



## UNFIP

### Partnerships Beyond Borders

By Amir A. Dossal

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#### Article

This is the first in a series of articles exploring the many facets of partnerships supported by the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP). As United Nations engagement with the private sector, foundations and civil society continues to evolve, the opportunities for innovative partnerships increase. In the series, some of the UN private sector and foundation partners will convey their views on how partnerships with the United Nations are being built and are achieving impact on the ground.

The United Nations has a long history of building partnerships to leverage expertise, infrastructure, technology, funds and other resources to address global challenges facing humanity. In today's interconnected world, these challenges require collective responses from stakeholders. Working together, they can achieve goals that each working alone could not. UNFIP promotes and supports these efforts.



Photo/UN Foundation

In the past, public/private partnerships often meant, "You give us your money and we will spend it". Today, partnership means truly working together, sharing intellectual and financial resources. Partnerships that leverage the comparative advantages of Government, the private sector, foundations and civil society take advantage of synergies and can address complex, cross-cutting issues that no single sector has the resources and ability to manage. Single initiatives might not only fail to reach their potential but also work at cross-purposes or duplicate efforts.

The private sector can contribute infrastructure, technology expertise, management skills and other resources. Foundations bring knowledge and expertise, in addition to funding. Beyond mobilizing funds, partnerships create policy dialogue, advocacy efforts, technology transfer, technical assistance, information and learning. For the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed and Member States agreed

to forge new global partnerships with all sectors of civil society to meet, by 2015, a set of time-bound, measurable targets. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were designed to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and gender discrimination.

The challenges and opportunities facing the world, whether polio or HIV/AIDS, access to safe drinking water or environmentally sustainable growth, terrorism or migration, are too vast and too complex to be addressed by the United Nations and its Member States alone. Making business and civil society part of the solution is not only the best chance, but may be the only chance, to achieve the MDGs.

To meet these challenges, the UN system needs the infrastructure, intellectual capital and expertise of the private sector and foundations. As a result of General Assembly discussions, the United Nations is building a framework for working with corporate and foundation partners in the context of the MDGs. Most UN agencies, programmes and funds have now appointed private sector focal points to identify new partners and strengthen linkages with them. UNFIP and the Global Compact brought together these focal points in 2002 to share experiences and lessons learned and create a network within the UN family.

The success of the UN partnership with the United Nations Foundation (UNF) has spurred a multiplier effect, enabling UNFIP and the United Nations to attract and foster additional partnerships. UNFIP is often asked to facilitate and promote such new partnerships, networks and alliances with a variety of parties. A few with which UNFIP works include: Cisco Systems, Citigroup, The Coca-Cola Company, Ericsson and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

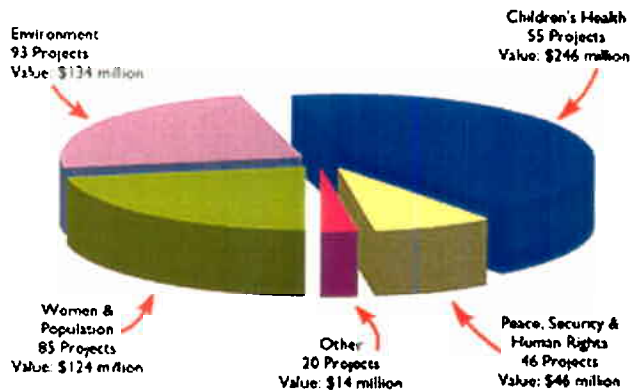
There is also a natural synergy between the causes of the United Nations and the philanthropies. Partnerships have been established with a number of foundations and civil society actors, including: African Medical and Research Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Charities Aid Foundation, Drucker Foundation, E7 Fund, Hilton Foundation, Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation network, Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rotary International, and Wellcome Trust, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the American Red Cross Society, the Aspen Institute, Equal Access, Digital Partners, Hope Worldwide-Africa and the International Business Leaders Forum.

Working with networks provides an opportunity to have partnership benefits spread to new parties. UNFIP has established close links with the Council on Foundations, the European Foundation Centre, the Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation, Europe in the World, Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmakers Support, the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy.

#### ***UNF-UNFIP Programme Areas***

- Women and population programme focuses on encouraging educational, health, and social and economic progress for adolescent girls and women. In Bangladesh, for example, UNF/UNFIP supports the efforts of UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund to empower adolescent girls by expanding their socio-economic opportunities and improving their reproductive health.

As of January 2004, the UNF-UNFIP partnership has programmed \$564 million for 299 projects in 120 countries engaging 35 UN entities in its four priority areas.



- Environment programme fosters energy projects to combat climate change in developing nations and supports long-term initiatives to protect the world's biodiversity. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Foundation (UNF) is working with park authorities and local and international partners to deliver resources to site staff and generate support for long-term biodiversity protection.
- Children's health programme supports the UN approach to enhance global public health systems through preventive interventions in infectious diseases, tobacco use and child mortality. As a result of a 16-year global polio eradication campaign that includes UNF-funded activities, there are less than 10 polio endemic countries left in the world.
- Peace, security and human rights programme promotes integrated structural approaches to conflict prevention, while also strengthening the United Nations central position in the cause of human rights. For example, UNF supports the International Labour Organization's efforts to create greater capacity for indigenous peoples to defend their rights by providing paralegal training to small groups.

Companies, foundations and NGOs with an interest in supporting UN causes often look for advice in navigating the UN bureaucracy. Increasingly, UNFIP finds itself providing a kind of one-stop service linking them with the appropriate UN partners. Yet, there is much more to forging a successful partnership than navigating the complex UN system and handing over contact information. It is about creating and strengthening relationships more than anything else. Quick response time, thoroughness, managing expectations, understanding what is important to a partner, as well as what is important to the United Nations, are all aspects of fostering a healthy collaboration.

A good partnership takes time to build. It is much like a courtship in which partners need to listen to each other, learn from each other's differences and be sensitive to each other's strengths and weakness. Ideas, not money, create a successful collaboration. Money follows when common ground has been found and partners can assist or develop a project or programme with the United Nations. Some key characteristics of a successful partnership include: shared vision and commitment to partnership objectives; complementary strengths of different stakeholders in partnership; open, honest and regular communication; clear agreements setting forth roles and responsibilities, with targets; and effective reporting and evaluation mechanisms.

One example of a global partnership that no single actor can achieve is the

Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Launched in 1988, it is the largest public health initiative in history that is working to eradicate polio by 2005. The World Health Organization (WHO) coordinates the effort, while the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) provides the oral polio vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO offer technical expertise, while Rotary International has raised approximately \$500 million for polio eradication and provided tens of thousands of volunteers in the field. The Initiative also includes private foundations like UNF and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, national governments, the World Bank and other development banks, humanitarian organizations and corporate partners, such as Aventis Pasteur, De Beers, and Wyeth. In Africa, the United Nations also has had strong support from the Coca-Cola Company, which has dedicated their refrigerated trucks so that large quantities of polio vaccine could be transported to remote villages.



WHO Photo/P. Virot

The First on the Ground initiative, a partnership which draws on the private sector's expertise and technology, is between the mobile telecommunications firm Telefonaktiebolaget LM Ericsson, the IFRC, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

#### ***Matching Partners for Development***

Secretary-General Kofi Annan's reform policy includes forging partnerships with the private sector and foundations. The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) turns this policy into action, under the leadership of UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette. UNFIP was established by the Secretary-General in 1998 to programme and leverage Ted Turner's \$1-billion donation in support of UN causes. It works with Mr. Turner's public charity—the United Nations Foundation (UNF)—to fund and develop programmes and build new partnerships. Under Timothy E. Wirth, UNF has evolved into a multidisciplinary support mechanism for the UN family. To focus activities and ensure the best use of resources, Mr. Turner and Mr. Annan identified four priority areas for funding: women and population; environment; children's health; and peace, security and human rights.

A dedicated UNFIP core team, working with its UNF counterparts, identifies and brings to the table potential partners, whose interests, skills and resources complement each other to tackle peace and development goals.

The UN-Ericsson partnership is designed to leverage technical expertise to enable the UN system to provide and maintain effective mobile communications equipment for humanitarian relief operations. A concrete outcome of this collaboration was the launch of a communications network for 5,000 people in Iran within 24 hours of the December 2003 earthquake in the region.

The Equator Initiative brings together civil society, business and foundation sectors, with the Canadian Government, the UNF and the UN, to help build the capacity and raise the profile of local enterprises in the tropics that link economic improvement and job creation with protecting the environment.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the Equator Prize 2002 recognized seven outstanding communities from the tropics for their exceptional efforts to reduce poverty and conserve and sustain biodiversity. The Toledo Institute for Development and Environment in Belize was recognized for its work in training local people to produce certified forest products and work in ecotourism. A Mexican cooperative, Café de la Selva, was honoured for its success in producing and marketing certified coffee grown by smallholder farmers for domestic consumption and export. In these and other ways, The Equator Initiative demonstrates that using and conserving biological diversity are part of the business bottom line for the thriving local enterprises. Smaller companies and organizations also can work with the UN to make a difference in people's lives. Books for Africa, a United States-based NGO that collects donated text, library and reference books and ships them to the continent, has entered into a partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to provide books in refugee camps. Under a pilot project, 25,000 books valued at \$110,000 were shipped in early June to Dukwe refugee camp in Botswana, where Angolan, Somali and Namibian refugees are staying. The \$8,000 transport cost was covered by a grant from the USAID Education for Development and Democracy Initiative. Books for Africa is now seeking to secure the shipment of 400,000 books to refugee camps in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda.

Another innovative partnership facilitated by UNFIP and led by the Rockefeller Foundation is the Mother-to-Child-Transmission (MTCT) Plus initiative, which focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention linked to treatment, to increase survival of both infected mothers and infants. UNICEF and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, among others, are implementing this \$100-million programme. The Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University in New York is leading the partnership coalition on technical and operational issues, and a coalition of eight foundations is providing sponsorship.



A winning entry of the Poster Competition organized by the World Summit on the Information Society, in collaboration with the UN Cyberschoolbus, by Emmanuel Dugbartey, 16, Ghana.

In support of the UN Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Task Force, established in 2001 to spread opportunities to use ICT for development, UNFIP has established linkages with corporations and foundations to support ICT for health and education.

Partnerships are not fostered without effort, sometimes even a struggle. But in the end, bringing two or more different perspectives and competencies to bear on today's interlocking crises can open the door to a new world of possibilities and impact.

#### Biography



Amir A. Dossal, Executive Director of UNFIP, sees building partnerships as being about people and their relationship with one another. From 1997 to 1999, he headed the UN Management Policy Office and earlier was Chief of Financial Management for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Before joining the UN in 1985, he served in the private sector in various management positions around the world.

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