



2012 COORDINATION SEGMENT

Panel I

Mobilizing partnerships for development, including in the field of education

Tuesday, 10 July 2012, 3.00 – 6:00 p.m.

ISSUES NOTE

Background

Over the last two decades, partnerships with the private sector, foundations, the civil society and non-governmental organizations, have increasingly become an integral part of many United Nations organizations' work, including in the field of education. These partnerships have not only complemented the efforts of the United Nations system to achieve its objectives but also contributed to its renewal by introducing new methods of work.¹ While these partnerships can not be a substitute for government responsibilities and commitments, they continue to be instrumental in the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits. This also includes the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals.

The General Assembly initially addressed the issue of enhancing partnerships between the United Nations and all its relevant partners at its fifty-fifth session and has continued to address this issue on a biennial basis since its fifty-sixth session. In its resolution under the agenda item entitled "Towards Global Partnerships", the General Assembly encourages the United Nations system to "continue to find innovative and additional ways to achieve lasting impact by identifying and replicating successful partnership models and pursuing new forms of collaboration".²

The General Assembly focused on the developments in the area of partnerships, concepts and modalities, reviewed lessons learned and identified approaches to respond to the challenges in developing and enhancing partnerships for development. The Assembly provided guidance to the international community to enhance the effectiveness of partnerships and uphold the integrity

¹ United Nations (2003). Report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector (A/58/227), p. 1.

² See General Assembly resolution 66/223, operative paragraph 10.

of the United Nations by placing greater emphasis on impact, transparency, coherence, accountability and sustainability. This guidance contributed to the development of a framework to facilitate relations with the private sector.

The consideration of this issue by the General Assembly, however, focused on general trends in cooperation between the United Nations system and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector, without examining in detail partnerships in thematic areas and their contribution to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

Given its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination in the economic, social and related fields, the Economic and Social Council is uniquely situated to provide more systematic, strategic and in depth discussion of joint initiatives taken by the UN system and their partnerships with other actors, including those of a thematic nature. The Council is the main United Nations body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic and social development and for the review and follow-up of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the Council has been holding a special annual event on partnerships since 2008, as part of its preparations for the Annual Ministerial Review, to broaden the range of stakeholders involved in the work of ECOSOC and promote concrete initiatives by the private sector and foundations to help accelerate progress in reaching the internationally agreed development goals. As such, the Council, with its multi-stakeholder approach, can build on the overall guidance provided by the General Assembly and bring together the actors involved to examine partnerships in greater depth. It can also provide policy guidance to UN agencies, entities and programmes with a view to ensuring more systematic and innovative approach to joint initiatives and partnerships with greater focus on impact and sustainability. ECOSOC's discussion on partnerships would complement, and not replace, its discussions on the regular work of the United Nations system.

General trends in partnerships

In its resolution 62/211 of 19 December 2007, the General Assembly defined partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits”.³

Over the years, the United Nations has come to recognize the valuable contribution of partnerships to its development efforts, and the private sector has increasingly acknowledged the business case for engaging in development activities and partnering with the United Nations. As a result, the United Nations' approach to partnerships has evolved from a donor-recipient relationship to collaboration in development efforts.

While interagency collaboration has been common in a number of critical areas such as education, health, nutrition and emergency preparedness and response, the diversity in partnerships between the United Nations and non-State actors has increased exponentially in recent years. Traditionally, non-State actors have interacted with the United Nations through

³ See General Assembly resolution 62/211, operative paragraph 2.

acquiring consultative status with governing bodies, signing procurement contracts and taking part in philanthropic fund-raising activities. In addition, non-State actors have also partnered with the United Nations in new ways, such as through global, multi-stakeholder initiatives. The recent increase in traditional forms of partnership and the emergence of new forms of partnership increased the contribution of non-State actors to the United Nation's development agenda.

Various models of partnerships and key elements for success

Collaboration between the United Nations and the private sector has focused on core business and value chain partnerships; social investment and philanthropy; advocacy and public policy engagement, and multi-stakeholder issue networks.

- **Core business partnerships** included supporting local enterprises in developing countries, building inclusive business models, facilitating international investment, or changing the way businesses operate. While these draw on the specific strengths of the private sector, they have the potential for being self-sustainable and can contribute significantly to development outcomes. They are often complex and require high level of commitment from stakeholders.
- **Social investment and philanthropy** involved directing private sector contributions to the United Nations initiatives and projects, contributions of core business expertise, products or services, including cause-related marketing, and concentrating philanthropic investment on a few strategic areas.
- **Advocacy and public policy engagement partnerships** aimed at influencing individuals' behaviours in countries, encouraging government regulation, raising general awareness and targeting directly business activities and conduct, and their employees.
- **Multi-stakeholder issue networks**, such as Stop TB initiative or the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, have also emerged as issue-driven partnerships, with dynamic governance structures, processes and activities to develop and implement a common approach to a complex issue.

Some organizations in the United Nations system have led the way in developing strategic approaches to partnerships and testing new models of partnerships, becoming role models for the rest of the system. Examples include the United Nations Children's Fund's cause-related marketing, the United Nations Development Programme's business development and inclusive market initiative, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Council of Business Leaders, the World Food Programme's partnerships harnessing contributions of corporate core competencies, products and services to achieve development results, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS' advocacy partnerships.

Commitment to a strong governance structure, that assigns clear responsibilities to each partner and includes measures for accountability, has been instrumental in forming transformative partnerships. Signing a Memorandum of Understanding that outlined clear responsibilities helped UN-HABITAT and BASF provide innovative solutions for shelter and sustainable development through more than ten projects in disaster relief, reconstruction, and infrastructure education. Each project involved formal project documents and agreements to uphold UN-HABITAT's rules and regulations.

For partnerships to be transformational and to deliver development results, they need to address a systemic issue, leverage core competencies of all partners, involve the appropriate set of stakeholders, and have an in-built capacity to reach scale and lasting impact. One example of a transformational partnership is the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, which addresses the issue of respiratory diseases and high energy costs in households resulting from the use of polluting, inefficient cooking practices. The partnership, which includes the UN Foundation, the World Health Organization, Shell, the Shell Foundation, Morgan Stanley, Impact Carbon and governments and implementing organizations, leverages UN Foundation's convening and brokering capacity to convene partners and raise funds and Shell's knowledge of energy markets. The Alliance aims to create a self-sustaining market for clean cookstoves with the goal of having 100 million homes adopt clean and efficient cookstoves worldwide by 2020.

Institutional developments

Several institutional developments have taken place to create an enabling environment for partnerships and improve the way the United Nations system engages with partners. The United Nations Global Compact Office, the United Nations Office for Partnerships and UN-DESA's Division for Sustainable Development have helped facilitate partnership activities and played a key role in knowledge creation and sharing in this area.

The "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector" were originally launched in 2000 and revised in 2009 to promote more effective partnerships while ensuring the integrity and independence of the United Nations. Efforts also focused on reinforcing "interface" skills, employing dedicated legal staff for partnership issues and offering training courses. The newly launched "business.un.org" portal has provided information on the United Nations system and partnership opportunities to help companies connect with the United Nations.

The introduction of a Private Sector Track at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the holding of the annual Private Sector Forum and the Partnerships Forum held during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development are examples of efforts to increase the engagement of the private sector in the work of the United Nations.

Enhancing the impact of UN-business partnerships is also a key priority of the Secretary-General's second term, as outlined in his five-year Action Agenda. In the Action Agenda, the Secretary-General described his vision to scale up UN capacity to engage in transformative multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society, philanthropists and academia across a broader range of issue areas by creating a new UN partnership capacity, which would catalyze commitments and promote accountability. One of the functions would be to backstop system-wide partnership efforts. This system-wide approach would help to generate greater synergies and efficiencies in partnerships while raising their quality.

Lessons learned and the way forward

Quite a number of studies have been undertaken on partnerships within the United Nations system (see Annex for details of these studies). These have provided an overview of the evolution of partnerships utilized by the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, successful partnerships models and challenges, lessons learned and what should be done to improve their impact and effectiveness.

Leveraging the contributions of the private sector is critical for achieving development objectives in a more strategic and harmonized approach. The most recent report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly suggested that, among other things, that there is need to (a) further nurture partnerships by disseminating their achievements, including best practices and lessons learned; (b) identify and replicate successful partnership models for achieving impact and scale; (c) facilitate greater collaboration and coordination among wide ranging partnerships; (d) develop a systematic approach to such partnerships so that the benefits can be maximized; and (e) provide a platform for exchange of experiences.

The recent report “Coming of Age: UN-Private Sector Collaboration Since 2000” have also identified a number of areas that require further attention. These include the need for the United Nations to:

- improve, promote and protect its brand value to ensure that partnership risks are mitigated and the United Nations is not selling itself short in partnership deals
- pursue further institutional learning and operational support to overcome current difficulties at understanding the real impact of initiatives and bringing them to scale
- continue and expand the United Nations inter-organizational exchange and learning to address the asymmetry in partnerships the United Nations system engages in
- address cultural differences between the United Nations and the private sector, as well as procedural and legal difficulties to enhance the effectiveness of partnerships,
- improve the effectiveness of the “One UN” approach or similar coordination efforts to speak with one, united voice to potential private sector partners at the country level.

What role can the Economic and Social Council play in moving the partnership agenda?

In view of these findings and conclusions, it is more urgent than ever that the Economic and Social carries out its coordination mandate and utilizes its multi-stakeholder convening power to increase the effectiveness and impact of partnerships on development. While the above studies illustrated progress made in moving the partnership agenda forward over the last two decades, they also concluded that more work needed to be done to promote and facilitate the replication and scaling up of good practice initiatives and models of partnerships.

There is a need to better understand:

- how successful partnerships are conceived, their functions and activities;
- how they complement or promote the United Nations goals, actors involved, focus areas; and,
- how they coordinate or cooperate with other partnerships working on similar issues.

In addition, there is also a need to demonstrate the development results achieved through partnerships and to use their potential to the fullest. In this way, ECOSOC can become the hub of the UN system in discussing, nurturing and strengthening partnerships.

The Council's Coordination Segment, which is entrusted to ensure "coordination of the activities of the specialized agencies, organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields, in accordance with Articles 63 and 64 of the Charter"⁴ is the natural platform for an in-depth intergovernmental discussions on partnerships undertaken by the specialized agencies, funds and programmes. At present, during the Coordination Segment, the Council examines how the United Nations system implements the recommendations contained in the Ministerial Declaration on the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review of the previous year and recommends policies designed to promote more comprehensive and effective approaches that could lead to better results. The consideration of thematic partnerships can be part of the Council's review of the implementation of the previous year's Ministerial Declaration. This focus on partnerships is meant to complement the work that the United Nations system undertakes to implement the Declaration. These discussions will supplement and not supplant the regular activities of the system.

Focusing on a thematic area of partnerships during the Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council would allow more in-depth analysis and would help identify recent trends, good practices and challenges that are specific to partnerships in a thematic area. It would also facilitate the exchange of experiences among the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, the dissemination of their achievements, the development of a systematic and strategic approach to such partnerships and facilitation of greater collaborative and coordinated approach to partnerships. In this way, the benefits of partnerships could be maximized which could help accelerate progress towards the achievement of internationally agreed development goals and commitments with regard to the annual theme of the Coordination Segment. This is in line with the desire of Member States to see increased coherence and coordination in all of the activities of the UN system. The discussions on partnerships would contribute to the Secretary-General's idea to harness the full power of partnership across the entire range of UN activities.

Enhancing partnerships on education within the United Nations system⁵

Many specific partnerships and thematic initiatives have been created since the World Education Forum in 2000. The partnerships are multi-stakeholder and often have one or two lead agencies providing the secretariat/coordination mechanism. Each tends to have its own governance system and to operate independently, providing opportunities for members to engage in policy-dialogue, knowledge creation and sharing, advocacy and mobilization of support. Some thematic initiatives focus on specific groups of vulnerable children, while others focus on international development themes and the content of education and constraints on access to education. In order to strengthen the representation of key stakeholders in policy debates and initiatives, UNESCO has established formal mechanisms for collaboration with NGOs (the

⁴ GA Resolution 45/264

⁵ See the report of the Secretary General on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments (E/2012/66) in regard to education for an in-depth overview and analysis of partnerships on education.

Consultative Consultation with NGOs, CCNGO/EFA), the private sector (Partnership for Education, PfE) and the Network of Parliamentarians for EFA.

Most recently, the Secretary-General has made education one of the priorities for his Action Plan for the next five years and has decided to launch, in the margins of the 67th session of the General Assembly, a new Global Initiative on Education to place education at the heart of the social, political and development agendas and to mobilize additional support for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals in education.

Examples of good practice partnerships that resulted in gains in education include:

- The School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) launched jointly in 2005 by UNICEF and the World Bank has focused on developing an evidence base on the impact of school fee abolition; providing technical support to countries; and enhancing the global and national policy dialogue. Fee abolition has already resulted in substantive increase in total enrolment, particularly in African countries, and allowed the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school to improve.
- UNESCO and the World Economic Forum have launched a joint initiative entitled “*Partnerships for Education*” (PfE) to foster, inform and facilitate the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships for education (MSPEs). This coalition of public and private partners committed to developing new and innovative models of partnerships in the education sector. Through the PfE initiative, UNESCO and the World Economic Forum have identified and disseminated principles and models of successful MSPEs, strengthened the representation and support of private partners in the EFA movement, and built capacities for partnership development. The core outputs include the publication of a review on partnership models in education⁶; a manual to support the monitoring and evaluation of partnerships in the education sector⁷, the creation of a web portal to increase the sharing of information and successful practices on MSPEs⁸; and capacity development activities in Rwanda.

A review of the literature on public-private multi-stakeholder partnerships for Education for All⁹ has illustrated that early agreement on the objectives is key for successful partnerships. There needs to be a clear assessment of needs and definition of desired results. The risks of partnerships, including competition between partners or failure to meet obligations, necessitate strong planning and analytical tools to examine costs, transferability, scalability and impact. The review recommends, among other things, investment in planning, regulation, transparency, results and documentation of partnerships. Furthermore, a recent review of the EFA coordination architecture suggests that country-level debates on key issues are not adequately reflected in the process of agenda-setting at the global level.

The ECOSOC Special Event on “Partnering with the philanthropic community to promote education for all” in February 2011 emphasized the need for strengthened partnerships

⁶ A. Draxler, *New Partnerships for EFA: Building on Experience*, UNESCO-IIEP, World Economic Forum, 2008

⁷ N. Marriott, H. Goyder, *Manual for Monitoring and Evaluating Education Partnerships*, UNESCO-IIEP, 2009

⁸ www.unesco.org/pfore/

⁹ Draxler, Alexandra (2008). *New Partnerships for EFA: Building on Experience*.

and enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration at all levels, between government, civil society and the private sector, to promote education for all. The event—during which a number of initiatives were announced in support of access to quality education—also highlighted the key role the private sector can play to support the Education for All goals through its resources, expertise and talent for innovation.

A recent panel on “Impact of public-private partnerships in education: An evidence-based approach”, co-organized by UNESCO, UNOP and IDP Foundation, highlighted the significant contribution of public-private partnerships in the areas of sustainable development, school management, expanding educational opportunities for all, teacher training, capacity building, and advocacy for gender equality and inclusion in local, national, and international levels. Recommendations included development of effective frameworks for sustainable public-private partnerships based on trust, transparency, accountability, and mutual understanding at local, national, and international levels, and an effective system of coordination, as well as mechanisms aimed at promoting long-term dialogue between the private and public sectors. The role of the United Nations as a platform for dialogue between public and private sectors was acknowledged. In this regard, ECOSOC was suggested as a key platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue on partnerships that could help maximize synergies and increase impact of partnerships on development outcomes.

Objective and proposed focus of the panel

The panel during the 2012 Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council will examine ways in which collaboration with civil society, the private sector and other actors can be strengthened and better harmonized. The discussion will focus on how partnerships, including in the field of education, can be better utilized, examine good practice examples, and discuss the remaining challenges, lessons learned and the way forward to increase their effectiveness and impact on development. It will also examine how partnerships support and bring additionality to the regular activities of the United Nations development system. In addition to a general discussion on the role of partnerships for development, specific examples of partnerships that help accelerate progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2, Education for All and related goals will be considered.

Questions for discussion

1. How can the Economic and Social Council effectively contribute to strengthening partnerships?
 - ◆ What role can the Economic and Social Council play to promote an evidence-based approach to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships in education?
 - ◆ How can the Economic and Social Council ensure that education remains a priority beyond 2015?
2. Given the current economic climate and financial constraints, what special measures can be taken to maximize synergies and ensure impact of partnerships?
 - ◆ How can stakeholders identify, disseminate and replicate successful partnership models, including for promoting the Education for All goals?

3. As new types of partnerships emerge, how can the United Nations system ensure that these are managed efficiently, support national development priorities and offer pragmatic solutions to the complex and challenges of today?

- ◆ To what extent has the United Nations system utilized the Partnership Assessment Tool to assess the sustainability and development impact of its partnerships in the area of education?
- ◆ What results have been achieved and what are some lessons learned?