. As a part of the survey a multiple response questionnaire was circulated among the partners of PRIA globally to understand the challenges they grapple with in a multi stakeholder partnership and the factors which can make a partnership a success. The Survey had 180 respondents.

Survey Findings: Development Partnerships

How frequent are partnerships today?

There has been a crescendo of activity with multi-stakeholder initiatives over the past few years. As demonstrated in the Figure 1, the survey finds that 94.5% of the 180 respondents have engaged in partnerships in the past, reiterating that partnerships are an accepted way of achieving socio-economic development goals. These MSPs are seen by many as additional and flexible means that could be used to effectively implement sustainable development goals.

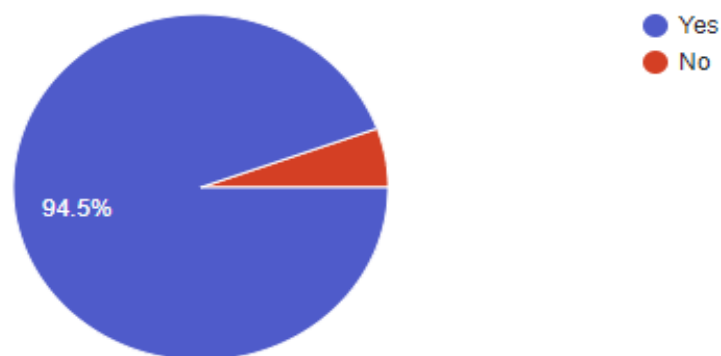


Figure 1: Percentage of organisations engaging in partnerships

What are the reasons for forming partnerships?

Partnership is formed around a particular issue or a set of issues. Almost 75% of the respondents feel that partnerships are important to influence other powerful stakeholders such as the government or business. By collaborating with national and international decision makers, community based organisations and NGOs develop insights as well as information of how these institutions operate. It provides an opportunity to NGOs and community based organisations to influence various departments and representatives of the government and other international bodies. Nearly 70% of the respondents feel that the partnerships are forged to solve particular problems. It is in the context of a crisis various stakeholders get encouraged to adopting

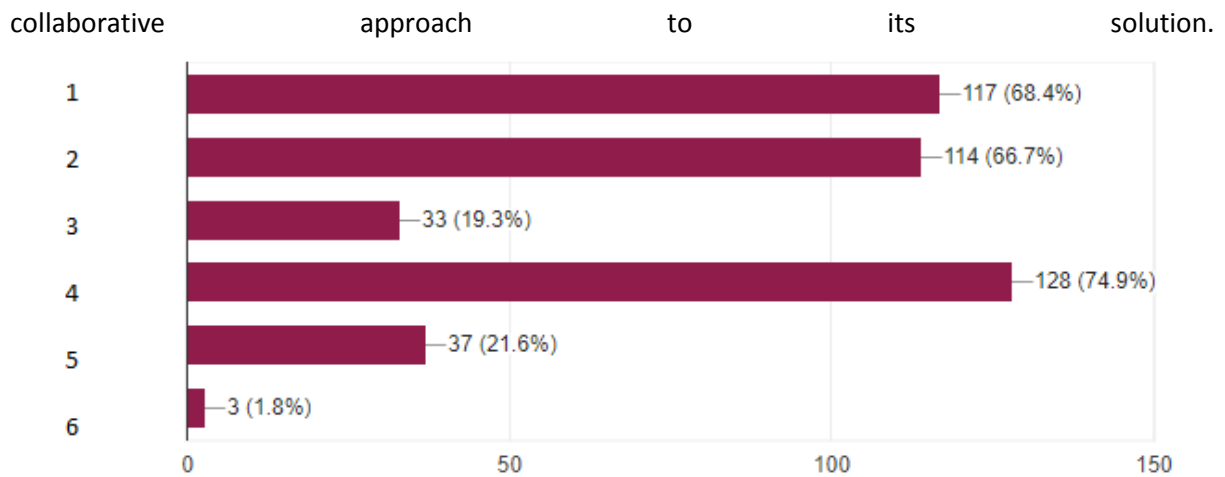


Figure 2: Purpose of partnerships

Legend: 1: To solve a particular problem; 2: To Scale up;
 3: To fulfil a statutory requirement; 4: To influence other more powerful stakeholders; 5: Others; 6: All of the above

66% of the respondents feel that partnerships provide a way to scale up their operations and expand their agenda. Most community based organisations, and NGOs are localised in their reach. As much as their local presence is important, it is accepted that most of the socio-economic problems are not solvable at the micro level hence tapping into resources and knowledge of other stakeholders in the partnership is helpful in scaling up their impact.

19% of the respondents felt that they enter into partnerships to fulfil statutory requirements.

As evident from the findings above, collaborations here refer to a multi-party, multi – level, multi-institutional collaboration beyond interpersonal collaborations across few interested individuals. Such partnerships involve stakeholders who exercise various degrees of power. Hence for each partnership to be successful they must be structured with clearly defined goals, roles and responsibility; only then can the stakeholders bring to bear their expertise, skills and innovation to solve the problems identified. Liese and Beisheim (2011) argue that the effectiveness of MSPs partly depends on how ambitious and stringent the goals have been set. High levels of precision limits the room for interpretation and innovation while lower degrees of precision allow for discretion and ambiguity. Precise rules and goals also have a stabilizing and reassuring effect on governments and firms to invest resources when trying to achieve the goals of the partnership (Keohane and Victor 2011). Building trust and improved collaboration among stakeholders to the level of consensus regarding strategies and goals increases the likelihood for success (Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2007). Hence, goal-setting is not only about the end product but also the way in which goals were set in a collaborative and inclusive process.

Which entities commonly engage in partnerships?

Partnerships feature collaborations between various stakeholders affected by the problem to come together to redefine and explore new approaches to solving these problems. Such partnerships can be local, regional, national and international in nature. These stakeholders, such as the government and its agencies at various levels from the local to the national; international and multi-lateral agencies; funding organisations; business, NGOs, media and academia come together to solve a specific problem. The survey finds more than 90% of the respondents partnering with the NGOs, 80% with the community (including community based organisations) and around 73.7% with the government (at various levels from village to national). International agencies have featured in nearly 70% of the partnerships forged by the respondents and 68.4% have partnered with academia. Private sector and media account for 68% and 42% of the partnerships forged by the respondents.

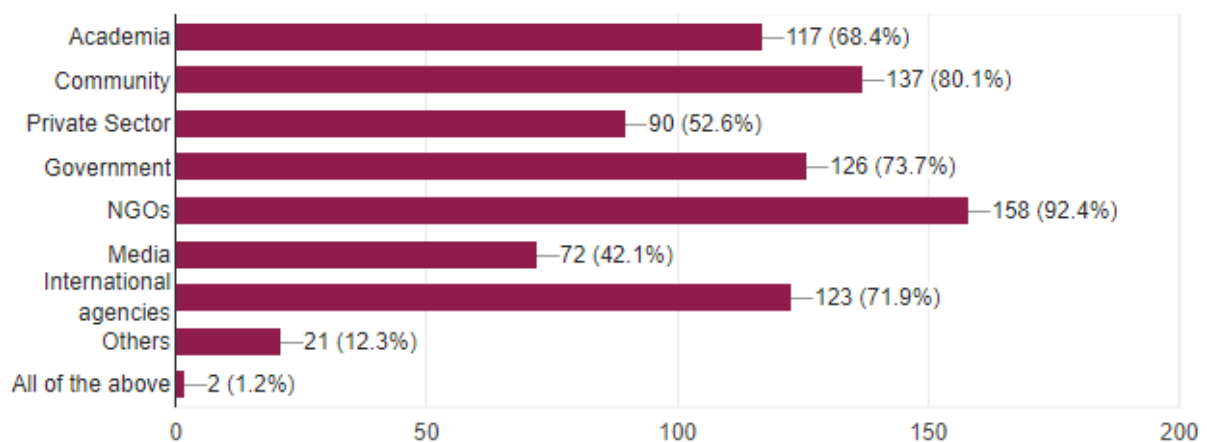


Figure 2: Stakeholders in the partnership

According to Tandon (1991), some stakeholders may not be very obvious, but many are. In a collaborative approach, significant stakeholders come together in defining, framing and solving the problem. Tandon (1991), goes on to say, stakeholders may choose to join in or not to join in at a different stage or drop out at a subsequent stage.

For such partnerships to succeed, one needs the combined willingness, capability, and resources of partners. As much as it is important to engage the most powerful and influential members (Beisheim 2012; Newell et al. 2012), it is equally important to involve the relatively less powerful members of such as community organisations and NGOs.

What are the key challenges that these partnerships face today?

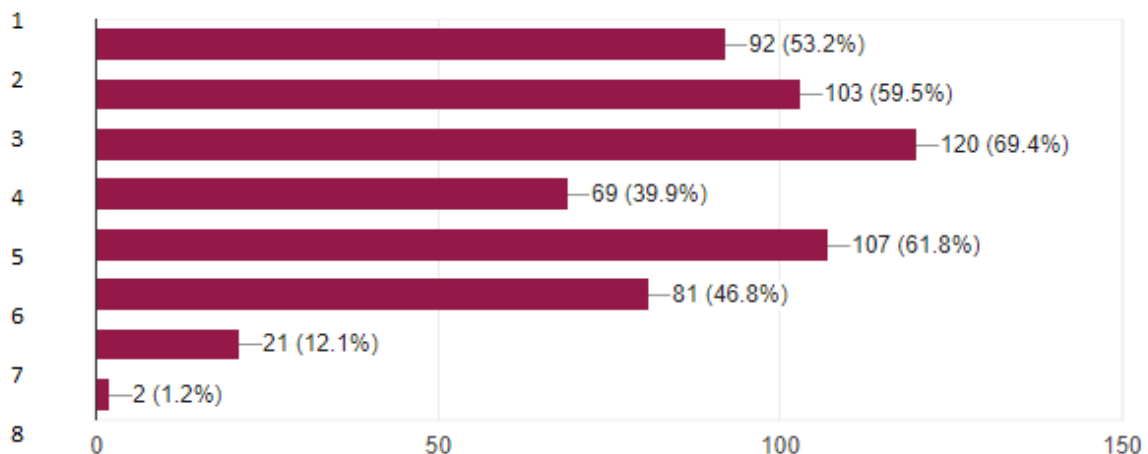


Figure 4: Challenges in partnerships

Legend: 1. Power Dynamics; 2. Availability of resources and information; 3. Varied interest and agenda of different partners; 4. Dissimilar styles; 5. Different perspectives; 6. Ambiguous roles and responsibilities; 7. Others; 8. All of the above.

Almost 70% of the respondents feel that different parties bring different interests and it is challenging to work around these. According to Tandon (1991), when government agencies come together with international agencies, community based organisations and NGOs it must be understood that each of these parties are likely to represent a different set of interests. These varied interests are likely to shape the path for their collaborative effort. Effective partnerships explicitly share these differences of interests and develop a way to use it to strengthen the partnership.

Nearly 62% of the respondents feel that different parties bring different perspectives to the partnership. Perspectives here mean how the parties understand the given problem and its underlying causes. These differences may get represented or may remain hidden but it is important to acknowledge that the perspectives of the partners will vary in a collaborative effort.

Almost 60% of the respondents felt that availability of resources and information in a partnership was a major challenge. It needs to be recognised that different stakeholders in a partnership have access to varying degrees of resources and information. For example, the kind of data the urban deprived communities have about their sanitation and housing problems in their slums, is different from the kind of information that national health and housing authorities, ministries of urban development, research institutions, and international bodies have on the same issue. These differences in information and data reinforce the perspectives of different partners and the interests they represent (Tandon, 1991). Sharing information that each partner has in the very beginning can create better understanding of all partners and enable joint work.

More than half of the respondents felt that collaboration between parties requires a certain degree of power balancing. Power struggles between partners can arise early in the partnership or emerge

later in the cooperation. Sometimes these arise as a consequence of the success of the cooperation. Less visible conflicts may indicate that conflict remains covert when there are no strong organisations to balance the power asymmetries. Power balancing factors are important in 'levelling the playing field' among the partners. The intervention of third parties that enable mutual influence by otherwise unequal partners can play the balancing role. These third parties can provide support to the positions of the lower powered groups in the partnership that might have been otherwise ignored (Tandon, 1991).

Almost 47% respondents felt that ambiguous roles and responsibilities are a major challenge in partnerships. Nearly 40% of them felt the dissimilarity in styles of communication, of meetings, of interaction, is challenging in a partnership. Community based organisations, NGO leaders, government officials and representatives of international agencies all represent different styles of communication, articulation, speech, language, dress, etc. It is important to recognise these differences at the outset, and design practical ways to overcome the same.

What factors contribute to successful partnerships?

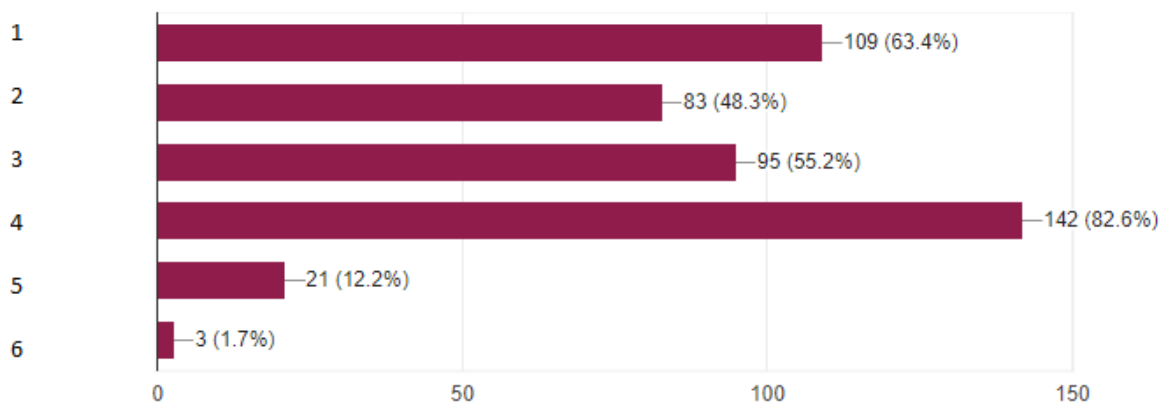


Figure 3: Features of a successful partnership

Legend: 1: Reframing the problem; 2: Strong organisation/collective of relatively lesser powered partners; 3: A clearly defined structural mechanism (Multi-party/ multi-level/ multi institutional partnerships which have clear goals); 4: Mutual empowerment of all the partners to work with each other (Some partners like POs & NGOs might not have the capacities to work at the scale of the government agencies. If their capacities are not built then these agencies might not be able to match the levels of aggregation of the other parties.) 5: Others; 6: All of the above

The survey findings reveal that 82.6% of the respondents feel that a successful partnership should empower its stakeholders, especially the ones who have been historically marginalised. It can be inferred that collaborative efforts need to simultaneously focus attention on strengthening such organisations and their leadership in order for such MSPs to work. This might be a situation where

the national governments and international donor agencies invite community based organisations and NGOs to forge a partnership. A common approach of the civil society is to collaborate with the community based organisations to form an alliance which can then negotiate, enter and sustain a partnership.

More than 63% of the respondents felt that cooperation was contingent on reframing the problem to make joint actions possible. Initiatives which are based on joint decision-making impart a heightened sense of ownership amongst the stakeholders. According to IDR (1992), the reframing process often puts forth catalytic ideas and influential individuals who then articulate and champion the possibility of new solutions.

More than 55% of the respondents felt that although informal relations were important at the outset and during conflict resolution, formal agreements were also important to organise joint work.

How crucial is leadership in making partnerships successful?

Leadership of individuals and organizations is considered a key ingredient, and during the course of the partnership’s life-time, different types of leadership are needed. The start of a partnership needs an entrepreneur or broker (Glasbergen 2010), “convener” (Gray 2007), or “orchestrator” (Abbott and Snidal 2010). Leader plays catalytic role of bringing people to the table, mitigating diverging opinions, and driving the difficult start-up process forward. Such a role requires communication, both formal and informal.

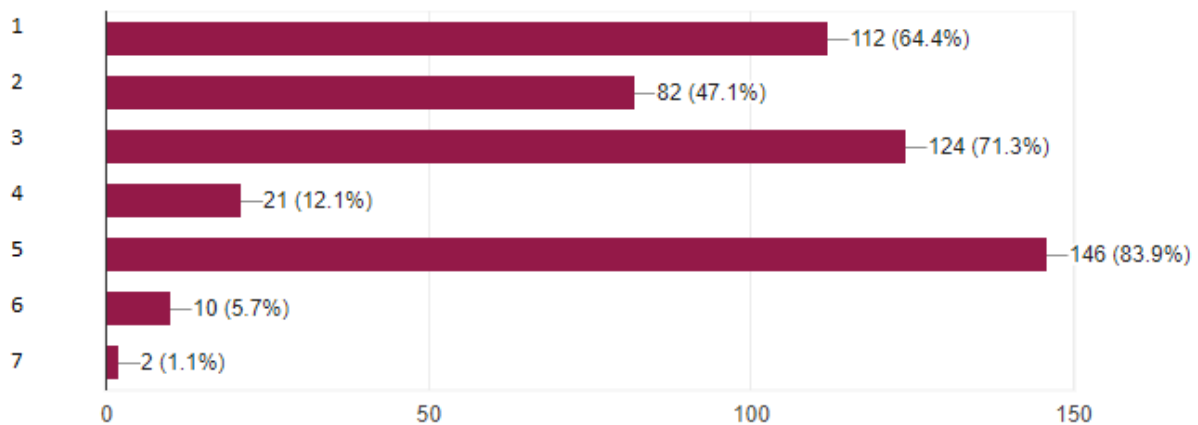


Figure 4: Conflict resolution in a partnership

Legend: 1. Informal communication between individuals; 2. Organisations playing a bridging role within the partnership; 3. Acknowledgement and appreciation of diversity of the partners; 4. Mediation of third parties outside the partnership (international donors); 5. Clear communication of roles of different partners; 6. Others; 7. All of the above

It is important to recognise right at the initial phase of the partnership that conflicts are likely to arise, especially if the collaboration is between partners who have history of adversarial relations. Since collaborations and conflicts go hand in hand, leadership becomes critical:

- a. 83% of the responders felt that clear communication of roles and responsibilities help in avoiding confusion and ambiguity which helps in avoiding conflict. Hence the leader needs to facilitate the communication of clear roles and responsibilities, in line with the goals of the partnership.
- b. Nearly 71% of the respondents felt that the acknowledgement of diversity in the partnership results in avoiding and mitigating conflicts in the collaboration. The leader should actively identify the diversity of capacities and resources between partners and facilitate the acknowledgement and appreciation of the same by each partner.
- c. 64% of the respondents feel that informal communication between representatives of stakeholders is useful in diffusing situations of conflict. Informal communication can permit exchanges of views that enable mutual influence without individuals being forced to prematurely commit into unpopular and controversial stands, thereby avoiding conflict. A leader can encourage the representatives of stakeholders engage in informal communication or provide a tacit support to the informal relationships in interest of the partnership.
- d. 47% of the respondents felt that some organisations need to play a bridging role (IDR, 1992). The leader can play this catalytic role where she acts as an intermediary bridging the differences among various stakeholders. It is difficult for parties to come together on the basis of a negative historical relationship and perceptions about the other. This can be mediated by the leader playing the catalytic role
- e. 21% of the respondents felt that external agencies/ third parties need to mediate to diffuse a conflict situation. According to IDR (1992), third parties can provide information, resources and neutral perspectives that allow the regulation or resolution of the conflict both formally and informally. They can provide alternative ways to deal with the deadlock. A leader can invite such a third party or lend support to the partner by accepting the mediation of the third party to resolve the conflict.

While effective leadership is recognized as an important feature of successful partnerships, it remains difficult to operationalize. Effective leadership needs to be inclusive to various stakeholder groups especially the historically marginalised communities, including women. Gender sensitive and inclusive leadership is necessary in order to play the bridging roles in partnerships.

In some circumstances, such cooperation is effective, both in solving specific problems and for building social and institutional capacity required for future development. Under the SDGs, the responsibility of achieving these goals are shared between existing institutions, including NGOs, Government, businesses, international agencies, and higher education institutes.

Partnerships for SDGs: Implications for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

What do above findings and analysis suggest about the requirements of achieving Goal 17 of SDGs?

What does it imply for HEIs to become active and effective partners?

I. MSPs are essential to effective achievement of SDGs. Most existing partnerships do not include HEIs. HEIs have to 'revisit' their core functions of teaching and research through the lens of SDGs.

1. Engaged teaching will mean building partnerships with local development actors. Teaching of all subjects may become more engaged with real world, society-at-large, and not merely in classroom. Innovative pedagogical tools can be adapted so that students learn about locally distinctive aspects of their discipline, whatever it may be. If a mutually beneficial partnership with local communities and institutions—business, government, civil society--- is built, teaching and research may become supportive of new knowledge and its use. Further, structured and regular interactions with local actors may generate research questions that have relevance for achievement of SDGs locally. In essence, a well thought out & calculated partnership, in turn increases the impact it has on the process as a whole (Tandon, 2017).
2. It will imply overcoming disciplinary silos, and working in a multi-disciplinary approach to both teaching and research. SDGs relevant knowledge generation and mobilisation will require different academic disciplines to come together, in a way to combine different knowledge forms, modes of knowledge and knowledge production. It will also require valuing indigenous, practical, experiential knowledge, in addition to theoretical and experimental (Tandon, 2017). Both teaching & research may include inter/cross-disciplinary field practice, secondment and immersion programs. Academic rewards and research/teaching grants may need to be so linked as to stimulate such partnerships (Tandon, 2007).

II. Complementarity of expertise, resources and networks are essential features of such partnerships. Sharing information readily and respecting expertise and resource of other partners is essential for successful partnerships.

1. HEIs interact with civil society, local government and business from a position of 'sole' repositories of knowledge. Even when they have partnered with others, it has mostly been a kind of charity approach, which assumes that the academics know all, and it is the others who need to be 'taught'. This approach has been one of the main reasons why HEIs have not featured in partnership agendas for development. This monopolistic knowledge perspective of the academia is what needs to be altered. Unless and until, they modify this approach to become respectful to 'other's' knowledge, perspectives and styles of working, achieving successful partnerships is difficult. One of the ways to demonstrate such respectful partnership models, innovations and pilots, the three higher education missions of teaching, research and service may be designed to be carried out in an *engaged* stance (Tandon, 2017).

2. HEIs tend to approach others in a 'teaching' mode; openness to learning from others will be essential for effective partnerships. Academics are teachers. They teach what they know. When they enter into partnerships with others, they start teaching what they know. They rarely listen to what others say. They are so busy teaching others that their listening to others' experiences, knowledge and perspectives becomes impaired. Academics need to learn from others in the partnerships.

III. *Bridging leadership to re-balance power asymmetries is crucial for effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.*

1. HEIs have enormous intellectual, physical, financial and human resources; this creates huge power differentials with other partners. In many societies, regions and communities, HEIs are some of the most resourced institutions. They have enormous physical infrastructure (classrooms, labs, residences, office space, recreational facilities, etc.) which are far superior to anything available to local communities, or even local government agencies (Tandon, 2017). This creates major power differentials. This aspect has also emerged in this study's survey findings, where the respondents have identified power differentials as one of the main challenges to building partnerships. In this light, it is even more important for HEIs to be mindful to these dynamics when working with others. Sensitivity to such power rebalancing would be critical for HEIs to contribute effectively.
2. Readiness in sharing such enormous resources within the partnership may require more flexible and responsive leadership of HEIs. HEIs do not have the orientation towards sharing their resources. Leadership in HEIs also plays a critical role in defining and determining the partnerships which the HEIs engage in. UNESCO Chair's study on 'Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships' clearly brought out the importance of leadership in defining the 'engagement' strategy of universities and how the latter approaches different kinds of 'external' partnerships (Hall et. al., 2015). Such a kind of leadership then steers the vision and mission of universities in a way which facilitates and encourages vibrant and respectful partnerships.

IV. *It is essential that capacity for working effectively in multi-stakeholder partnerships is strengthened amongst all actors. Such capacities are especially crucial for HEIs, its academics, administrators and students to learn.*

1. Capacity to build, nurture and engage with multiple partners is weak in most HEIs as they operate within the confines of the university/institutional campus. Engagement with external partners in the real world may require new human capacities and institutional mechanisms. Higher education systems and institutions need to become proactive in building stronger, beneficial partnerships with SDGs actors, such as governments, civil society, the media, industries, policy think tanks, research institutions etc. for maximum impact and results in moving this inclusive global sustainable development agenda forward (GUNi, 2017). This would require dedicated capacity

building of all its stakeholders (faculty, students, administrators etc.), and also create enabling institutional mechanisms to realize this agenda (Hall et. al., 2015).

2. Capacity to co-construct knowledge with humility is not something available in a HEI. HEI's continue to be little the knowledge prevalent in the communities as well as the experience of the practitioners. Knowledge generated through time tested methods by scholars engaged with HEIs find currency in the discourse around 'whose knowledge counts?' The actual practice of co-construction of knowledge leaves a lot to be desired. (Hall, Tandon and Tremblay, 2015). According to Hall, Tandon and Tremblay, even when HEIs are mandated to foster engagement with the communities, it is rare that research is mandated as a part of community engagement (2015). Researchers and students need to learn CBPR and related methodologies for mutually respectful co-construction of new knowledge necessary for achieving SDGs. HEIs need to invest in capacity building of students and faculty (and in community and civil society) to learn about partnerships, nuances of collaborative research, such as community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodologies (Tandon et. al., 2016). UNESCO Chair's Knowledge for Change (K4C) initiative aims to build capacities of next generation researchers in such collaborative research, which it calls as 'Community Based Research'. K4C also builds on 'partnerships' between universities and civil society for addressing the SDG goals.

V. *Favourable policies and individuals can create an enabling environment to foster deeper engagements between HEI's and other stakeholders.*

National policies can have a substantial impact on the willingness of HEIs to engage with multiple stakeholders as they create a formal expectation to comply with. For example, the fact that the UK government has created a structure to encourage public engagement in HE, the NCCPE, clearly makes a difference. The recent decision by the University Grants Commission in India to allocate significant funds to the creation of a new generation of Centres for Community University Engagement is another example. (Hall, Tandon and Tremblay, 2015).

Such efforts can be augmented by the presence of favourable top leadership in ministries and HEIs. Hall, Tandon and Tremblay (2015), "found that middle level leadership such as Deans, Chairs, Unit Heads and Centre Directors-play a critical role. They are the ones who mediate between the academic staff and students and at the higher levels of administration." Their openness to change can make a difference.

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