HOLDING TOGETHER
Collaborations and Partnerships
in the Real World
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Preface

The Asian part of the global study was coordinated by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi in collaboration with the Institute for Development Research, Boston. In preparation and analysis of the seven cases, several individuals and institutions played the central role. These included: Prem Chadha and D. Thankappan of Centre for Workers' Management, New Delhi; Jayanti Banerjee and Lekha Bezbabruah of Ekatra, New Delhi; and Sojan Thomas and Joe Madiath of Gram Vikas, Orissa; Maria Anna de Rosas-Ignacio of Partnership of Philippines Support Service Agencies and Julie Ocalena from Peoples Forum of the Philippines; Agus Purnomo of Pelangi and Sudar Atmento of LP3ES in Indonesia; Dato Mohammed Soffian of International Youth Centre and Basri Hasan of Village Technology Centre in Malaysia; Anwar Rashid of Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan; and Afzar Hussain of ADAB in Bangladesh.

The experiences of various parties engaged in these cases of collaboration were the basis for the materials produced. Their contribution to this study is primary. This popular document is largely based on the cases presented and collective analysis generated during the Case Conference held in March 1991 at New Delhi. Its text has been prepared by Rajesh Tandon of PRIA, New Delhi. Its designing and printing has been done by Popular Documentation and Resource Centre of PRIA, New Delhi.
Context

We are living in a world which has been experiencing dramatic changes in recent years. Changing realities on the ground have made it difficult for many of us to understand the scope, the range, and the depth of changes taking place. Most dramatic changes have already taken place with respect to availability, use and consumption of resources. The world has come to recognize the finite nature of many resources and it is no longer possible to continue to consume them without concern for their regeneration.

The second aspect of the changing reality is the dramatic shift that has occurred in ideas about society, development and humanity. It is no longer possible to visualize a world based on ideas generated fifty or a hundred years ago. Shifting grounds with respect to ideas has been most dramatically illustrated in the notion of environment and the essential balance between humanity and its natural habitat.

Thirdly, structures created after the second world war in the form of nation states, multilateral mechanisms, structures of institutions, public and private, government and corporate, have all begun to show and experience dramatic changes. Many of those structures have simply disappeared. Many of them have undergone significant transformations and, by and large, all those structures - of government, of corporations, schools, hospitals, have come in for critique and accountability. It is a different world today.

There has also emerged a growing impatience with the continuation of problems of poverty, hunger, deprivation, crime, etc. Various strategies, plans and models utilized to deal with such problems over the past several decades have yielded little results. It is no longer possible to pretend that continued use of the same strategies and models will bring about dramatic results in the foreseeable
future. Ordinary people, the poor, the deprived, the oppressed, have been
demanding that new ways be found to solve these problems. Many of us, inside
institutions, in governments, in NGOs, in international bodies, have also begun to
experience a sense of impatience with the continued and sustained prevalence of
the same problems for decades. There is, therefore, a pressure for fresh thinking,
fresh approaches, and fresh strategies to be developed and utilized to deal with
the growing problems of our world today.

So we live in a context which has dramatically changed in recent decades.
We live in a world where it is no longer a question of development or growth or
prosperity. Now the fundamental issue is survival - survival of individuals,
communities, institutions, nation-states, survival of the humanity itself is at stake.
It's no longer a question of survival of a few which is at stake. What is at stake is
survival of all, the entire humanity, in any part of the world.

This is, therefore, a world of interdependence. This is a world where
internationalization of economies, politics, culture, science, technology, ideas,
people, and information has already occurred. It is a world which is dramatically
interlinked through markets, through networks, through politics, through capital,
through people, through ideas. And it is in this extremely interlinked and
interdependent world that we have to face the question of "holding together."
The Study

The study began with the purpose of understanding the current nature of collaboration and partnerships as they occur in the real world.

It was planned to study some real life cases of collaboration addressing poverty problems across various parties and various sectors in a given society -- the government, the private sector, the NGOs, the people's organizations, the international bodies, etc. By looking at real life cases of multi-party collaboration, we could then understand how collaboration started, how did it expand, how did it move from one stage to another and with what results. We felt that the study of such real life cases would help us understand the ways in which collaborative initiatives to address problems of poverty can be encouraged and strengthened throughout the world. To us, therefore, a study of this kind in collaboration and partnership means a response to the above context.

The study went through several steps. The first difficult step was to identify ongoing cases of collaboration and partnerships in different countries of Asia. This resulted in identification of seven cases; two in India, one each in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan and Malaysia. Through informal networks, contacts and associates, these cases were first identified and subsequently selected. In each of these countries, people associated with the cases and a few others, with an understanding and capacity to document such experiences, got involved in actual preparation of the study. The common and evolving framework was used in a meeting of potential case writers held in August, 1990 in New Delhi. And over the next six months case writers worked with others involved in the actual experience to prepare a case study. Each of these cases were then discussed in a case conference held in March, 1991 in Delhi where case writers, one of their colleagues from the actual case and several other people involved in the global study came together for a week to understand each case and to evolve some comparative analysis across case studies. Their analysis during the case conference provided the basis for developing insights about collaboration and partnerships in the real world.
This document is not intended to provide a detailed guideline of how to proceed with collaborations or build development partnerships, but to strengthen our understanding of how collaborations work, what factors help or hinder them. The experiences of the seven cases and the analysis collectively generated by all of us has been utilized throughout this document to illustrate, highlight and underscore various insights, principles and concepts. We invite you to explore this fascinating and challenging issue with us.
Understanding Collaboration

Why?

Before we proceed further about how to build collaboration and partnerships, we should first ask ourselves the question: why do we need to understand collaboration? Why is it important to build partnerships? We could approach this question from several angles.

Interdependence

First, we are living in a world of complex problems. These are problems arising out of interconnectedness of various dimensions of economy, politics, society, culture. Problems of poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, illness, urban degradation, etc. are not simple problems which can be solved by applying singular solutions. Clearly, current perspectives have not worked. Unilateral State or by organized people have also not solved these problems. These are complex and amenable to multiple strategies and approaches and worked. Collectivist- ties of lasting solutions, coming together to attempt a redefinition and a new approach to solving those problems. Collaboration, rather than competition, or apathy, or indifference, may well help us deal with such complex problems.
Popular Initiative

Second, we have found that the State as an intervener in society to bring about growth and development and to solve problems of society, has its limits. It has been shown again and again that the state on its own cannot solve all the problems. In fact, the state also creates or contributes towards the creation of several problems. Similarly, the private sector through the market as a way of organizing society and economy, has its limits. It can solve some problems, but it causes some others. In dealing with complex social problems of our societies today, market on its own will not be able to solve the problems. Over the years the potential of the popular sector of ordinary people themselves in joining hands to solve these problems has been ignored.

Normative Impetus

A third and perhaps most powerful rationale for using collaboration as an approach towards solving complex social and economic problems of our times, is the philosophical imperative of collaboration. Towards the end of the 20th century of human civilization, it is no longer possible for government policy makers and others responsible for dealing with problems of our times, to deny the political imperative of collaboration -- of working together with those who are directly affected by the problems of inviting the participation of ordinary people and their organizations, the poor and their associations, to work jointly towards solving the problems that they experience. This philosophical and political value of collaboration has acquired a new impetus in this age of democracy and freedom, human rights, human dignity, and humanism.
Popular Sectors and Collaboration

Then the question comes: why should people’s organizations (POs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in our countries think about collaboration? It is important to understand that most POs and NGOs, from their own experience of working together, have had to evolve various ways of collaboration and partnership. In fact, many of their initiatives at collaboration have been frustrated by lack of similar thinking on the part of governments and other national and international decision makers. Yet, there is a trend among NGOs where they themselves aloof from other private institutions. The argument is that if you work with the government bodies, it is likely to result in loss of the original mission for which such POs and NGOs exist. There is an underlying fear of becoming as a consequence of any attempt at working together with the governments and other international decision making bodies to solve pressing socio-economic problems of our times. This has led to an “outside-the-football-game” approach by many NGOs and peoples’ organizations. There is suspicion, caution, and cynicism among POs and NGOs with respect to collaboration. Yet, there are some pressing reasons for POs and NGOs to look towards collaboration and partnership as additional approaches to solving the problems of our times.

Macro

The first reason is the need to look for a larger scale and larger set of resources. Most work of peoples’ organizations and non-governmental organizations has been localized in a few villages, in a block, district, a few slums, etc. Yet, increasingly it is recognized that most problems of our time are no longer solvable by merely focusing at the micro level.
Stakes

Secondly, major socio-economic problems of our times are caused by the manner in which the state and the market mechanisms operate. Thus, to the extent both the state and the market cause certain problems, as well as become part of the problems, it is important that NGOs and POs develop stakes in solving such problems, and engage with the government and private bodies in addressing them.

Influence

A third reason for POs and NGOs to look at collaboration as a way of solving some of the problems of our times is because it generates greater influence for them. By collaborating with national and international decision makers, POs and NGOs develop insights as well as information about how these institutions operate. It also helps POs and NGOs to acquire certain ways of influencing various departments and representatives of the government and other international bodies. Thus, collaboration provides an additional way of enlarging the repertoire of influence mechanisms that POs and NGOs can acquire in order to pursue their mission in a long term and sustained manner.

Therefore, it appears that the need for POs and NGOs to approach the question of collaboration and partnership in solving some of the pressing problems of our times is as urgent as it is for other parties involved in those issues.

What is Collaboration?

It is very difficult to provide a single and simple definition of what collaboration entails. We are talking about collaboration in the context of socio-economic problems that our communities and societies are facing. We are talking about collaboration across various parties and stake-holders. We are talking about collaboration across various institutions - locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. We are talking about working together on specific issues. What, then, are some of the features of defining such a collaboration?
Concrete

First, collaboration occurs around a particular issue or a set of issues. Collaboration is not life long, forever. The collaboration involves coming together of various parties to work together in solving a particular problem. Thus, each collaboration has a concrete boundary in time and space and around a specific problem.

Multiple Stakeholders

The second dimension of collaboration is about various parties coming together to solve a specific problem. These parties can be several: government and its agencies at various levels from the village to the national; international and multilateral agencies; funding organizations; private businesses; other non-governmental initiatives, voluntary development organizations or NGOs at various levels (from local to national to international); POs at the micro level (village or slum), as well as their associations at the national or international levels. These parties have a stake in the problem that is being worked on. These stakes may include advancing their interests or enhancing their influence, vis-a-vis other parties. Some stakeholders may not be very obvious, but many are. In a collaborative effort, significant stakeholders come together in defining, framing and solving the problem. However, it is possible that certain stakeholders do not join in or join in at a different stage, or drop out at a subsequent stage. Collaboration entails bringing together stakeholders affected by the problem.

Structure

A third aspect of collaboration that these cases have highlighted is its structural or formal aspect. Collaboration does not merely imply the coming together of a few individuals who, because they like each other, have decided to work together to solve a problem they think is important. Various parties in collaboration evolve, over time, a structural mechanism of coming together. Collaboration here refers to a multi-party, multi-level, multi-institutional collaboration, and not merely an interpersonal collaboration across a few interested individuals. Thus, each collaboration described here is concrete, includes multiple significant stakeholders and is somewhat structured.
Types of Collaboration

Problem-Solving

Box 1

Village Technology Centres in Malaysia

The problem of rural unemployment and immigration to cities by rural youth was seen as a possible arena for initiating interventions by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Government of Malaysia. The Ministry initiated a process of collaboration with the National Youth Council and local youth clubs in this regard. BTD or Village Technology Centres were visualized as possible solutions to these problems. Managed by the local youth clubs, these centres provide opportunity for skill training, micro enterprise development, and strengthening entrepreneurship. While the Steering Committee of BTD comprises of local and district level government official with members of the youth club, the daily operation of BTD is carried out by a working committee led by the chairman of the youth club.

In looking at the various cases, it became clear that several types of problem-solving collaboration occur in real life. Most collaborations by most parties are started with the perspective of solving a specific problem. For example, “Let us come together to solve a specific problem related to poverty.” This is one type of collaboration - problem-solving. See Box 1 & 2 for examples where the prime initiative was with the government.

Box 2

Small Irrigation System in Indonesia

Because of declining resources, the Government of Indonesia was facing the growing problem of ongoing maintenance and management of small scale irrigation facilities in rural areas. Based on a field visit to similar efforts in the Philippines, Irrigation Directorate and Public Works Department supported two pilot projects to involve local farmer associations in more active maintenance of small scale irrigation systems. The positive outcomes of these were then translated into a national policy to create and support farmers'(users) associations to take over the management and maintenance of these systems. Involvement of NGOs like LP3ES helped to bring farmers associations into the collaboration venture. The policy has now been implemented nationally following the BAPPENAS (National Planning Agency) 1987 recommendation for transfer of small scale irrigation system management to farmer associations for systems under 500 hectares.
Participatory

However, collaboration may serve another purpose perhaps more important than mere problem-solving. That purpose is empowerment and capacity building of POs and NGOs to continue to solve problems. In such a collaboration, strengthening their capacities, where empowerment of POs, enhancing their scale of influence beyond micro levels and strengthening their support structures occurs, then it is participatory collaboration. It is participatory because those most affected by the dwellers -- themselves problems -- the poor, the tribals, the slum, take on a central, active and key role in framing, analyzing, and solving the problem in collaboration with other parties. Thus, in participatory collaboration, the role of popular groups and sectors is central. For examples, see Box 3 and 4. Slum-dwellers in Tondo and workers in Kamani played central roles in these collaborations.

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Box.3
Tondo Foreshoreland Development in Philippines

Tondo Foreshoreland Development Project was the first squatter and urban development project in Metro Manila. It was started by the Marcos government in the early 1970s to create housing for urban poor by relocating them away from the areas they were living in. Based on funding from the World Bank, the government plans for upgrading of the area were first resisted by a Tondo residents' organization called ZOTO. The existence of community organizations among the urban poor helped in stalling the plans for dislocation and entering into dialogue with the Bank and Ministry of Urban Development. Initial support to ZOTO came from the Philippine Ecumenical Committee for Community Organization (PECCO). PECCO support to the community organization process, building its leadership and capacity to engage with officials of the World Bank and government, led to the possibility of major collaboration around redesign of an urban improvement program where the poor were able to own land and to build their houses. Gradually, the organization and leadership of the Tondo poor families spread in strength and scope and became a part of the larger network of the Coalition of Associations of Urban Poor.
Box 4
Kamani Tubes Takeover in India
Kamani Tubes, Limited (KTL), a factory employing about 700 workers in Bombay, closed down in 1985. The Workers Union then took the initiative to influence the owners first to save jobs and the factory. Later, the Union dealt directly with the banks, the state and national government to find ways to reopen the factory. Following persistent pressures and mobilization from the Union and its leadership, and a supportive judgement from the Supreme Court, the workers of KTL formed a cooperative to proceed further with taking over the factory. In this entire process, the leadership and the organization of the Workers Union faced tremendous challenges and hardships, but grew in capacity and strength. Their ability to influence government officials and bank managers to invest in them became a significant aspect of their continued success. Since the workers have taken over the factory two years ago, KTL is making profits and continues to provide jobs.

Partnership

A third type of collaboration can be called development partnerships. Development partnerships go beyond solving specific problems and enhanced empowerment or capacity building of the POs and their collaborating NGOs. They reflect a shared vision. Various parties involved in the collaboration share a common vision about a desirable future of society and thereby a desirable resolution of the problem at hand. The nature of the relationship across parties is one which is long-term and not merely built around solving a specific problem, though it may start out in that fashion. The key dynamics of a development partnership are relationships across various parties that have more than an immediate, instrumental character.

Obviously, all collaborations do not become, or result in, a development partnership. In many situations, collaborations start out by mere collaborations for problem solving. With a certain degree of attention and care and a broader purpose in mind, many collaborations can become participatory collaborations and result in the empowerment and capacity-building of POs and their associated voluntary development organizations. When a participatory collaboration develops further and acquires the character of a development partnership, then we have the making of a long term and strong relationship across parties based on a shared vision of how future society should be structured. That is the ideal for most
collaborations, but need not be the one which occurs in reality most of the time. Box 5 presents illustrations where potential for development partnerships existed.

[Box 5]

**Potential for Partnerships**

The cases from Urban Sanitation in Pakistan and National Biogas Program in India present the potential for emerging development partnerships. In the former, Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) started working in Karachi with poor urban slums to improve the sanitation systems. Working closely with the residents and helping them form local committees and neighborhood organizations, OPP demonstrated the role and capacity of local people in solving their own problems. Initial efforts to bring the government into collaboration proved rather difficult. But with recent recognition of this approach by the World Bank; OPP has found it easier to collaborate with the government around a common vision of strengthening the involvement and capacities of the community groups to solve their sanitation and related problems.

The National Biogas Program in India was started with a vision of overcoming the growing fuelwood crisis and the need for utilizing various biomass wastes for regenerative purposes. The process of collaboration entailed several levels; national, state, and local. The role of people and their own associations and local NGOs were seen as critical in this program right from the beginning. Over the years, the collaboration has undergone ups and downs, but the most interesting aspect of it is in terms of the emerging convergence of ideas for the long term reforestation and regeneration of natural resources. Local communities, NGOs and government departments are beginning to come together to think about expanding the arena of collaboration to regeneration, building on the experience of the Biogas Program.
Making it Work

How do we make collaborations work? What are the various principles which an analysis of these cases have highlighted? What are the stages in making collaboration work? What are the issues which parties have to keep in mind when engaging in collaboration?

In this section, some of these principles are highlighted, but not as steps or guidelines to be followed blindly in all situations of potential collaboration. Five sets of principles have been outlined in this section.

1. Macro Conditions - Creating the Climate

An analysis of these cases clearly highlighted that certain macro conditions help create the climate conducive to collaboration at the local, regional or national level. What are some of these macro conditions?

Firstly, certain global trends and events help create a conducive climate for collaboration to take place within a country. For example, recent events in Eastern Europe help create new conditions for easing of tensions across East and West. Certain trends resulting from the pressure of bilateral donor agencies have also created conditions conducive of collaboration. Many international, multilateral and bilateral donors have been asking national governments and other decision makers within countries to seek the collaboration of the poor and their organizations in solving poverty related problems. This shift in their perspective
has been the result of their perception of lack of effectiveness of development aid over the last four decades. Various studies, international gatherings, workshops, etc. also help create such trends which influence national decision makers to begin to pay attention to the issues of collaboration with POs and NGOs in their own areas of work. See Box 6 as an example from Bangladesh.

**Box 6**
**International Trend**

The national collaborative program of extended immunization coverage in Bangladesh gained major support from international institutions in the mid-1980s. The government's Extended Program of Immunisation (EPI) was to be implemented in collaboration with several NGOs and other bodies. This was the major recommendation of UNICEF and WHO in a meeting they held in December 1985. Additional support from the World Bank to EPI also made this ever expanding collaboration a major venture. The then President of Bangladesh was personally committed to the ambitious targets of universal immunization (he spoke of a target of 85% coverage by 1990 in a UN General Assembly) and wanted all possible means to be experimented with in support of that mission. This further created the climate for ensuring collaboration with NGOs and other institutions in the country.

The creation of a second set of conditions is due to the nature of the national political and economic trends. As resources within national economies get increasingly restricted, as the rate of growth of various economies slows down, as surplus revenues generated by the oil boom or other related booms reduce, decision makers in the government begin to pay attention to finding ways to collaborate with popular sectors in the society, including NGOs, to mobilize additional resources of people - energies, ideas and materials from hitherto neglected parties. See Box 7 for an example from Indonesia.

**Box 7**
**Pressure for Resources**

The pressure for transfer of management of small scale irrigation systems to farmers associations came on the Indonesian Government in the late 1970s and early 1980s as oil resources were shrinking. External funders like the World Bank were not willing to continue funding the management and maintenance of expensive irrigation systems. The Water Users Associations were seen as possible partners in sharing the responsibility (and the costs) of managing and maintaining the irrigation systems.
Similar pressures emerge in the national political context when growing restlessness, impatience and agitations of the poor and their organizations begin to rock the boat, where it is no longer possible to control the minds of the people and to continue to create an illusion that everything is fine with the economy and the country. In those periods, national leadership finds it conducive to extend their hands for collaboration with POs and NGOs in solving pressing problems. While these conditions help set the stage in which collaboration across multiple parties can take place, certain macro conditions create hinderances for collaboration as well.

2. Catalyst

An analysis of cases suggested the role of a catalyst in collaboration. This catalyst could be in the form of an idea or an event or a person, but it provokes, stimulates and creates the possibility of actual collaboration unfolding across parties.

In many cases, a catalytic role is played by persons. For example, in the case of Tondo Foreshoreland Urban Development Project in Metro Manila, such a catalytic role was played by some PECCO and church leaders who made the meeting between ZOTO representatives and the World Bank possible following Robert McNamara's visit to Manila in 1974. The leader of Kamani Employees Union was the key person who moved beyond his constituency of workers to establish relationships with the banks and government officials in encouraging all parties to come together. The personal integrity, credibility and capacity of this person was key to getting the banks to even consider the proposal for a workers' takeover. In
the OPP case of Pakistan, it was the person of Dr. Akhtar Ahmed Khan who made it possible to bring local community leaders and residents together to solve the problem of sanitation. His personal links continued to bring other parties into collaboration, including the national government in recent years.

In two of the cases, visits to other programs or experiments helped catalyze the possibility of collaboration. In the Village Technology Centres case of Malaysia, the Minister for Youth and Sports visited several African countries where he saw many rural employment generation efforts being carried out by local youth organizations. He was instrumental in inviting the National Youth Council to discuss the possibility for collaboration when he returned to Malaysia.

The Ford Foundation staff in Jakarta brought the Philippines example of National Irrigation Authority to the notice of Indonesian officials. Following a study by social scientists from Gajah Mada University which identified small scale irrigation as the major problem for small farmers, a group of officials from the Irrigation Directorate visited the Philippines to see the User Association’s management of small irrigation systems. That exposure resulted in setting up pilot projects as forerunners of expanded collaboration in Indonesia.

**impress idea**

One key contribution of a catalyst is to impress upon different significant stakeholders the idea of working together to solve the problem. Generally, parties like POs, NGOs and government may be apathetic or suspicious of each other and may not be concerned about coming together to solve a problem. In those situations, a catalyst brings the parties together to consider the possibility of collaboration. Such a catalyst helps to “sell the idea” of collaboration itself. Sometimes the selling of the idea may occur informally; sometimes it may occur formally during a workshop or a similar event.

**Intermediary**

Another role of a catalyst is that of the “middle man.” This is not meant in the traditional exploiting sense of the term, but as one who acts as intermediaries among various parties. One of the difficulties that parties face in coming together is the past history of negative relationships and perceptions of each other. In such situations, the past history of prejudices, opinions and relationships can be transcended - or mediated - with the help of a catalyst.
3. Multiple Parties Imply Differences

Analysis of the cases underscored the importance of understanding differences in a multi-party situation. To the extent that different parties come together in a specific collaboration, they bring with themselves differences. Thus, experiencing differences in a collaborative effort is natural and need not be surprising. The existence of differences and conflicts is inevitable in a collaborative effort across different parties. It is important that we understand these differences and their effect on the process of collaborations.

One of the ongoing sources of conflict in many cases were the differences in style, approach, perspective, etc. among field workers of NGOs and government agencies. In the EPI collaboration case from Bangladesh, it was the source of major hurdles initially. As field workers of CARE and BRAC got involved in EPI, the government health workers began to complain and became hostile because of their concern about status and style of work. Only when regular meetings and leadership exhortations continued from both parties were these conflicts overcome to allow for productive collaboration.

The differences among OPP field staff and the staff of Karachi Municipal Corporation in Pakistan started out from the very beginning. The latter did not even recognize the existence of Karachi with whom OPP 1985 evaluation of its decided to collaborate own terms. The govern- OPP as Katchi Abadi. When OPP refused to unilateral terms, government soured. by some international ment willing to work with perspective and style.

"Katchi Abadi" (slum community) has been working. After the program, the government with OPP but only on its nment agency renamed Training Institute. collaborate on these relations with the Only after an intervention agencies, is the govern- OPP without imposing its

The Indonesian case brought out key differences in perspective and style between NGOs and government agencies. In the pilot projects HPSIS (High
Performance Sederhana Irrigation System), a working group comprising of members of all parties (including NGOs) was set up to monitor the pilot project. In training and orientation of community organizers during the pilot stage, the NGO and university worked together with the Department of Public Works. Differences in perspective on farmers' involvement emergent during this phase had to be gradually overcome during the process.

**Interest**

First, different parties bring different interests. When government agencies come together with POs and NGOs and international donor agencies to solve a problem it must be understood from the very beginning that each of these parties is likely to represent a different set of interests. Their differences in interests are likely to shape what happens in their collaborative effort. Instead of ignoring those differences of interests, it is important to find out what they are in order to find a way to work together.

**Perspective**

Second, different parties have different perspectives. Perspective here means how different parties understand the given problem and its underlying causes. These differences in perspective may get represented or may remain hidden, but it is important to recognize that perspectives on the problem at hand and its underlying causes are likely to be different across parties coming together in a collaborative effort.

**Information**

Third, a significant difference across parties is in the kind of information or data they have about the problem being addressed. The kind of data that slum dwellers have about their sanitation and housing problems, on the numbers and sizes of families living in the slum, is very different from the kind of information that national health and housing authorities, ministries of urban development in the government, Institutes of Urban Affairs or other research institutions, or such international bodies as the World Bank may have. These differences in information and data are likely to affect the perspectives that different parties bring in support of the interests that they represent. Thus, it is important that in any collaborative effort, parties recognize the different information and types of information that they have and find ways to share it openly, candidly, and authentically so that it can
help create conditions for reconciling perspectives and interests around the problem at hand.

**Style**

The fourth significant difference that parties bring is that of style - the style of communication, of meetings, of interaction, of dress and demeanor, etc. POs and their representatives, NGO leaders, government officials, and representatives of international donors all represent different styles of communication, articulation, speech, language, dress, form, etc. It’s important that these differences in style are recognized and not confused with the differences around perspectives or interests, per se. It is also important that representatives of various parties coming together for a collaborative effort learn to work with different styles and not be put off by one style or the other. If NGO and PO leaders find it impossible to talk to somebody in an air conditioned hotel wearing a three piece suit representing an international donor organization, or in a high security government office where security checks are undertaken four times before NGO leaders can meet the government officials, then it is going to be very difficult to work on the problem together.

Therefore, recognition of differences in a multi-party collaboration helps parties to work together in that collaborative effort. What is also important is to recognize that each party may be represented by an individual or a set of individuals who may project these differences, but these differences are not merely of interpersonal nature. They are interparty differences and the representatives who project those differences are not good, bad or indifferent persons, per se, but merely spokespersons and representatives of their own parties. Thus, the leader of the PO must represent the interest, perspective, information, and style of the people, while the representative of the government must represent the interest, perspective, information and style of the ministries and the governments of the time. If parties in a collaboration recognize this, it helps them to deal with the differences because it creates conditions for understanding differences and their underlying causes.
4. Strengthening POs and Leadership

The cases revealed that collaborative efforts need to simultaneously focus attention on strengthening POs and their leadership in order for such multi-party, multi-level collaborations to work. What are the aspects of POs and leadership which require strengthening?

The first aspect relates to "power balancing." It is important that we recognize that collaboration across parties requires a certain degree of power balancing. One party which is high in power relative to the other party, may block effective collaboration. This is typically the case when a national government supported by international donor agencies invites a local micro, village based PO to a collaborative venture. In those situations, the power of the PO is much less than that of the national government and international donors. In such situations strategies to balance the power between POs on the one hand, and national government and international donors on the other, can help. Various ways of doing this are possible. A common method employed in the cases was where local, regional and national level NGOs join hands with peoples' organizations (or, in fact, take a lead with and on behalf of peoples' organizations) to form a strong enough front to enter into and sustain the process of collaboration with other parties. See Box 8 for such an example from the Philippines.

**Box 8  
Empowerment of Urban Poor**

The Philippine case dramatically demonstrates the effectiveness of "power balancing" accomplished by the poor residents of Tondo. The history of associations in Tondo dates back to mid 1950s. By 1969 a Council of Tondo Foreshoreland Community Organizations has been created. When the Marcos government decided to improve urban areas and dislocate Tondo residents, Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO), a group of squatter organizations in the southern tip of Tondo, resisted. ZOTO had received support from PECCO to get itself organized as a community and articulate its demands. During martial law, several ZOTO leaders were arrested and harassed. So, ZOTO resistance escalated during the World Bank's interest in urban improvements in Metro Manila. Through their contacts with the Church and the middle class, ZOTO leaders met with World Bank officials to present their case. In late 1973 ZOTO also took the initiative to bring all the community organizations active in Tondo into a federation, called UGNAYAN. This brought UGNAYAN into the picture with the World Bank. When Tondo Foreshoreland Development Project started in 1976, UGNAYAN became the key party on behalf of the residents. Thus, a series of steps resulted in growing empowerment of the urban poor at Tondo in their efforts to collaborate with the government.
The analysis of cases has also shown the necessity of "scaling up" POs to higher levels of aggregation. Where POs remained limited to a micro level, they were not able to play a central role as levels of collaboration became increasingly aggregated and macro. There POs were supplemented by national or regional level NGOs. In such situations, an important strategy is to work towards scaling up the PO in creating new federating mechanisms by bringing them together in expanding circles in collaboration among themselves. The Philippines case illustrates this process. Box 9 presents the Biogas case from India where scaling up of the PO did not occur.

**Box 9**
Scaling Up Missing

In the National Biogas Program in India, the collaboration at local, village level operates with tribal community and their organization supported by Gram Vikas (an NGO in Orissa) with local banks, and state government field workers. This effectively results in construction of family and community bio-gas plants locally. When there is disagreement between the state government and the NGO, the people's organization is not able to intervene because no effective organization of tribals exists at the state level. Similarly, for national consultations among collaborating parties of the program, Gram Vikas represents Orissa (and the interest of tribals, one hopes) as, again, no effective national organizations of tribals exists. Along with the difficulties of organization at state and national levels, there is also the continuing inability of representation by tribals themselves of their issues and aspirations in the process of collaboration at higher levels of aggregation.

The cases have thus highlighted the importance of looking at the relationship between an NGO and peoples organization in an historical context. If strengthening the leadership of POs is a key consideration, then it is important that the relationship between NGOs and POs remain such during the collaboration so that it does not encourage dependence of POs on NGOs. It is here that specific and deliberate interventions need to be made for enabling and strengthening the leadership and organizational capacity of POs to play increasingly significant and macro roles in such collaborations with other parties.
5. Process Unfolds

Any specific collaboration can be seen as a process or a series of processes. Analysis of cases has highlighted the dynamic and ever changing nature of collaboration, almost like a kaleidoscope. Three broad phases in the process of collaboration can been identified.

The first phase is a "start-up" or warm up process. This is where the parties come together, warm up to each other, agree to collaborate and do an initial positioning, hand holding, etc. to start the process.

The second phase is "working on" the process of collaboration itself and defining the problem and generating and implementing solutions, etc. This is the major phase of the collaboration effort.

Finally, the third phase of collaboration is "moving on" -- moving beyond the specific collaboration for which the parties came together. As mentioned earlier, sometimes this results in a broader collaborative effort spread over a period of time as the case for development partnerships. In some other situations, it means dissolving the relationship and different parties moving on separately.

In the movement through these phases, several aspects of collaboration are worth highlighting.

Informal Relationships

The first aspect is that the collaborative process has both formal and informal dimensions. In many situations, key persons representing different parties build informal relationships, understanding and collaboration before the collaboration across parties. When the parties come together, the basis of mutual understanding developed by key persons in each of those parties helps in collaboration. In some other situations, formal collaborative initiative leads to the building of informal relations among key representatives of different parties. This helps to insure cementing and strengthening of the collaborative process beyond the formal structure. It is interesting to note that in all the cases the issue of informal relationships across a few key representatives of different parties was central to the success of the collaborative venture. In fact, POs and NGOs or other relatively powerless groups in a collaborative venture, use relationships as resources. By building relationships, they develop access to information and
influence. Relationships with third parties who have influence over relatively powerful parties, like the government or the international donors, can also strengthen the resource base of relatively powerless parties like the peoples organizations and NGOs.

In the Philippine case, leaders of ZOTO had made effective use of their informal relations. Through the initial contact with PECCO, leaders of ZOTO knew church leaders. This brought them in contact with senior government officials. Several contacts with professionals and academics brought ZOTO leaders in contact with sources of information in funding agencies and ministries.

Similarly, the network of progressive persons in Indonesia was seen as key to building the case for transfer of management of small irrigation systems to farmer user associations. Such persons were drawn from government ministries, academic institutions, NGOs and international bodies. Their informal relationship outside their formal roles gave them an opportunity to work together on a common idea without getting bogged down in formalities and procedures.

**Conflicts**

The **second** aspect of the collaborative process is the importance of bringing attention to the emergence of and dealing with conflict. As has been mentioned earlier, multiple parties bring multiple approaches, perspectives, interests, information, and style. Differences need to surface. Often, differences get hidden. When differences are not articulated, it becomes difficult to understand and deal
with them. Differences may emerge suddenly and take other parties by surprise. The process of collaboration, therefore, is also a continuous process of surfacing and dealing with conflicts.

Various methods have been used in dealing with conflicts. Sometimes conflict across parties is resolved by excluding a particular party. This has been the case where a particular party is obstructing collaboration between other parties.

When Kamani Tubes Ltd. first closed down, workers and their union spent three years attempting to forge a collaboration with banks along with the owners. But the owners of KTL continuously blocked any possibility of reopening the factory. At a later stage, workers’ union ignored the owners and approached the state and national governments along with banks to find a solution. By excluding the owners as stakeholders from this stage, the rest of the parties could forge a collaboration resulting in the Supreme Court judgement authorizing the workers’ takeover of the factory.

Likewise, in the case of urban settlements in Karachi, the OPP first tried to collaborate with the federation of community groups existing in the squatter settlements. The leaders of All Orangi United Federation had difficulty in working with the NGO around the concept of local initiatives, as they were used to government actions in all these aspects. So, OPP decided to work with the residents. This resulted in new associations at the local level and more fruitful outcomes.

In other situations, conflict across parties are dealt with first informally and then brought to the formal structure. Understanding reached between key representatives of different parties based on mutual appreciation of each other’s position helps to then deal with the differences in the formal arena.

**Parties**

Another important dimension of the process of collaboration is the changing configuration of parties. Different parties come together at different stages of the collaborative venture - initially a few parties, sometimes expanding to larger numbers of parties, at some stage shrinking in number, with parties sometimes joining in or dropping out. Some of these are stakeholders, some of these are interested groups, some come together as alliances and coalitions, and some remain alone.
One recurring theme in EPI effort in Bangladesh was expanding collaborations. The initial NGO involvement was with large national NGOs - BRAC and CARE. By the third phase of collaboration, there was a substantial involvement of local NGOs and community leaders. More than 1,300 partners were involved in the nationwide collaboration by the end of the third phase, resulting in new complexities and challenges. This kaleidoscopic pattern among the parties needs to be understood and continuously monitored - which parties are present during that stage, which are not, which should be invited and which should be excluded.

**Attitudinal Changes**

One of the interesting outcomes of the process of collaboration as demonstrated in these cases has been shifts in attitudes and perspectives of representatives of various parties as collaboration unfolds. Most collaborations result in mutual influencing across parties. Leaders of peoples' organizations and NGOs influence representatives of the government and international donors and vice-versa. Consequently of influencing attitudes, opinions and perspectives of the representatives of different parties may change. It is important that such changes in attitudes and perspectives of other parties be recognized and appropriately responded to in subsequent phases of collaboration.

**Influencing**

A key process in any collaboration venture is the continuous attempt at mutual influence. What are the various ways that have been found useful in influencing? Relatively more powerful parties at the beginning of a collaboration may use their power to influence others. Those who are relatively powerless (like POs or NGOs) may use other strategies to influence powerful parties. The cases highlight the importance of having a well-formulated and well-planned strategy of influencing other parties.

One significant tool in this process of influencing has been access to, and control of information. By getting access to information which is otherwise not available, representatives of POs and NGOs (as in the Tondo case in the Philippines) have been able to significantly influence representatives of the government and international donors. There are various ways this information can be obtained. Informal connections with staff members of government ministries and international bodies help an easy access to information in advance.
Media

Use of media, in particular the newspapers, also helps in getting access to information which is otherwise not available to relatively powerless groups. Media representatives can publicize information in ways that supports the position of POs and NGOs. Media has also been effectively used to influence public opinion. In some cases, effective use of media throughout the process of collaboration has played a significant role in strengthening collaboration from one stage to another and in overcoming likely blockages to collaborative venture.

The effective use of media, particularly the press, has been demonstrated in the Tondo and KTL cases. In both cases, POs (ZOTO in Philippines and Kamani Employees Union in India) used the media to create favorable public opinion and the possibility of influencing the representatives of government and international bodies. Timely, critical and supportive press coverage to the cause of urban poor and unemployed workers resulted in greater sensitivity of, and influence on, representatives of generally powerful parties.

Profile

Another issue related to influence is that of taking credit for the results. POs and NGOs have discovered that government officials do not like them to take credit for results. The experience of both Gram Vikas in India and LP3ES in Indonesia suggests that "credit for collaboration" can be a sensitive issue. In these cases, the NGOs learned to maintain a low profile and took no public credit for effective outcomes of collaboration. In fact, they even encouraged government officials to take credit, thereby maintaining smooth relations.

In some situations, maintaining a low profile helps the collaborative process to continue. In other situations, raising a high profile influences public opinion, media and other key decision makers. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, NGOs like BRAC, CARE, ADAB and OPP maintained a visible and high profile during the process of collaboration. This helped them to maintain a degree of autonomy of action and independence during the process of collaboration. The choice of the profile, low or high, needs to be deliberately made and may change at different stages of the collaborative process.
Alliances

A key aspect of influencing has been building alliances with "middle forces" within the country. In some cases, POs and NGOs have deliberately reached out to build alliances with the middle class, with the professionals, with religious leaders, or with other similar groupings which are not directly stakeholders to the collaboration, but whose opinions and views carry significant influence with relatively powerful parties, like national governments or international donors. Similarly, alliances with international bodies, with other networks of NGOs and POs, sometimes help to influence relatively powerful parties.
Postscript

The foregoing analysis may seem to indicate that collaboration and development partnerships are a natural order and easy to operate. This is not so. Collaborations and development partnerships occur frequently, but are very difficult to build, sustain, and nurture. The challenge, particularly for those who work with POs and development NGOs, is to look at the issue of collaboration in a broader framework than perhaps has been done so far.

Conflict and Collaboration

The real world in our societies and communities is not always conducive to collaboration. Not everything in the real world happens through collaboration. This is a fact. Conflict is both a reality and necessity, significant differences, antagonism and hostility with the government and its agencies, and with other international forces and private business interests do occur, and continue to occur. The purpose of collaboration is not to replace conflict, but to add an additional strategy for influencing other parties (like national governments and international agencies) to work towards strengthening the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Thus, the purpose of becoming knowledgeable about and skilled in collaboration and development partnerships is not to ignore the advantages of adversarial and conflict oriented strategies, but to strengthen and supplement them.

Macro Influence

The real challenge for POs and development NGOs right now is influencing macro scale -- influencing macro policy and decision making in ways that support the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Thus, a variety of ways and strategies of influencing national decision makers, government leaders, international donor
community and others need to be developed. NGOs are also open to influence from others. Influencing by collaborating is one other strategy. There is a need to use a combination of influencing from outside, influencing against and influencing with. To that extent, building collaboration and learning how to do so strengthens our repertoire of influence strategies in order to influence macro policies.

Moral Imperative

Collaboration has become a “moral” issue towards the end of the 20th century of human civilization. It has become the rhetoric that most political leaders, government officials, representatives of the international donor community frequently mouth. Therefore, collaboration with popular sectors and their representatives playing a key role in it, is a moral victory for the people. As supporters of POs and popular sectors, NGOs and other allied institutions must demand that governments and international bodies use collaborative approaches. POs and their supportive NGOs can utilize collaboration in strengthening their voice and capacities to influence macro policies.

Empowerment

The dependence of the poor and the marginalized has come to be seen as a multi dimensional phenomenon. Dependence is a structural reality, a political and economic reality. The poor and exploited are dependent on the rich and the powerful. Dependence also acquires a cultural and psychological dimension over a period of time. Those who are dependent feel weak, helpless, incapable, ignorant, etc. Collaboration requires power balancing. Therefore, strengthening the leadership and organizational capacity of popular sectors is an important strategy towards achieving collaboration. Empowerment is a necessity for collaboration to occur. Empowerment also results from collaboration. If we recognize this we can use collaboration as a vehicle for continuous and sustained empowerment of POs and leadership.
Shaping Our Future

Finally, it is important that we realize the future is ours. To that extent, we have a stake in building and shaping our own future. We have a responsibility to find ways to influence those who are presently unilaterally shaping our future. Collaboration represents one strategy for us to influence those shapers of our future in order to become shapers of our own future.