

Expert Group Meeting
“Dialogue in the Social Integration Process:
Building peaceful social relations – by, for and with people
New York, 21 – 23 November 2005

Background Paper:
„Building Multi-stakeholder Processes for Social Integration“

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1. Introduction

My input to this important work on „Dialogue in the Social Integration Process“ comes from the perspective of „Multi-stakeholder Processes“ (MSPs), which include multi-stakeholder dialogues and multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly in the area of sustainable development. It also comes from a social psychological perspective, which implies a focus on individual and group functioning, and the linkages between the two.

I believe that at the core of „Dialogue in the Social Integration Process“ and dialogues and partnerships in other areas and sectors lie some common, fundamental principles, most prominently those of inclusion, equity, transparency, and building mutual respect and trust through identifying shared values and goals and pooling resources. The commonalities between the different areas of social integration, sustainable development, information society development, corporate responsibility, and the like, outweigh the specifics and differences. The current debates in those areas demonstrate that increased attention on „people and process“ brings out similar lessons, including, among others: the need to invest time and resources in good process, and in capacity development for meaningful participation; the benefits of independent but knowledgeable facilitation; and the risks of „dialogue fatigue“.

Multi-stakeholder processes are not appropriate for every situation. In the Social Integration Process (as modeled by Donelan et al.), there are societal situations that prevent meaningful engagement in dialogue and partnerships across stakeholder groups. Dialogue and partnerships are not a replacement for justice – perpetrators need to be brought to justice. However, dialogue, mutual accommodation and, where necessary and appropriate, collaborative action (partnerships) between societal groups are needed to develop and maintain individual citizen commitment to a societal contract for peace and security, and for development that is beneficial and indeed owned by all. Without such participation and ownership, societies cannot hope to develop in a peaceful and sustainable way.

The present paper begins with some definitions in order to clarify the multi-stakeholder-processes perspective and outlining principles and different kinds of MSPs. It then briefly discusses linkages and commonalities between peace building dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The following is dedicated to exploring some of the principal benefits and risks, as well practical challenges of a „dialogue“ and/or „partnership“ approach. It then presents a number of lessons learned that help to address such challenges. The paper concludes with a few illustrative examples of multi-stakeholder processes.

1. Multi-stakeholder Processes

Multi-stakeholder processes are processes of decision-finding (and possibly decision-making) that aim to:

- Bring together all major stakeholders in equitable representation;
- Achieve equity and accountability in communication between stakeholders; and
- Are based on democratic principles of transparency and participation.

This is a broad definition, and a normative as well as a pragmatic one. It is normative in the sense that it is guided by fundamental values and principles that are largely not culturally specific but are among the key

fundamentals of functioning human communities worldwide, as much as they are manifested in the UN Charter and other key UN documents. Most cultures and societies have developed ways and mechanisms of communication between different groups, for sharing information and building mutual accommodation and consensus.

The definition is pragmatic in the sense that it is guided by what we know about the practical benefits of meaningful participation. Practicing such principles like equity and accountability increases the likelihood of success – achieving meaningful dialogue and effective collaboration – because of the way people function individually and in groups.

Multi-stakeholder processes are a relatively new phenomenon in current debates at local, national and international levels. MSPs are gaining increasing interest, particularly in the - albeit broad - context of sustainable development. While acknowledging that they are by no means a panacea for all sustainability challenges, they are being hailed by many as a more inclusive and effective tool for complex, ambiguous and dynamic challenges.

In many international agreements, governments and agencies have been underlining the importance of stakeholder involvement. Increasingly, public authorities at all levels experiment with various forms of engaging with their stakeholder environment. Many sustainable development related policy decisions acknowledge that sustainable development cannot be achieved without effective stakeholder engagement in policy formulation, implementation, and implementation review.

In his Millennium Report, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said: „Better governance means greater participation, coupled with accountability. Therefore, the international public domain – including the United Nations – must be opened up further to the participation of the many actors whose contributions are essential to managing the path of globalization. Depending on the issues at hand, this may include civil society organizations, parliamentarians, local authorities, scientific associations, educational institutions and many others.“

MSPs, and most notably issues of stakeholder engagement, also feature prominently in the debate on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Governance. Successful companies have always been those who also relate well to their stakeholders, i.e. investors, regulators, customers, and trade unions. In recent years, however, many companies have opened up further, entering into dialogue and building long-term relationships with groups beyond their traditional stakeholders. They are engaging with environmental organizations, community groups, civil society networks, intergovernmental agencies, and so on. The main reason is that today, economic success is not only determined by effective investment, high quality products and services, and legal compliance. It is also increasingly dependent on the *Social License to Operate* – society at large, and its range of stakeholder groups, approving of what a company is doing and how.

Annan echoed this understanding when he launched the UN Global Compact at the World Economic Forum in 1999, and said: „The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partners involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today’s world, we depend on each other.“

Stakeholders. I believe a pragmatic but inclusive definition is most useful: “Stakeholders are those who have an interest in a particular decision, either as individuals or representatives of a group. This includes people who influence a decision, or can influence it, as well as those affected by it.”¹

This definition is inclusive in the sense that it allows to acknowledge even individuals as stakeholders, and that it also points to those that *can* influence a decision (or policy, programme, etc), not only those who actually do exert influence at a certain point in time.

In the sustainability discourse, stakeholders are often thought of as the nine so-called “Major Groups” identified in Agenda 21, agreed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED / Earth Summit; Rio de Janeiro, 1992). The Major Groups are: Women, Children & Youth, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers & Trade Unions, Business & Industry, Scientific & Technological Community,

¹ Hemmati, M. 2002: Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability – Beyond Deadlock and Conflict. London: Earthscan, p2. See www.minuhemmati.net/eng/msp/msp_book.htm

Farmers. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the body mandated with the follow-up of UNCED and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002, welcomes participation of those groups, and works with networks and organizations representing them, for example, when preparing multi-stakeholder dialogues that are held regularly at CSD sessions.

In many processes, people routinely gather those nine groups in multi-stakeholder dialogues. In others, people use the concept of „tri-sector“ or „tripartite“ process: government, business, and civil society. It is important, however, to think outside such boxes. Careful, case-by-case stakeholder analysis relies on a close look at the issues, situation, and dynamics at hand. It forms the basis of assembling those groups and individuals who need to be part of the process to achieve the desired outcome.

Due to the increased recognition of the need to involve stakeholders in policy-making and implementation, many organizations nowadays, across the sectors, try out different forms and temporary or permanent mechanisms of engagement. There is a lot of experimenting going on, in various fora and at all levels.

Dialogue. MSPs are a new kind of decision-finding and governance structures and processes. They have wide implications as regards institutional and political culture - implications that are often overlooked. MSPs require not only new institutional structures, meeting styles and knowledge management. They also fundamentally challenge the culture of politics: While acknowledging the very diverse interests of different actors, they seek to overcome competition. They challenge all participants to interact in a way that allows identifying common ground and ways forward that are based on mutual respect and consensus. They require openness and transparency instead of corridor or “green room” dealing; active listening instead of fighting for speaking time; understanding and role-taking instead of convincing or coercing.

MSPs are essentially about creating a space where dialogue can take place, ‘a neutral, free, and ordered space, where violence is replaced by verbal debate, shouting by listening, chaos by calm’ (Kader Asmal, the Chair of the World Commission on Dams, 2000). MSPs ideally develop a culture of ‘dialogue’, i.e. a manner of open, honest communication that facilitates joint learning, and hence potentially leads to changes in individuals’ opinions and the group’s approach and actions. At the best of times, dialogue becomes *generative* – understanding, solutions, and actions emerge that could not have been developed by the individuals alone. The exchange serves to bring together diverse views and ideas – and because they are brought together, and in a respectful and creative way, innovative solutions can be generated.² This is particularly true when people joint in dialogue are diverse, as human creativity is enhanced by diversity.

Principles of multi-stakeholder processes have been mentioned before as a key fundament of their success. Such guiding process principles include, among others: accountability; equity; honesty; inclusiveness; learning; ownership; and transparency.

They relate back to the definition provided above:

- “Bringing together all major stakeholders in equitable representation” means inclusion of all relevant stakeholders;
- “Achieving equity and accountability in communication between stakeholders”: equity and accountability depend on honesty and transparency;
- “Being based on democratic principles of transparency and participation”: transparency and honesty build trust, participation breeds ownership;
- Learning is a result of meaningful engagement, of dialogue rather than negotiation or debate.

These principles overlap, mutually reinforce each other, and can hardly be fulfilled without each other. All of them serve to build trust among participants. All aim to create a culture of possibilities for dialogue and collaboration rather than separation and hostility. All challenge the whole of the group to become carriers and leaders of and in the process - to make it their own process, and to contribute actively and creatively.

² See www.generative dialogue.org for information about an ongoing project bringing together practitioners, promoters and researchers of ‘generative dialogue’.

Looking at these principles it is clear that MSPs are not the traditional way of doing things. The challenge is to create a space that all participants share, and regard as shared. In a successful MSP, people feel united by their shared purpose and their agreed process, respected in their diversity, appreciated for their contributions, learning from each other and learning together, and equitably contributing to building consensus and creating innovative solutions.

Different kinds of MSPs. The definition of MSPs presented above is rather broad. Therefore, it will be useful to look at the different kinds of such processes:

MSPs differ in scope and purpose: They range from hearings and consultations, to dialogue, to consensus building, and to collaborative action (i.e. partnerships), and to joint monitoring and evaluation. Hearings, consultations and dialogue do not require consensus building, whereas collaborative action in partnerships does.

MSPs can be found at all levels - from global to regional to national to local. Examples at the global level include the UN Global Compact; the Task Force on Public Participation at the UNECE Aarhus Convention; the UN CSD Multi-stakeholder Dialogues; the UN Financing for Development Process (eg stakeholder hearings before the Monterrey Summit); the Global Reporting Initiative; the International Standard Organization's process on Social Responsibility; and many others. Examples at the national level include the German Climate Protection Programme; UK Aviation Industry Sustainability Strategy; the Indonesian Government's process to initiate sustainable development partnerships across the country; and so on. At the local level, we find Local Agenda 21 processes; companies engaging with local communities; and an increasing number of partnerships between public authorities, business, and civil society groups.

MSPs are addressing a wide range of issues - from transboundary conflict (eg over water); to solving municipal waste problems while producing cheap energy; developing corporate strategy on sustainable agriculture; creating powerful public health campaigns; and so on. In fact, it is hard to think of issues that cannot or should not be addressed with the inclusion of all stakeholders.

MSPs have various kinds of participants, ranging from large groups and their associations and networks at the global level to individuals who play a key role in a local development effort. One important aspect in this context is the relationship of MSP participants to their constituencies. Functioning feedback loops need to be in place so that representatives of large organizations or networks actually remain able to represent their constituencies throughout the process.

There are independent MSPs as well as those linked to official decision-making: Here, engagement ranges from the mere provision of views (government hearings and consultations) to being part of decision-making. However, most processes operate the general principle of "voices, not votes". The level of linkage to official decision-making also impacts the level of formality, and often affects the ability to "dialogue" – rather than negotiate. In intergovernmental processes, for example, country representatives are mandated to represent their national position, not to engage in joint learning and individual transformation.

Official participatory mechanisms involving multiple stakeholders vary considerably, for example: experts inputs to governments and UN bodies; stakeholder consultations during preparatory processes at various levels; stakeholder representatives on government delegations; stakeholders as session participants; multi-stakeholder dialogues at international meetings; inclusion of stakeholders on agency governing boards (eg UNAIDS) and other monitoring bodies.

Independent processes often take the form of "policy networks" that bring together actors from different sectors in dialogue, often creating an exchange or even joint strategizing that would not be possible to achieve in "official" fora. A prominent example is the World Commission on Dams. Independent processes can also be partnerships for joint action, which are becoming increasingly popular in the sustainable development context. Such partnerships can be found, for example, in the UN DSD database of 'Johannesburg Partnerships'.

It is clear that not all such processes develop spaces for „dialogue“ as defined above. However, in many cases, dialogue develops between participants, be it within the process itself or in its margins. Whenever

that is the case, the likelihood of success – in terms of increased mutual understanding and the ability to collaborate – is enhanced.

Linkages and Commonalities: Multi-Stakeholder Processes and Dialogue for Social Integration: As outlined above, I believe that the concept of multi-stakeholder processes can serve as an overarching one, including processes of dialogue, consensus-building, and collaborative action. Within such a framework, “Dialogue for Social Integration” is a similar concept, maybe with less obvious inclusion of collaborative action, and a more defined focus on a certain set of purposes, i.e. social integration. I don’t want to engage in an extended theoretical discussion of the different terms and concepts here, but highlight several commonalities that suggest close linkages between the two frameworks or models and future collaboration between people working on them: A *focus on people* is common to both MSPs and Dialogue for Social Integration. The emphasis is on processes that are driven and owned by people and serve their purposes. Another common focus is that on *good process*, which requires investment of time and resources to create the spaces that are needed for people to engage in dialogue, ideally generative dialogue. Both frameworks advocate a *principled approach*, and at the same time outline a *range of practices* that allow putting those principles into practice, depending on the specific circumstances in each case. They also share a *pragmatic approach* that complements ethical values and principles, advocating to work with the stakeholders willing to engage, and seeking opportunities in a range of settings and activities within societies. Finally, I believe MSPs and Dialogues for Social Integration share the core element of *dialogue*, and a form of deep, honest, trust building, and creative communication that can take place within the ‘safe space’ of a well governed process.

2. Principal Benefits, Risks, and Challenges

Every multi-stakeholder process, be it a dialogue or a collaborative action (partnership) has specific benefits and risks to deal with. However, among the common characteristics of MSPs are also some principal benefits, risks, and challenges that I briefly want to discuss here.

Principal benefits of multi-stakeholder processes include aspects of quality, credibility, likelihood of implementation, and outreach:

Quality: Quality of decisions is increased due to more, and more diverse information made available to decision-makers, for example, in multi-stakeholder dialogues. Input from a wider range of perspectives furthers understanding and knowledge. Diversity is conducive to human creativity: more creative solutions can arise in a diverse group setting. In collaborative partnerships, the pooling of capacities and resources from different actors allows taking actions that one alone could not undertake.

Credibility: Inclusion generally reduces criticism and protest from those who would otherwise have been on the outside of a process. A decision, plan, or standard that has been developed by all relevant stakeholder groups is more likely to be supported by all groups. People know that a process that includes all stakeholders is the result of debate, discussion, consensus building, compromise, and - in the best of cases - of dialogue and joint learning. The outside perception is that the result of an inclusive, participatory process is more valuable than the product of a single group or organization.

Likelihood of implementation: Higher quality generally makes a product more workable. And participation breeds ownership: those who were part of the process will co-own it, and implement the results or be supportive of implementation. Those who perceive the process and its results from the outside will find it more credible, and hence will be more likely to support and implement it, rather than stand in its way.

Outreach: Wide participation of all relevant stakeholders will help to disseminate and promote process outcome(s). All those involved will, during and after the process, regularly communicate with their constituencies, who in turn will spread the message. The message will be delivered by people and organizations “closer” to the various audiences than any single stakeholder can be. This not only ensures a wider and deeper dissemination of the outcomes itself but also an increased credibility of the message, as the ‘messenger’ is perceived as more similar to the audiences themselves, and hence more trustworthy.

In the long term, there are less tangible benefits of *democratic development* through solid processes of meaningful participation, joint learning, and joint ownership; and *conflict prevention* in societies that engage in multi-stakeholder processes. MSPs do foster mutual understanding – through interaction, people get to know each other better, which is one fundament of overcoming prejudice. This in turn is an important aspect of conflict prevention. Even individual positive contacts can contribute to a group's willingness to respect or tolerate another. In general, MSPs, at whatever level, help to weave webs of relationships across stakeholders within societies.

Principal Risks of multi-stakeholder processes include mostly concerns relating to quality and legitimacy, such as:

Undue increase of stakeholder influence: Involvement of business in UN processes, for example, has been criticized by civil society groups concerned about increased influence by a stakeholder group whose main purpose is maximizing profits, not enhancing livelihoods or fostering development and justice.

Biased stakeholder influence: Whenever a process or a multi-stakeholder group is skewed in terms of numbers and capacities for engagement, there is a danger that some voices will be heard more than others. Hence, decision-making can be unduly in favor of some groups, and disadvantaging others.

Lack of transparency towards the outside: MSPs, while possibly convened by democratically elected bodies, are not themselves elected. Participants representing certain stakeholder groups need to be scrutinized as to their relationship with their constituencies. But even if these questions are answered satisfactorily, there is the need to balance creating a “safe space” for dialogue among participants vs. being transparent towards the outside – constituencies, non-participating stakeholders, the general public.

Reputational risk of suboptimal processes: Any organization convening a process runs the risk of damaging their own, and others', reputation in case the process is unsuccessful, ends prematurely, erupts in conflict, and so on.

Dialogue Fatigue: This is a phenomenon increasingly observed as regards policy dialogues in particular. Many stakeholders, such as civil society groups, are frequently invited to dialogue events. This is a challenge in terms of capacity, but it also poses the question of effective outcomes. Processes aiming at and succeeding in bringing about concrete change, such as through collaborative action, are more likely to be embraced than those that seem to enter into dialogue in order to inform policy – including with no clear information or guarantee that the inputs from the dialogue process will actually have any effect.

There are a number of **practical challenges** that apply to most MSPs: These challenges represent risks, as processes will not be effective if these are not addressed effectively. They include:

Consensus on process design: Participants need to be comfortable with the process that they are involved in. They need to be able to operate effectively in the process; feel treated fairly, listened to, and so on (see Principles).

Resources in terms of money and time are a challenge in most processes: MSPs generally take more time than anticipated, and hence need to be resourced well. Generating funds for elaborate processes, however, is still rather difficult, as donor agencies and others are reluctant to invest in processes in which outcomes develop as the process unfolds. Work in indicators and evaluation procedures are needed to help address this challenge.

Human resources and capabilities: We should not assume that all participants are equally capable of participating effectively. Due to capacity gaps, a process may lose quality, and may give rise to frustrations. In many cases, it is worth exploring potential needs for capacity development, and possibly invest in training measures.

Clear principles and flexible practice: Principles may sound fine - the challenge is to put them into practice in any given process. As stated above, flexibility regarding practice needs to complement a firm and clear vision of principles. This is a difficult balance to maintain, particularly for the leadership and conveners of a process.

Participants and their constituencies need to maintain good communication throughout a process. The representative participating in the process may learn and change due to the interaction within the MSP. This may lead to increasing gaps between participants and their constituencies and an actual gap in representation. This will make it less likely that agreements and action plans developed within the MSP will be agreeable to the wider communities represented in the process, and hence not get implemented.

3. Some Lessons Learned

Drawing on research in social and organizational psychology, management studies, and political science, as well as my own and colleagues' practical experience, I would like to outline some lessons learned and practical measures that can help to address the challenges of multi-stakeholder processes:

Establishing clear rules of the game: The basic principles guiding the process should be made explicit and agreed explicitly. Consulting with participants on how to "walk the principled path with practical feet" is key. For example, transparency is an important principle, but has to be enacted in different ways, depending on the conditions at hand, like resources and access to ICT. Explicitly agreeing ground rules of communication is another aspect of this. One example of a key communication ground rule is: "Everybody brings things that are true to them but nobody holds 'the truth'." Adhering to this rule fosters openness and respect for diversity. Leaders of conveners of a process should strive to exemplify the basic principles and communication ground rules so as to encourage similar behavior from all participants.

Form Follows Function is a basic principle of all living things. In the context of MSPs, it means that while all such processes share certain characteristics and challenges, each of them serves a unique purpose. All MSPs have a unique purpose. The best way of putting agreed principles and goals into practice will be specific every time. Each MSP involves different groups and individuals; addresses specific issues, and takes place at a particular point in the history of that issue. MSPs differ as regards the opportunities and constraints the available resources represent.

Designing a process so that its form actually follows its function means to design it so that it best serves its purpose. In order to achieve that, flexibility as to which tools and mechanisms are used is key. For example, meeting formats, groupings, timings, consensus building procedures, internal and external communication, etc, can be designed in a range of ways. Choosing the ones that people most comfortable with is a prerequisite for success - otherwise the process blocks the path to achieving its purpose.

Process Design: Making the design of the whole process the first multi-stakeholder undertaking is a powerful measure to involve people and create ownership right from the start. Consulting everybody on suggested procedures, agendas and time tables, and asking an initial group to recommend further participants is a first joint and successful undertaking.

Ownership: Commitment and ownership by all is key to success. Building and maintaining ownership needs investment throughout the process. Various opportunities can be utilized in order to foster ownership: Explicitly agreeing the process' purpose and its design (see above); ensuring transparency about the process; ensuring inclusiveness in decision-making as much as possible (including in process design); supporting participants in their needs, eg when relating to their constituencies); giving participants active roles in the process; acknowledging all contributions; and dealing effectively with participants who are trying to undermine the process.

Meta-communication: Communicating about the way one communicates and collaborates is called "meta-communication" - having conversations about how we are communicating, how our meetings are being run, how the process develops, how it feels to be involved, what barriers people see. Spending time on meta-communication is useful investment in all MSPs, fostering ownership, and building reliable relationships. Meta-communication will provide opportunities to reaffirm the agreed purpose, and improve the process together if necessary. And it will create more trusted relationships between the individuals involved - relationships that are needed when things get tough.

A good example for the need for meta-communication is the fact that in many multi-stakeholder settings, we will have to deal with power gaps between partners who are not equally powerful, or have different bases of power – e.g. financial resources (often: business) vs. high moral ground (often: NGOs and CBOs). This poses challenges to partners that they need to address within their process. While striving for equity between partners, the common lack of appropriate tools to deal with power gaps leaves many processes at risk to be run inequitably and failing to benefit from the full contributions of all partners. A common tendency to taboo difficult questions is understandable but not helpful. Through creating a reflective setting and allowing the group to step back and look at their structure and process, possibly through role play, can help to further an open and fruitful conversation about power relations within the group.

The Power of Success: Psychologists have long studied stereotyping and prejudice, aiming to find out what causes it, how it works, and how it can possibly be overcome. It is essential for MSPs to break down stereotypes.

Stereotyping is normal, it is related to how our cognitive system functions. We group and categorize objects, situations, and people, in order to manage the otherwise overwhelming amount of informational input. Often, stereotypes are associated with negative connotations in relation to other groups (eg NGOs / business / governments), due to conflicting interests, differences in culture, and lack of trust - that's what we call prejudice.

Contact and communication can help overcome stereotyping and prejudice and build trust. But its effects are limited. What works best is to collaborate on a task and share the success of mastering the task together. Hence, it is beneficial to create situations of shared successes in the beginning of the process: it helps people to work together in the future.

Learning: No matter how experienced people are in MSPs or how knowledgeable they are about the issues at hand, learning is a key principle every time. Leaders and conveners in particular need to demonstrate the ability to learn and thus inject it in the process as a challenge for all participants. Every participant should be encouraged to learn from others, about others, and with others. Every participant should be encouraged to learn how to work together as a team (in this particular group), and come to creative, integrative solutions.

The same applies to the process itself - every MSP needs a learning approach towards its procedures and, in some cases, the issues developing over time. The flexibility of such learning needs to be balanced by maintaining clear vision and purpose.

Facilitation: Facilitation helps to get the best from groups of people who need to work together towards a common goal. Engaging independent facilitation enables all participants to focus on the issues, and off-loads moderating to a neutral other. Engaging a facilitator is often regarded as a signal of commitment to equitable process, and generally enhances group communication and collaboration.

There are benefits of engaging facilitators who are not familiar with the issues, such as enhanced neutrality. Yet there are also benefits of engaging facilitators who are knowledgeable about the issues – they understand the terms being used, are familiar with different stakeholder groups and their cultures, and so on. I don't believe that there is a standard answer to this question. In addition, the personal qualities of a facilitator - such as integrity, embracing diversity - are as important to the process as are formal aspects of background, knowledge and training.

Meeting Design: For every step of the way – every interaction, every meeting - carefully consider purpose, desired outcomes, agendas, and participants. It is useful to work backwards to determine what preparations people will need. When designing the agenda, consider who has to meet when to have people prepared for subsequent sessions. For example, if you need a common stakeholder position to be presented at some point (eg by NGOs), give that stakeholder group the time to meet and arrive at a common position.

As a general rule, consultation and consensus building always takes longer than one would think. It is well-invested time - otherwise, there will be roadblocks on issues, when there's actually only a gap in the process. The more time you invest in precisely identifying the challenges in the beginning, the less time you will need later, and the smoother things will go.

Last but by no means least - Resources: Transparency about resources of money and time that are available for a process is very important. Participants should be informed as to how big the budget for a process is, where the money is coming from, and how it is being spent. There also needs to be clarity all stakeholders' human resources and capabilities to engage in a process. Potential participants should be consulted about their potential capacity development needs in advance, and investments should be made to ensure meaningful participation from all.

4. Examples

I would like to illustrate some of what was said above with examples of multi-stakeholder processes, most of them geared towards building, supporting or implementing partnerships:³

The SEED Initiative – Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development: The Seed Initiative (Supporting Entrepreneurs in Environment and Development) aims to inspire, support and build the capacity of locally-driven, entrepreneurial, multi-stakeholder partnerships to contribute to the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. SEED itself is a multi-stakeholder partnership between IUCN – The World Conservation Union, UNEP, UNDP, a number of governments, Swiss Re, the UN Global Compact. The initiative focuses on 'business as unusual' - innovative action delivering real solutions through project cooperation among small and large businesses, local and international NGOs, women's groups, labor organizations, public authorities and UN agencies, and others working in the field of sustainable development. Through an international award scheme, intensive capacity development activities and a research programme, the Seed Initiative will stimulate and build the capacity of nascent partnerships executing action on the ground; create a conduit for investment in partnerships; disseminate good practice and lessons-learned from successful partnerships to inspire further new partnerships; and generate evidence-based research to assist policy makers. To illustrate, here are brief descriptions of the Winners of the SEED Awards 2005:

'Agua Para Todos' - Water for All, Bolivia: The municipal water company, a private consortium, the local community and a non-profit foundation form an entrepreneurial partnership to greatly extend access to affordable water in peri-urban areas of Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Cows to Kilowatts, Nigeria: A local NGO and a community-based organization join with technology innovators from Thailand and the Sustainable Ibadan Project to install a biogas plant running on abattoir effluents to create a source of domestic energy, abate pollution and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Global Marketing Partnership for SRI Indigenous Rice, Cambodia, Madagascar & Sri Lanka: Farming communities, a research institute, NGOs, and businesses collaborate to market indigenous varieties of rice grown with System of Rice Intensification (SRI) methods, thereby improving incomes, conserving biodiversity, and benefiting health and the environment.

Harvesting Seabuckthorn at the Top of the World, Nepal: A sustainable programme run by women community groups, a university, a foundation, and others to harvest seabuckthorn and create products for local and international markets, thereby improving livelihoods and safeguarding traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and the biodiversity of Nepal.

Madagascar's First Community Run Marine Protected Area: A partnership between the local community, international NGOs and research institutions aims to demonstrate the economic, conservation and fisheries benefits of Madagascar's first community-run Marine Protected Area (MPA).

More information at www.seedinit.org

³ Analyses of 20 examples of MSPs are presented in Hemmati, 2002 (s. above); these also include examples of policy-informing processes (hearings and dialogues). - Other empirical research on sustainable development partnerships is being carried out by, for example, the Global Public Policy Institute (Berlin), The Partnering Initiative (Cambridge), Columbia University (New York), and others.

Developing a Corporate Strategy for Sustainable Agriculture: In 2003, Bayer CropScience, a pesticides & seeds company engaged in an internal and external stakeholder consultation process in order to develop its sustainable agriculture strategy. A consultant with an NGO background helped to develop the first draft, which was then circulated among relevant people within the company, worldwide (internal stakeholder consultation). A lively discussion ensued, focusing on the definition of sustainable agriculture, and about the case studies used to support the strategic suggestions. The draft went through several revisions and was then presented at a meeting with key internal stakeholders. This meeting was also used to introduce the subsequent process of engaging external stakeholders in developing the strategy. Public affairs staff with relevant external networks, regional management, and consultants with an NGO background identified external stakeholders.

A workshop with about 40 internal and external stakeholders was held, where the draft strategy was discussed and more concrete suggestions on the company's future policies were developed in mixed groups. It was made clear that suggestions were to be taken into the internal discussions, but no promises were made in terms of taking them up: external stakeholders were consulted, not being asked to sign up to the strategy. After the workshop, the draft strategy was revised and put to internal consultations again. It was then presented to and agreed by the company board.

More information at www.bayercropscience.com/bayer/cropscience/cscms.nsf/id/SustainAgriculture

Sustainable Food Lab: The purpose of the Sustainable Food Lab is to accelerate the movement of sustainably produced food from niche to mainstream:

Why? Experiments to create sustainable food supply chains have, for the most part, resulted in niche products. The Food Lab will figure out and demonstrate how to create sustainable food chains for mainstream markets.

What? The Food Lab will create "living examples" of sustainable supply chains — not just reports or proposals. These prototypes and pilots will be supply chains that can become mainstream and profitable for all actors in the chain. Many will involve partnerships between government, farmers and civil society.

Who? The Lab Team and Executive Champions include leaders from Europe, the United States, Brazil and a few other developing countries. They are diverse stakeholders from, for example, farm worker unions, multinational corporations, government ministries, and environmental NGOs.

How? The design of this Lab is based on methods for deep innovation that have been developed and applied over the last 20 years by a group of action researchers now associated with the Global Leadership Initiative. The Lab's "U" methodology* involves the Lab Team in three sets of activities:

- Co-sensing to develop a shared understanding of the current and emerging realities of regional and international food systems. Team members will identify learning objectives and undertake on-the-ground Learning Journeys to see important places and meet remarkable people. With this experience, team members will construct scenarios of how sustainable food systems might unfold.
- Co-inspiring to share new knowledge and commitment.
- Co-creating to design prototypes and pilot a small number of innovations conceived by the Lab Team. The Lab Team and Executive Champions will then assess these pilots and plan to bring them to scale.

More information at www.glifood.org

The Implementation Conference: Stakeholder Action For Our Common Future: The purpose of the Implementation Conference (IC) was to inspire stakeholders to create collectively, clear, measurable on-going action to deliver the Sustainable Development Agreements. The Implementation Conference process and event was designed to support the movement of citizens and organizations coming together in multi-stakeholder processes or partnerships, at local, national and international levels. The IC was aiming to contribute to harnessing this energy, creativity and courage, and thus delivering real change on the ground. The

process and event poignantly highlighted the vital role of participation in generating commitment to action. Taking the lead from Sustainable Development Agreements, stakeholder identified areas of future collaboration and agreed action plans that they are pursuing in partnership initiatives.

Developed between June 2001 and August 2002, the process culminated in a 3-day event immediately preceding the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (24 – 26 August 2002). This event represented just one step towards inspiring collective action for sustainable development.

Preparations included several stages of consultations with a broad range of stakeholder organizations, governments, and international agencies:

- Consulting an International Advisory Board on which issues the IC process should focus on. This resulted in four issues (freshwater, energy, food security, and health), all to be addressed with a focus on the eradication of poverty, good governance, and gender equity.
- Establishing multi-stakeholder advisory groups to each issue, tasked with identifying potential areas for collaborative action and partner organizations to engage. This led to a gradual refining of an initially the extensive list of potential action areas identified for each issue.
- Identifying small, multi-stakeholder Action Plan Groups of interested parties and developing draft Action Plans. These groups communicated by email and telephone conferencing well before the event.
- Identifying "champions" for most of the Action Plan Groups, i.e. key stakeholder representatives who took an encouraging leadership role within their groups.
- Inviting participants who were interested in a draft Action Plan, and motivated and mandated to engage in a partnership agreement.
- Establishing a core team of professional facilitators who identified a gender-balanced team of facilitators from around the globe who had experience with multi-stakeholder settings and sustainable development issues. Individual facilitators were linked up with individual Action Plan groups.
- Facilitating the development of focused, tailor-made agendas for each workgroup, in close consultation with potential participants.

Over four hundred stakeholders from over 50 countries participated at the Implementation Conference itself. Supported by a 25 strong international facilitation team, 25 small, multi-stakeholder Action Plan groups worked over 3 days, developing 25 concrete, agreed and owned collaborative actions plans focusing on specific aspects of existing and emerging policy agreements within one of the four issues.

More information at www.earthsummit2002.org/ic