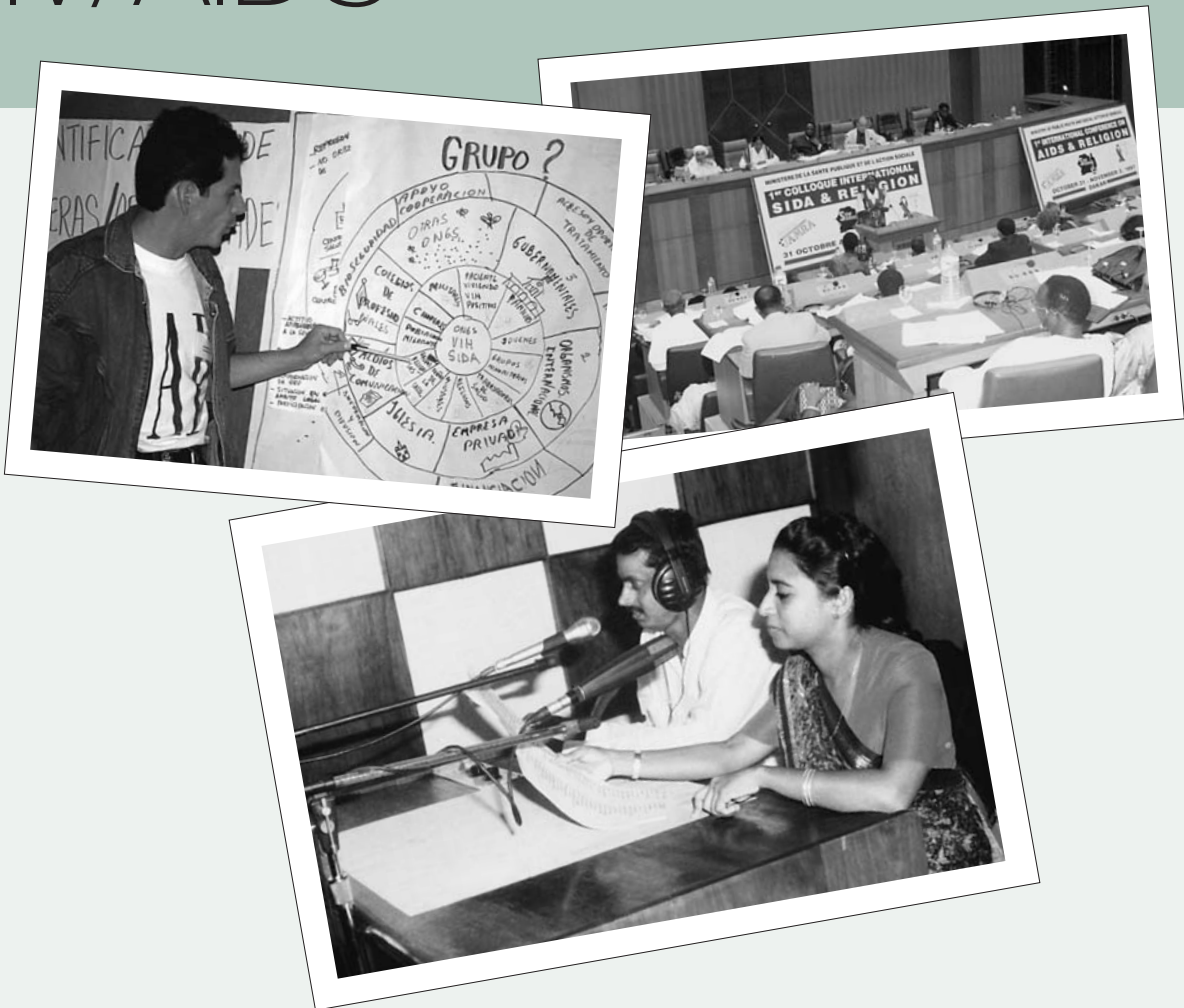


Building Partnerships:

Sustaining and expanding community action on HIV/AIDS



Acknowledgements

This report benefited from the views of many different people involved in the Alliance's partnership building work. Lead authors were Rebecca Clay and Sarah Lee.

Front cover

(Top left) Fundación Eudes, Ecuador, used partnership building methodologies during a 'health fair' for NGOs working with HIV/AIDS, development, reproductive health, human rights and women's issues from across Ecuador, to share information and to challenge discrimination.

(Top right) Jamra, a Muslim NGO based in Dakar, Senegal, organised a conference with Muslim and Catholic religious leaders, government ministers and NGOs to encourage these sectors to work in partnership to improve care and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS.

(Bottom) In Sri Lanka, a local NGO, Rural Friends, worked in partnership with a local radio station to broadcast regular programmes on sexual health and HIV/AIDS to rural communities.

“Building partnerships is about working with others to achieve what we cannot achieve on our own.”

Reference: 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 1999.

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1

Introduction

In practice, building partnerships is different for every NGO and community group – depending on their specific needs, priorities and projects. However, it may include working with:

- ✓ LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS
- ✓ COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS
- ✓ FARMERS' LEADERS
- ✓ TRADITIONAL LEADERS
- ✓ ROTARY CLUBS
- ✓ FACTORY OWNERS
- ✓ PRIESTS, MULLAHS OR MONKS
- ✓ LOCAL PHILANTHROPISTS
- ✓ ADVOCACY NGOS
- ✓ UNITED NATIONS BODIES
- ✓ PRESIDENTS
- ✓ SOCIAL WORKERS
- ✓ YOUTH GROUPS
- ✓ LOCAL COUNCILLORS
- ✓ POLICE
- ✓ TRADITIONAL HEALERS
- ✓ NATIONAL AIDS PROGRAMMES
- ✓ LAWYERS
- ✓ MIDWIVES' GROUPS
- ✓ NEWSPAPERS
- ✓ HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS
- ✓ FOUNDATIONS
- ✓ WOMEN'S CLUBS
- ✓ BUSINESS LEADERS
- ✓ CIVIL SERVANTS
- ✓ INTERNATIONAL DONORS
- ✓ INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUALS
- ✓ ARTS GROUPS
- ✓ HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
- ✓ ACADEMICS
- ✓ CHURCHES, MOSQUES OR TEMPLES
- ✓ POLITICIANS

Reference: 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 1999.

"I really appreciate your efforts on sharing information and lessons learned with others. Already, the toolkit you sent to me on 'Pathways to Partnerships' is helping us here in Uganda to initiate a national alliance between religious institutions, AIDS care organisations, people living with HIV/AIDS and the private sector for increased prevention and care."

Reverend Samuel Balagadde
Ssekkadde, Namirembe Diocese,
Church of Uganda.

HIV/AIDS shows little sign of losing its momentum as the pandemic nears the end of its second decade. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organisation, HIV has already infected over 50 million people around the world. More than 16 million have died, and new infections continue in both the most affected countries and in parts of the world previously spared the brunt of the pandemic.

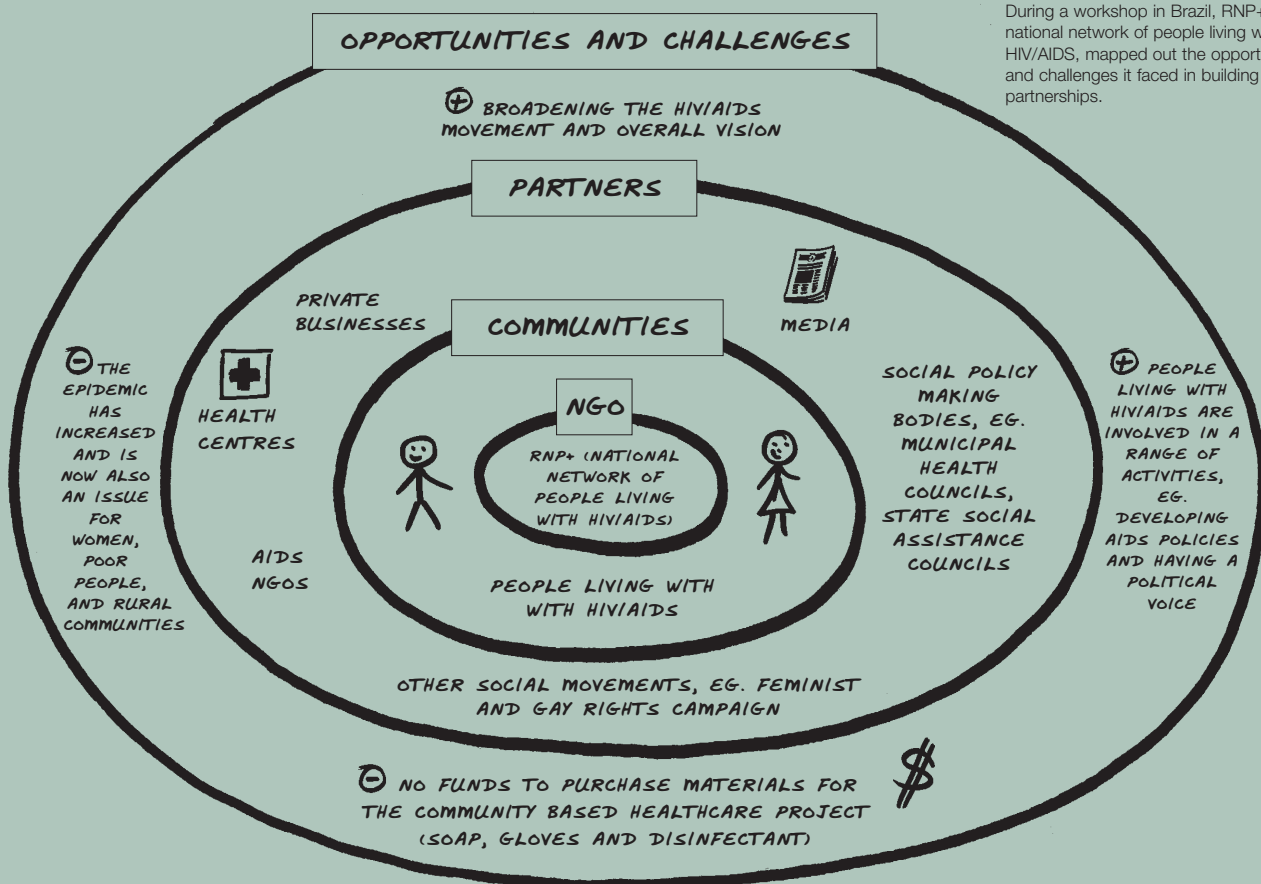
Fortunately, even in the poorest countries, there are important and impressive signs of success in responding to HIV/AIDS. Countries like Uganda, Thailand and the Dominican Republic have reversed trends in the midst of serious epidemics, while Senegal, the Philippines and others have prevented epidemics from taking off. It is difficult to demonstrate or replicate the exact causes of these successes, but clear patterns emerge. In all these countries, widespread community mobilisation has complemented leadership and action from governments, with each reinforcing the other. In addition, all these countries have benefited from 'multisectoral' action on HIV/AIDS. Responses included those not just from Ministries of Health and health-focused community groups, but from women's organisations, youth groups, economic development ministries and others.

For more than a decade, the key international

technical agencies involved in responses to HIV/AIDS have called for 'multisectoral' responses, and over the past five years this is increasingly complemented by calls for 'partnerships'. But beyond the rhetoric, how can organisations and institutions **make it happen**, in a way that has real impact on the epidemic? How can the handful of successes in Thailand, Uganda and the Dominican Republic be replicated more broadly?

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 1993 to support community action on HIV/AIDS in developing countries. The Alliance channels technical, financial and managerial support to partners it calls 'linking organisations' which are NGO support programmes situated in thirteen different countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In turn, these linking organisations catalyse and support local NGOs and community responses to HIV/AIDS.

The Alliance and its partners must do more than simply start up and support good community programmes. For community work by NGOs to be successful and sustainable, it is also crucial to encourage and build NGO skills in partnership building. The impact of even the best community work is limited by the broader context within which programmes are delivered.



During a workshop in Brazil, RNP+, the national network of people living with HIV/AIDS, mapped out the opportunities and challenges it faced in building partnerships.

Reference: Adapted from a 'Participatory Methodologies for Developing External Relations and Sustainability' workshop in Brazil involving Pela Vidda, the Ministry of Health and the Alliance, November 1998.

Partnerships with governments, churches, businesses and the media can help NGOs and community groups to shape that context, for example by decreasing discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

The impact of community work is also limited by the number of people that NGOs can reach. These numbers can be increased by leveraging the involvement of other institutions, especially those with regular and direct access to large populations, like schools. Finally, resource flows for community HIV/AIDS work are unpredictable. For long-term financial stability, local NGOs and community groups need to diversify the sources they draw on for resources, and whenever possible learn to tap into the resources managed by their own national and local governments.

For these reasons, the Alliance tentatively began an effort to encourage and build the skills of local NGOs to work with others. First efforts began essentially as training in 'public relations'. Through this the Alliance discovered that NGOs often needed to be convinced that partnerships were even necessary, let alone central to their success. Ultimately this led to the development of entire programmes to build commitment and skills in 'partnership building' work.

The Alliance learned that conscious efforts to build multisectoral partnerships can influence

and improve the context of community work as a whole. This can be achieved by training local NGOs and community groups to reach more people directly themselves through replication of training programmes locally. This can help leverage financial, human and political resources that help them sustain their work. At its best, partnership building becomes integral to NGO operations – inseparable from strategic planning, programme implementation, impact evaluation and organisational development.

Over the course of this learning process, the Alliance and its own NGO partners developed a wide range of training methodologies and tools, as well as programme models for training around partnership building. This collection of training methodologies and tools contributed to the development of the Alliance's first toolkit 'Pathways to Partnership' as a way of reaching a large number of groups at low cost. This report is designed to synthesise what the Alliance has learned to date through its partnership work and to share some of this learning with a wider audience. It begins by providing the background to the Alliance's work in partnership building, then summarises some of the lessons that have been learned. It concludes by sharing the Alliance's recommendations for NGO support programmes, donors and policy makers.

What are the benefits of building partnerships?

- ✓ Access to people and places
- ✓ Good ideas
- ✓ A helping hand
- ✓ Knowledge and skills
- ✓ Practical support
- ✓ Influence
- ✓ 'In kind' support
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Political support
- ✓ Lessons learned

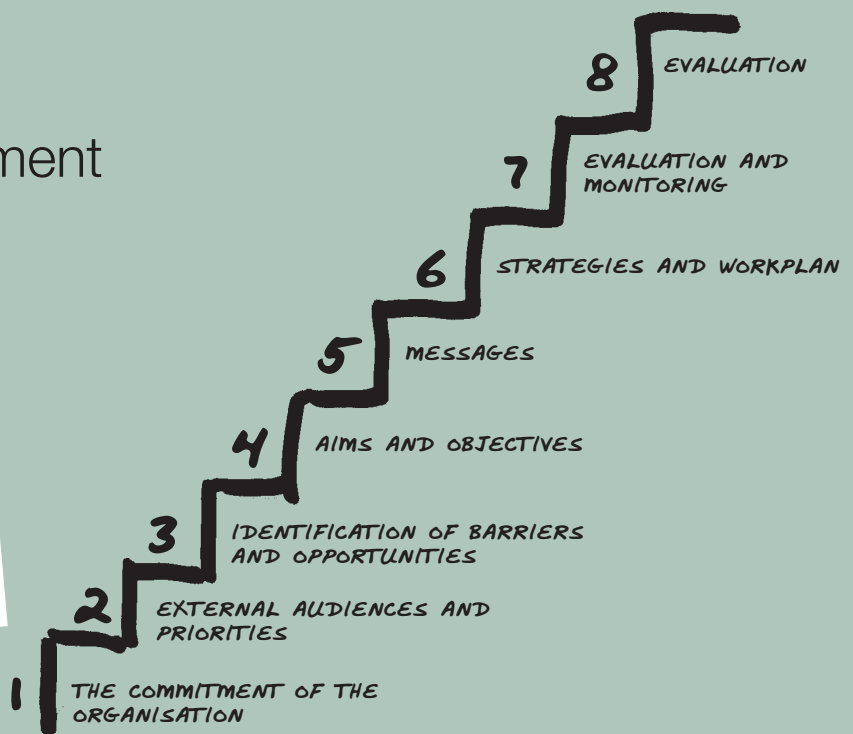
Reference: 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 1999.

2

Programme Development



While a mapping tool developed in the Philippines (above) was replicated in Ecuador, a planning 'staircase' developed in Ecuador (right) was adapted to a planning 'cycle' in Zimbabwe (opposite page).



Reference: Adapted from a 'Solidarity and Sustainability Workshop', COMUNIDEC and the Alliance, Ecuador, May 1997.

'We learned about treating other sectors – such as business, government and media – as partners rather than enemies... We began to realise that we could reach out to our community through all sorts of different ways and that we could sustain ourselves through local means. The PHANSuP workshops gave us confidence and knowledge to go out there and do it... Now, our plan is that our work will become more sustainable on funds from local businesses.'

Jude Asunción, a board member of OCAFI, Philippines.

For many of the organisations the Alliance has worked with, training in partnership building resulted in a considerable change of attitude. The Olongapo City AIDS Foundation Inc. (OCAFI) in the Philippines is just one example, "We learned about treating other sectors, such as business, government and the media, as partners rather than enemies" says Jude Asunción. "It was a real eye-opener."

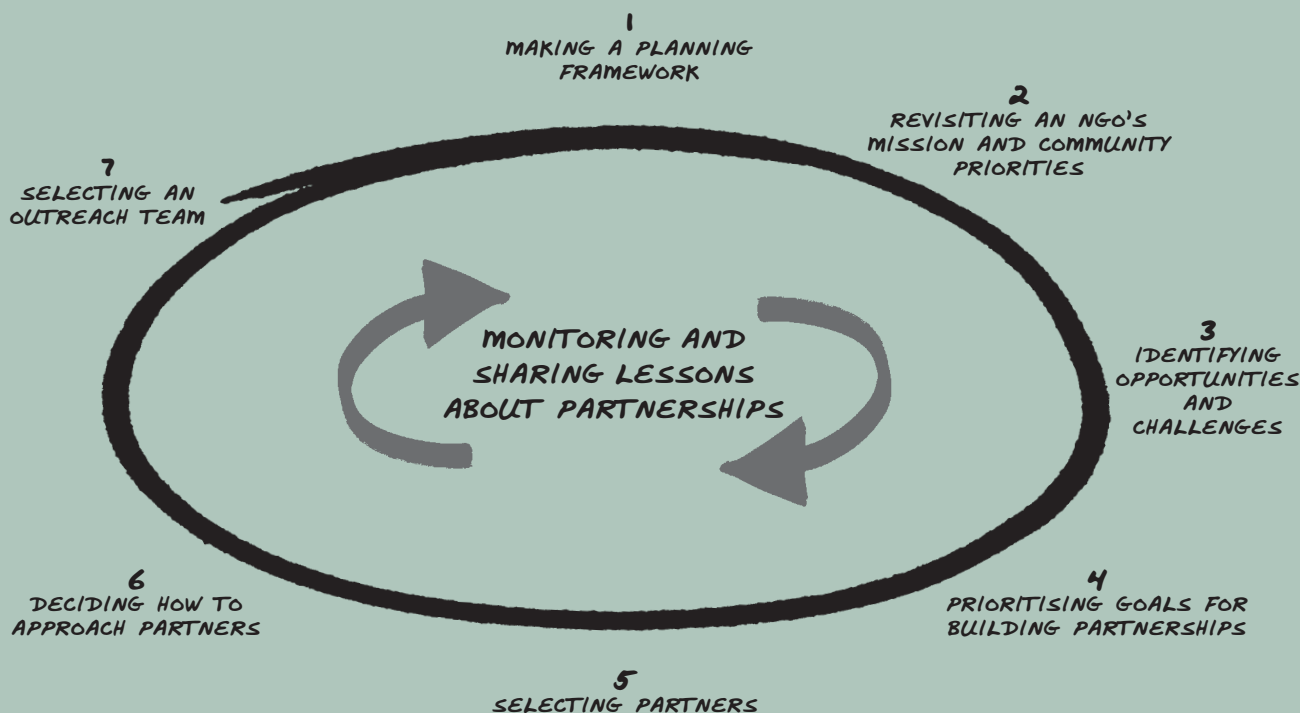
OCAFI had participated in the Alliance's pilot programme on building partnerships, which was established in 1995 in collaboration with the Alliance linking organisation - Philippines HIV/AIDS NGO Support Programme - PHANSuP. This inaugural workshop was designed to respond to the increasing maturity of local NGOs and their need to sustain and expand their HIV/AIDS work. It focused on the use of participatory tools to build skills in reaching out to other sectors. A second workshop the following year enabled participants to share their lessons – both among themselves and also with participants from Alliance Lanka, the Alliance's linking organisation in Sri Lanka.

In this way, the Alliance started its capacity-building programme on partnerships work, which has since been adapted and expanded worldwide (see timeline, pages 6-7). In practice, initiatives have varied from

organisation to organisation and country to country. However, throughout the programme, the Alliance has consistently emphasised a number of core features:

■ **Creative approaches based on concrete objectives.** The Alliance advocates for an approach to partnerships that combines the most effective strategies with the most practical, concrete benefits for each individual NGO. For example, at a workshop in Morocco, participants were encouraged to diversify their partners, and to consider working with groups such as religious organisations and the corporate sector, as well as 'traditional' partners such as the government. While in the Philippines, NGOs were supported to set specific, non-financial objectives for their partnerships, and to articulate the tangible benefits they aimed to achieve.

■ **Adaptation rather than replication of participatory methodologies.** The Alliance's programme has focused on the use of participatory activities, and supported NGOs to learn from the methodologies of others as well as develop their own. In practice this has meant that, while some methodologies have been used in every country, others have been newly developed to meet country-specific needs (see above).



Reference: Adapted from a 'Building Partnerships Workshop', Pact, the Project Support Group and the Alliance, Zimbabwe, July 1998.

■ **Complementary partnerships and programmes.** The Alliance has encouraged NGOs to view the development of strategic partnerships as complementary to their own direct programme work, rather than in competition. This ensures that all elements of an NGO's efforts, both conceptual and practical, aim toward the same goals. For example, in Ecuador, participants in a training workshop were encouraged to start by articulating their organisation's goal, and then draw an image to show how both their partnerships and direct programme work complement each other in reaching their goal (see page 8). The participants were then actively encouraged to review their plans for partnerships – to ensure that they achieved an appropriate balance with direct programme work, taking into account the existing commitments of staff and volunteers.

■ **Learning from and reaching out to other organisations.** The Alliance has actively sought to learn from and share its experiences with organisations beyond its own immediate 'family'. For example, as well as its linking organisations, the Alliance has drawn on the experiences and materials of groups such as the Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS, Proyecto Acción en SIDA de Centro América and the Latin American Council of AIDS Service Organisations. Other opportunities included field-testing the 'Pathways to Partnerships'

toolkit in collaboration with two local NGO support programmes (Project Support Group and Pact) in Zimbabwe, as well as leading skills-building sessions at international AIDS conferences involving NGOs from around the world. The Alliance has also involved external organisations as 'test sites' for the monitoring and evaluation strategy which has been designed to assess the effectiveness of the toolkit, and also provide recommendations for the improvement of future resources.

■ **Reaching groups with diverse levels of needs, experience and capacity.** While developing a core set of generic methodologies, the Alliance programme has also aimed to address the specific needs of a diverse range of NGOs, with differing expectations and skills. For example, while technical support in the Philippines involved a small-scale, nascent self-help group for people living with HIV/AIDS, in Zimbabwe it targeted large-scale, well-established AIDS service organisations. In each case, the Alliance emphasised the need to develop realistic, achievable strategies for partnerships – to fit the specific needs and capacity of the NGOs.

Programme Development for partnerships work → → → → →

1995

● The Alliance and its linking organisation in the Philippines – Philippines HIV/AIDS NGO Support Programme (PHANSuP) – trained local NGOs in why and how to develop relationships with the media, government and business.

1996

● The Alliance and PHANSuP facilitated a workshop in the Philippines to share lessons on the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships among local NGOs. The Alliance's linking organisation in Sri Lanka – Alliance Lanka – also attended the workshop to share their experiences.



1997

● The Alliance and its linking organisation in Ecuador – COMUNIDEC – held a solidarity and sustainability workshop focusing on NGO collaboration, working with the church and gaining participatory inputs from other sectors, including field visits to local media outlets.

● In Sri Lanka, the Alliance provided technical support to its linking organisation – Alliance Lanka – focusing on building skills for partnerships and documentation work.

1995

● An article about the Alliance's partnership building programme in the Philippines was published in 'AIDS/STD Health Promotion Exchange Journal' in The Netherlands.

● An edition of 'Alliance News' focusing on the Alliance's experiences working on partnerships was disseminated to over 1000 donors, policy makers and NGOs worldwide.

1996

● The Alliance disseminated a report synthesising the lessons learned to date about building partnerships to over 100 donors and policy makers.

1997

● The Alliance gave an oral presentation on its partnerships work to date at the National Council for International Health Conference held in the United States.



1998

1998

Policy Development for partnerships work → → → → →



- The Alliance facilitated a skills-building session on building partnerships at the National Conference of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Brazil.
- The first phase of the Alliance's 'partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme' was launched in Mexico in collaboration with the Alliance's linking organisation, Colectivo Sol. The programme focused on the training of trainers, and included five capacity-building workshops in three states, five workshops to share lessons learned, and an evaluation of the first phase of the Pilot Programme.
- The Alliance facilitated a skills-building session in Switzerland at the XII International Conference on HIV/AIDS. The session trained NGOs and people living with HIV/AIDS from Africa, Asia and Latin America using some of the tools that were later included in the toolkit.
- The field-testing of the toolkit was carried out in collaboration with Project Support Group and Pact in Zimbabwe, focusing particularly on testing the 'user-friendly' nature of the toolkit for local NGO support programmes, and how it could be adapted to an African context.

1999

● The Pilot Programme for capacity-building in external relations and sustainability was launched in Brazil with Pela Vidda/Rio de Janeiro, Pela Vidda/Niteroi, Grupo de Incentivo a Vida/São Paulo and the municipal Government of Praia Grande/São Paulo. The project focused on the training of trainers and included four capacity-building workshops in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, two workshops to validate the Brazilian training manual developed during the pilot programme and a final evaluation workshop.

● The French adaptation of the toolkit - 'La voie du partenariat' - was field-tested in Morocco during a skills-building workshop in collaboration with Association Marocaine de Solidarité et de Développement (AMSED). The toolkit was used to improve linkage with public health sector clinics for the management of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).



● The first skills-building session based on the completed 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit was held at the Asia Regional AIDS Conference in Malaysia involving participants from Alliance linking organisations and other NGO support programmes in the region.

● The Alliance launched the second phase of the partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme in Mexico in collaboration with Colectivo Sol. This second phase focused on capacity-building with existing partners in three states to address organisational development issues. In addition, this included the expansion of the programme to a further two states.

● The Alliance facilitated a skills-building session for NGOs, government representatives, people living with HIV/AIDS and UN representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America at the International Home Care Conference held in Paris.

- The Alliance developed a poster presentation on its partnerships capacity-building programme for the XII International Conference on HIV/AIDS held in Switzerland.

Stage 1: Pilot project, the Philippines

The programme started with a pilot project in the Philippines in collaboration with the Philippines HIV/AIDS NGO Support Program, an Alliance "linking organisation", and partner NGOs. It included:

● A skills building workshop for NGOs from throughout the Philippines on relations with business, media and government.

● NGOs implementing external relations plans within their on-going programmes in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

● A follow-up "Strategic Partnerships" workshop to share best practice and focus more strategically on external relations.



● The Alliance toolkit 'Pathways to Partnership' was disseminated in English to 1,146 NGO support programmes, training institutions, donors and policy makers world-wide. This was followed by the dissemination of 345 French versions translated as 'La voie du partenariat'.

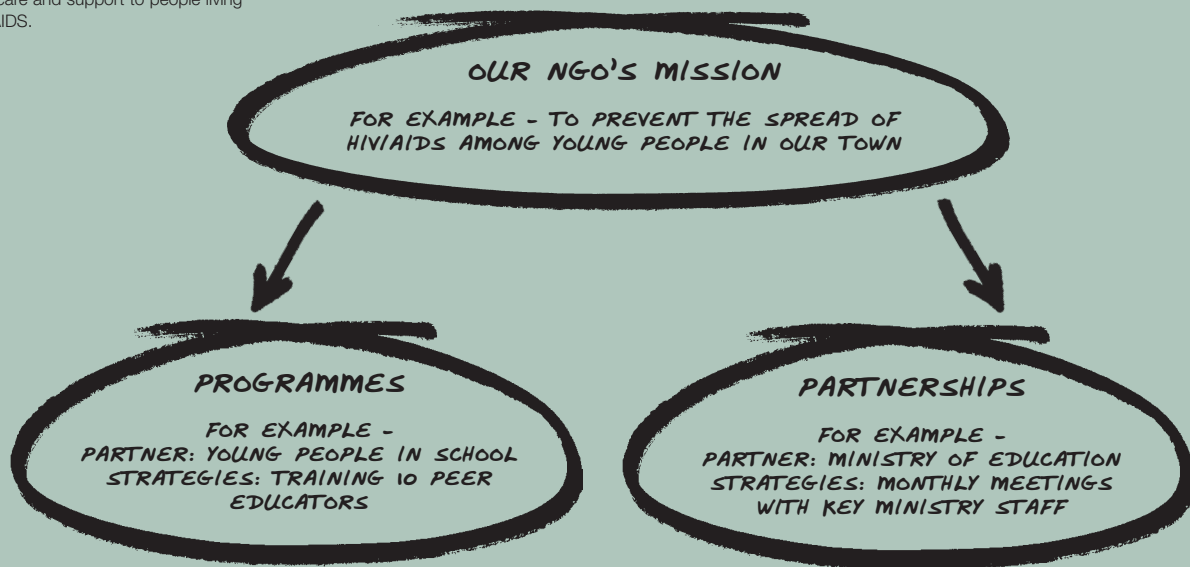
● A Portuguese adaptation of the toolkit was developed in Brazil. In Brazil the Alliance also made presentations at both the World Bank/ National STD/AIDS Co-ordination Seminar on Sustainability and IX National Meeting of AIDS NGOs in Brazil.

● The first phase of the partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme was evaluated, and recommendations were disseminated both within the Alliance and with external audiences. In addition, a Spanish adaptation of the toolkit was developed.

1999

Programme Development

Complementary partnerships and direct programme activities work toward the same goal – increasing the effectiveness of work preventing new HIV infections, and providing care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS.



Reference: Adapted from a 'Solidarity and Sustainability Workshop', COMUNIDEC and the Alliance, Ecuador, May 1997.

■ **Building and sustaining local capacity.** The emphasis for capacity-building has been on a local level. For example, in Mexico, the Alliance's most ambitious partnership building effort to date has focused on a multi-year training programme. This includes the creation of a team of trainers from staff and volunteers from eight national NGOs. The team aims to ensure a local pool of people and resources to mobilise and support local NGOs to plan and implement partnerships. The first phase of this partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme was launched in 1998, and based on this successful approach, this Mexican model has now been adapted to the needs of local NGOs in Brazil.

■ **Combining capacity-building with policy work.** At the same time as developing its training package, the Alliance has implemented a parallel programme to actively promote the lessons and importance of its capacity-building effort to donors, policy-makers and other key players. For example, this has included one-on-one briefings, presentations at international conferences, and articles in international journals (see timeline, pages 6 - 7).

■ **Scaling-up the programme.** Once the Alliance felt that it had reached a 'critical mass' of experience and lessons in partnerships work,

it proactively sought ways to scale-up its initiative. For example, one central strategy focused on developing a practical toolkit – 'Pathways to Partnerships' - to consolidate the lessons from across the different regions, and to share the methodologies. The toolkit – which has been developed in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese - is a practical resource for NGO support programmes and training institutions. It consists of activities to introduce partnerships work and to guide users through developing plans, building effective relationships and sharing lessons. The toolkit has been disseminated through skills-building workshops, resource centres, mailings, and conferences, and has enabled the Alliance to expand the impact of its programme – by promoting its work among many more stakeholders in many more countries.

RNP+ using a universe map as a starting point for building partnerships work during an introductory workshop on 'External Relations and Sustainability' with the Ministry of Health and the Alliance in Brazil.



3 Results

Impact of partnerships programme in Mexico

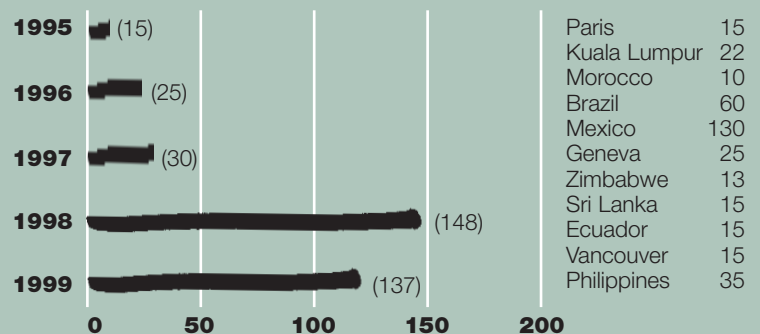
Goal	% of participating NGOs achieving goal:	
	...before training	...after training
Written mission statement	31%	97%
Written strategic plan	23%	88%
Written workplan	30%	72%
Key partners identified	9%	98%
Partnership building strategy	11%	84%
Partnership building plan	9%	55%

Organisations reached through 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit

Africa	38%
Asia & Pacific	31%
Central & Latin America	8%
Europe	14%
North America & Canada	9%



NGOs reached through partnerships skills-building workshops



“This programme has allowed me to grow at both a personal and professional level, to learn new tools and facilitation techniques. More than anything, it's allowed me to apply what I've learned to my organisation to improve our work and to make a detailed plan of what we want to achieve. Another achievement is that I have become more actively involved in decision-making processes and programme work within my organisation.” Member of La

Red de Personas Viviendo con VIH/SIDA in Mexico.

Since the Alliance launched its initiative to promote partnerships in 1995, the programme has developed and expanded considerably. As a result of the Alliance's training efforts, NGOs have started reaching out to the government, business community, media and other new partners. By bringing people together in a common cause, these collaborations are now helping communities to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic more effectively than ever before.

The sheer numbers alone tell part of the story. Since 1995, 355 local NGOs have participated in the capacity-building effort (see above). Also, by disseminating the 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit, the Alliance has greatly extended the reach of its efforts. Since the production of the English version in 1999, the Alliance has distributed 1,146 copies to organisations in over 32 countries (see above).

Benefits of Mexico Pilot Programme

The Alliance asked the 64 NGOs participating in the first phase of the partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme how they had benefited from the training. They summarised their response at three levels:

Individual level:

- Individual empowerment
- Decentralised leadership
- Improved capacity to delegate

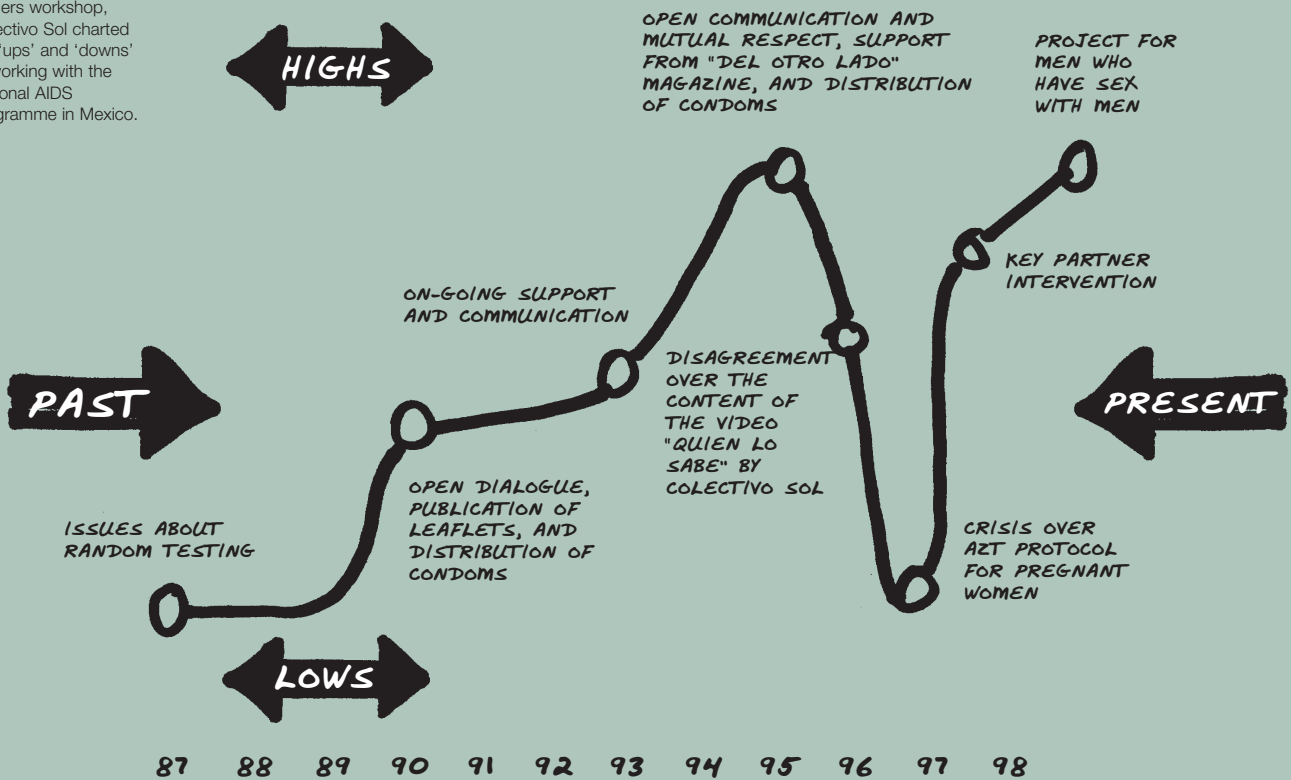
NGO level:

- Access to new planning tools and skills
- Greater clarity about organisational structure, roles and responsibilities
- Greater clarity about organisational mission, strategy and activities
- Increased level and quantity of services
- Increased access to equipment, donations and services
- Greater involvement of new players

National level:

- Increased leadership capacity
- Increased awareness of NGOs' role in social mobilisation on HIV/AIDS
- Increased focus on human rights
- Greater unity of vision as a group of NGOs

During a training of trainers workshop, Colectivo Sol charted the 'ups' and 'downs' of working with the National AIDS Programme in Mexico.



Reference: Adapted from an 'External Relations Workshop', Colectivo Sol and the Alliance, Mexico, August 1998.

The data from Mexico, the site of both the most comprehensive partnerships training programme and most thorough evaluation to date of the Alliance's work in this area, shows the real impact of this kind of work. As part of a formal performance-monitoring plan, structured interviews were used to gather baseline and follow-up data from the participating NGOs. The results were striking (see opposite page). For example, when the programme began, only 6 out of the 64 participating NGOs had identified key partners. By the end of the first phase, this had increased to 63.

In addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative feedback from Mexico also indicates that the capacity-building efforts have been effective. Participants reported a number of positive developments, ranging from individual empowerment to a united vision of their HIV/AIDS work (see page 10).

One of the most important results of the Mexico Programme has been a heightened awareness of the importance of NGOs working more closely, not only with other sectors, but also amongst themselves. This was achieved through facilitating a combination of discussions and participatory activities (see above) to encourage people to openly voice their perspectives and concerns. As one of the participants at the evaluation workshop said,

"When we were thinking back over conflicts we have had with other groups, we were able to see things from their point of view. It encouraged us to think more about how we relate to others and helped us to realise, because NGOs share common objectives, we can complement each other's work."

Now, the realisation by NGOs and other sectors alike that Mexican NGOs are working together more collaboratively and productively, has had a ripple effect. As the programme's success continues, more and more groups want to be involved. Although this kind of mobilisation was not the programme's original goal, it has been one of its most striking achievements.

The Alliance's work in Mexico is not an isolated success. Individual NGOs, NGO support programmes and NGO sectors in other countries have also reported improvements in their capacity, effectiveness and ability to not only sustain their efforts, but also to expand them.

"It is the first time ever in the history of the fight against AIDS in Mexico that many of the most important NGOs have started to work together strategically and, a year later, they continue to go from strength to strength. For the first time, there is a strategic approach to the fight, based on the internal strengthening of NGOs. This is the first time that organisational development for internal capacity-building has been used to encourage NGOs to work together."

Sandra Peniche, Director of UNASSE/GIRE, one of the participants in the Mexico training programme.

CASE STUDY



Example: HOPE Foundation, the Philippines

What is the HOPE Foundation?

HOPE is a local NGO based in Bacolod City. Their programme focuses on developing a local “AIDS Council” involving different sectors. These include local government bodies – such as the City Government, Provincial Health Office and City Health Office.

What did they do with their government partners?

HOPE identified their local government bodies as priority partners. Their activities included:

- Carrying out one-to-one visits – to build relationships, and to develop their individual HIV/AIDS strategies.
- Involving them in the “AIDS Council” – enabling them to participate in strategic planning for the City’s response to HIV/AIDS, and to share ideas with others – such as the Red Cross and civic clubs.
- Providing them with access to HIV/AIDS training – in areas such as gender.

What did they gain?

By working with their local government bodies, HOPE gained:

- Financial support – such as funding for HOPE’s telephone counselling service from the City Government.
- Endorsement and political support for a broader response to HIV/AIDS within the City.
- An improved referral system – enabling HOPE to refer community members, including people living with HIV/AIDS, to government services.

What did they learn?

HOPE learned that it was vital to:

- Recognise and respect that local government bodies have specific systems and ways of working.
- Involve government in a multi-sectoral initiative – to help them to understand the different needs and priorities of other groups, and to contribute to – rather than “dictate” – a local response to HIV/AIDS.
- Have a positive approach to government relations – which offers support and strengthening, rather than confrontation.

Results

By building a strategic partnership, COMDEV has successfully integrated their peer education programme for young people into the official government curriculum for schools in General Santos, the Philippines.



At the level of individual NGOs, the Alliance's training has taught participants new skills, and thus helped increase their capacity to form partnerships. In the Philippines, for example, HOPE Foundation has dramatically enhanced the quality of HIV/AIDS co-ordination and services in Bacolod City through the creation of a multisectoral AIDS Council (see case study on opposite page).

COMDEV, another NGO in the Philippines, has also been able to address the scale and sustainability of its efforts. It started by building upon its success in mobilising considerable local resources; from video equipment from the City Government, to sponsorship for peer educator awards from the Rotary Club. It then took its partnerships work one stage further by collaborating with the local education department and convincing them to integrate their HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and materials into the school curriculum. This initiative, based upon training sessions and prototype lesson plans developed by COMDEV, will enable the scale-up of the NGO's established programme of guidance counsellors and peer educators in 25 local schools. Although COMDEV will continue to have a technical role, in the future much of the resources and support will come from the government.

Experiences such as COMDEV's show that the

results of partnerships can go far beyond the initiative in question. They can also benefit both the NGO's work, and the local response to HIV/AIDS as a whole. As Miriam Grafilo of COMDEV says, "We've shown that different agencies are able to plan together – which has never happened before. For example, students can be referred from peer educators to government clinics. This has changed the image of NGOs with the government – because they have realised our usefulness."

This is supported by the views of other sectors. For example, Estrella Lariosa, Assistant Schools Division Superintendent of General Santos says, "Before, we had HIV/AIDS in our curriculum, but it wasn't as strong as it is now. COMDEV have brought practical expertise, whereas our knowledge was limited to books. The peer counsellors are doing a splendid job. You can see their confidence and enthusiasm – which is a result of the high quality of the training they received from COMDEV." While the President of General Santos Rotary Club says, "COMDEV has helped us to see that we can do our bit, especially for students and people in the slum areas. We've realised that AIDS is not just my problem or his problem, it's the whole community's. So, we've now decided to make our work with COMDEV a continuing project – so that they don't have to look for a new partner each year."

"It was PHANSuP that introduced us to the world of HIV/AIDS. From an organisation that knew nothing about HIV/AIDS, we can now be seen as a model. This is largely because of PHANSuP. Their technical support has helped us to grow – from the basics of starting off a project, to preparing us for the next stage. We know that we can just pick up the phone, tell PHANSuP our problem, and they're ready to help." Miriam Grafilo, COMDEV, a PHANSuP partner in its fourth and final year of support.

Responses to 'Pathways to Partnerships' toolkit

"It is a breakthrough for HIV/AIDS; therefore I want to congratulate you for such a fine product.... This [is an] achievement which is an important tool for all of us who work with HIV/AIDS."

Rainer F. Rosenbaum, Representative, UNFPA, Mexico

"It is comprehensive and covers in-depth ways of working in partnership at the international level. I believe it would be a useful resource for our Family Planning Associations."

Pramila Senanayake, Assistant Director General, IPPF

"I am very happy to inform you that I have received your wonderful toolkit which I and my team see as the best since we started working in the HIV/AIDS field for the past ten years now."

Bernard K. Sode, Director, Friends Concern, Ghana

By enhancing partnership building skills, the Alliance has also helped linking organisations and other NGO support programmes increase their effectiveness. For example, in Ecuador, the Alliance linking organisation has improved its work with the media, and in the Philippines, the linking organisation has enhanced its co-ordination with the government. While, in Malaysia, an Alliance skills-building workshop conducted before the Asia Regional AIDS Conference – involving Alliance linking organisations and other NGO support programmes – helped participants to develop a strategic plan for targeting donors and other potential partners at the conference.

Of particular note, the Alliance's efforts have also resulted in an increase in focus amongst NGO support programmes on working with local NGOs to develop their own partnerships work. In total, over 50 local facilitators have been involved in the programme. At a country level, the results can be most clearly seen in Mexico – where the pilot programme alone resulted in 16 local facilitators being trained in how to train others to use participatory methodologies for partnerships work. Results can also be seen in other countries. For example, in Morocco, the staff of AMSED – the Alliance linking organisation – put their new skills, developed during a technical support visit, to immediate use by preparing and

co-facilitating a partnerships workshop for their partner NGOs.


These changes at the NGO and NGO support programme levels have contributed to changes at the NGO sector level. As a result of the Alliance's capacity-building efforts, the sector has, in many countries, increased its ability to act in strategic collaboration rather than in isolation. For the NGOs in Morocco, for example, the Alliance workshop represented the first time that many participants had talked together about their experiences of working with others, and helped to strengthen the sector's effectiveness.

4

Lessons Learned

Stage 3: Sharing of lessons learned

The cross-country lessons learned were documented, synthesised and shared with a broad range of stakeholders, including:



- **Other NGOs.**
For example: Through an advocacy workshop in Cuba with the Pan American network of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- **Alliance programmes.**
For example: Through the 1997 Linking Organisations' Meeting, with participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- **Policy makers / donors.**
For example: Through a policy report, articles in journals, one-to-one briefings, and presentations at international fora.

To share the lessons learned from its experiences in capacity-building for partnerships work, the Alliance developed a poster presentation for the XII International Conference on HIV/AIDS held in Switzerland.

The Alliance has learned many valuable lessons in the course of its on-going capacity-building efforts in building partnerships. They can be divided into three main areas:

Training content

■ Partnership initiatives by NGOs need to be appropriate to the communities in which they work. Projects that are based in resource-poor settings and that become dependent on intensive financial support are very unlikely to be sustained. Instead, training efforts should stress that money is not the only thing to gain from partnerships, and should instead emphasise mobilising other types of resources – such as technical, political or ‘in-kind’ support.

■ To improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of local and national responses to HIV/AIDS, training must specifically focus on relations among NGOs as well as relations between NGOs and other sectors.

■ Government and the media are not the only potential partners in responding to HIV/AIDS. Training should stress the need to target partnership building efforts with sectors that have not traditionally played a role, such as the church and the business community, as well as more traditional partners. Trainers should remind participants to be open-minded, and encourage

them to reach out to new sectors.

■ Training should emphasise the need to be as specific as possible about targeting potential partners. Participants should name specific individuals or institutions, such as a local newspaper editor or factory, rather than general sectors, such as the media or the business community.

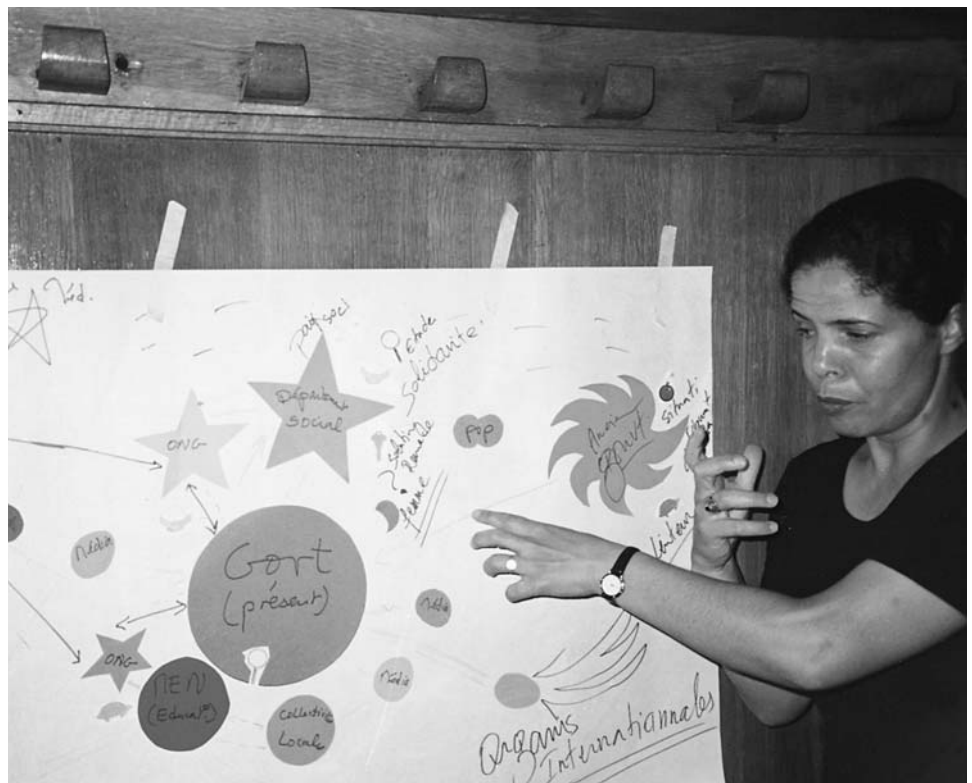
■ NGOs should see partnership building as a key function rather than an optional extra task. Training should emphasise the need to integrate outreach efforts into an NGO’s overall strategy – as this will help them to ensure that programmatic and partnership activities are both working towards the same goal of responding to HIV/AIDS.

■ NGO support programmes should point out that working in partnership might be new not just to NGOs, but also to businesses, governments and churches. Training should therefore emphasise to NGOs that mutual understanding and trust need to be developed over time, and immediate results cannot always be achieved.

■ People sometimes have misconceptions about other sectors. For example, members of the business community may assume that NGOs approaching them are only looking for

Lessons Learned

At a skills-building workshop in Morocco, participants used a 'universe map' – a tool originally developed in Mexico – to brainstorm diverse new and existing partners.



financial hand-outs. Training should challenge these misperceptions in a constructive way, and emphasise the need for finding common ground.

■ Training on partnerships work should specifically include attention to monitoring and evaluation, including support in the development of simple and practical quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess strengths and weaknesses, and measure success.

Training methodologies

■ Using visual participatory activities, such as mapping and timelines, are invaluable for engaging NGOs and demystifying the partnership building process. However, emphasis needs to be placed on the quality of the information, discussions and ideas that emerge, rather than on the quality or detail of the drawings.

■ Younger, less sophisticated NGOs tend to be open to support in building partnerships, while mature NGOs can be less receptive, feeling that they have less to learn. However, in practice, all NGOs can benefit – whether they are starting from scratch or simply fine-tuning long-standing initiatives.

■ Training should target people who can make

maximum use of the new skills they gain and take the partnership building efforts forward in their organisations. Involving at least two representatives from each NGO, such as the Executive Director and a Programme Officer, helps participants reinforce each other's efforts once a workshop is over. It also protects against lost knowledge should one person leave the organisation. Trainers should also encourage participants to make specific plans to share what they have learned with other colleagues, for example through techniques such as 'echo seminars'.

■ Trainers should validate and build upon participants' past experiences in building partnerships, while also helping them develop a more strategic approach to future efforts. To validate the experience of the more mature NGOs, for instance, they can be asked to train less experienced NGOs.

■ Inviting religious leaders to speak at training sessions, sending participants out to local radio stations, and finding other ways of actively involving other sectors does more than just help participants learn. By breaking down misconceptions and creating personal bonds, activities like these are themselves a means of building relationships – by dispelling myths and fostering collaboration.

Lessons Learned



Role plays have helped to develop negotiation skills for working with different partners, including the media in Sri Lanka (left), the government in Ecuador (far left) and the church in Zimbabwe (top right). But it is the analysis and discussion during such participatory activities that are the most crucial part of the process.

■ While local organisations can offer the benefit of practical experience, regional and international resource people can sometimes offer broader expertise. Training sessions can benefit from using both types of facilitators and technical input - to take advantage of these complementary strengths.

■ Documenting the process and tools used is crucial. For example, workshop leaders can develop an information sheet describing each day's key activities and give take-home copies to participants. Technical support providers should also encourage NGOs to find simple and interesting ways to make records while implementing their work - for example, through project diaries or photo reports.

■ Building NGOs' capacity to create partnerships is an on-going process. A single workshop is not enough. Ideally, trainers should find a way to provide on-going support to NGOs in order to help their efforts to grow and flourish.

Programme development and adaptation

Programme developers should recognise the value of basic, generic tools that can form a framework for skills-building efforts in any context. However, they must also be ready to

adapt rather than replicate both tools and programme strategies. Flexibility is key. Programme developers must respond to - and be seen to respond to - the perceived needs of each NGO and country setting.

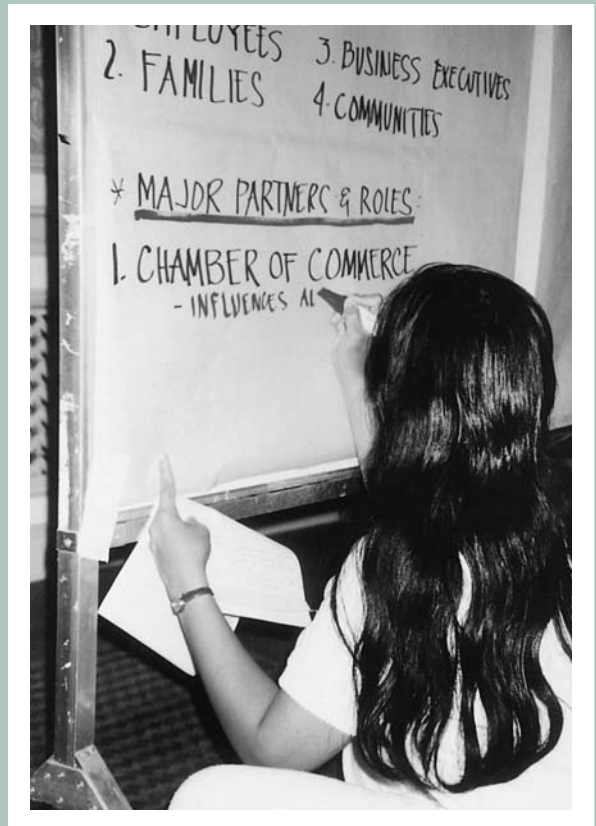
■ Partnership building efforts can give NGO support programmes a non-controversial point of entry to working with NGOs. After building a relationship with them, the support programmes can gradually shift their efforts towards tackling more challenging areas, such as organisational development.

■ Helping NGOs learn how to build partnerships does not just further their responses to HIV/AIDS. The collaborations they form can also aid their on-going work on other aspects of community development.

5

Recommendations

Integrating partnerships work into regular technical support visits has helped the Philippines HIV/AIDS NGO Support Programme to provide both follow-up to their training workshops, and also to continue learning about partnerships work in practice.



The lessons the Alliance has learned in capacity building for partnerships work have led to the development of the following two areas of key recommendations:

Recommendations for donors and policy-makers

■ Governments and donors on the one hand, and NGOs on the other, have often referred to 'partnerships'. In fact, governments and donors often want NGOs to simply sub-contract official work, while NGOs often act as if they are entitled to support without critical review or willingness to collaborate. Governments and donors, as well as NGOs and NGO support programmes, should be aware that effective partnerships require each participant to respect differences while seeking common ground.

■ International donors increasingly push national governments to establish multiple partnerships in the development and implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes. Such encouragement can be positive, but donors should recognise that effective partnership building requires commitment and exchange of expertise from all sides as well as at least a minimum level of financial autonomy.

■ Donors and policy-makers can play a crucial, active role in fostering dialogue and

co-operation between groups. For example, they can plan and facilitate opportunities to bring together representatives from all the projects they support in a given country.

■ Donors and governments should play a particularly active role in facilitating partnerships at a national level. For example, governments should involve NGOs in decision-making processes – as bringing NGOs to the table not only helps ensure better decisions but also acknowledges that different sectors have different strengths. In this case, NGOs' experience working in local communities complements the government's national perspective.

■ Traditional donors such as international agencies and governments should help encourage other sectors – such as media, business and religious – to form partnerships with NGOs.

Recommendations for NGO support programmes

■ Even at a modest level, partnerships should be introduced into a programme at the very beginning of a new relationship with an NGO – as part of a package of comprehensive support in programmatic and organisational sustainability.

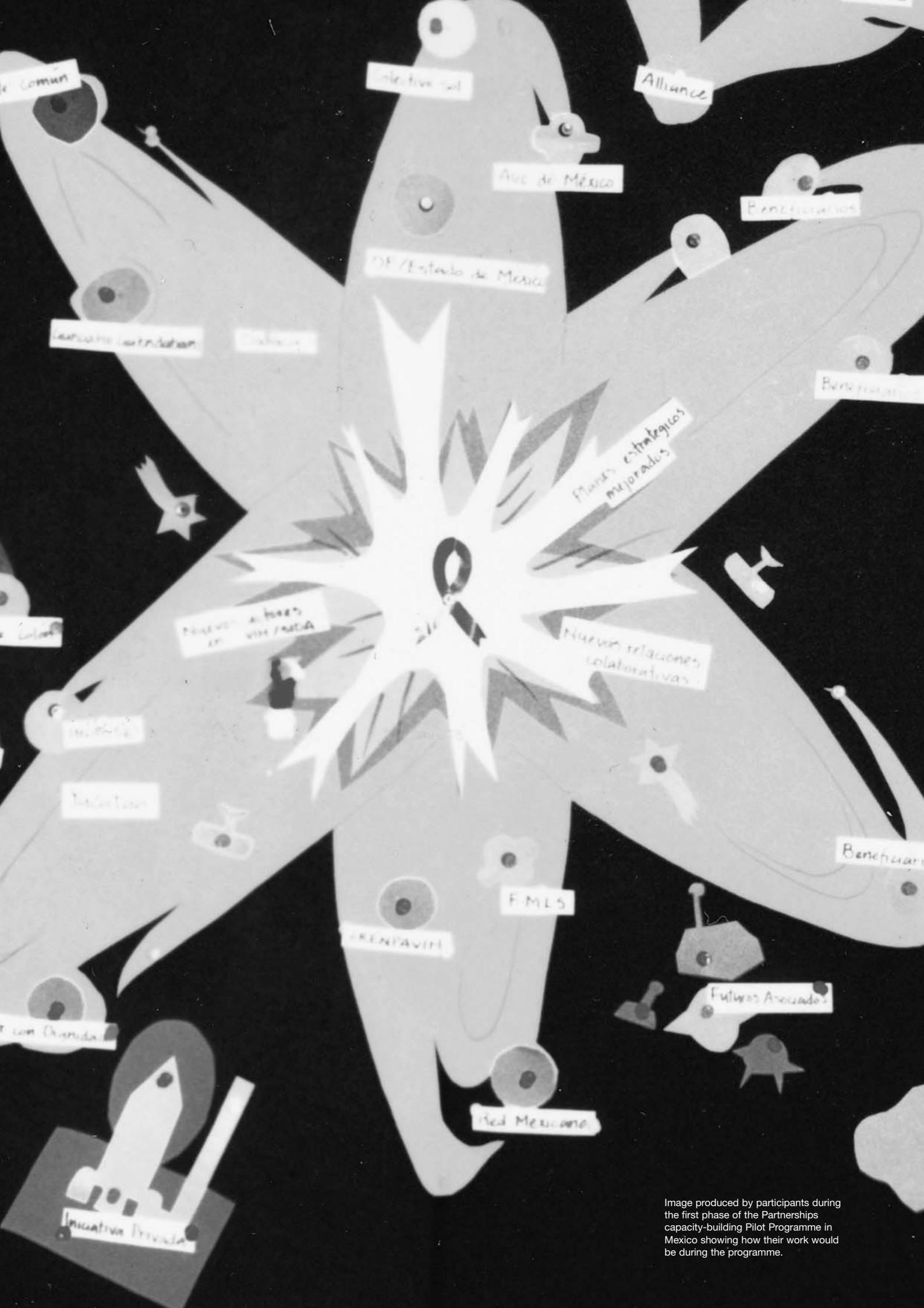
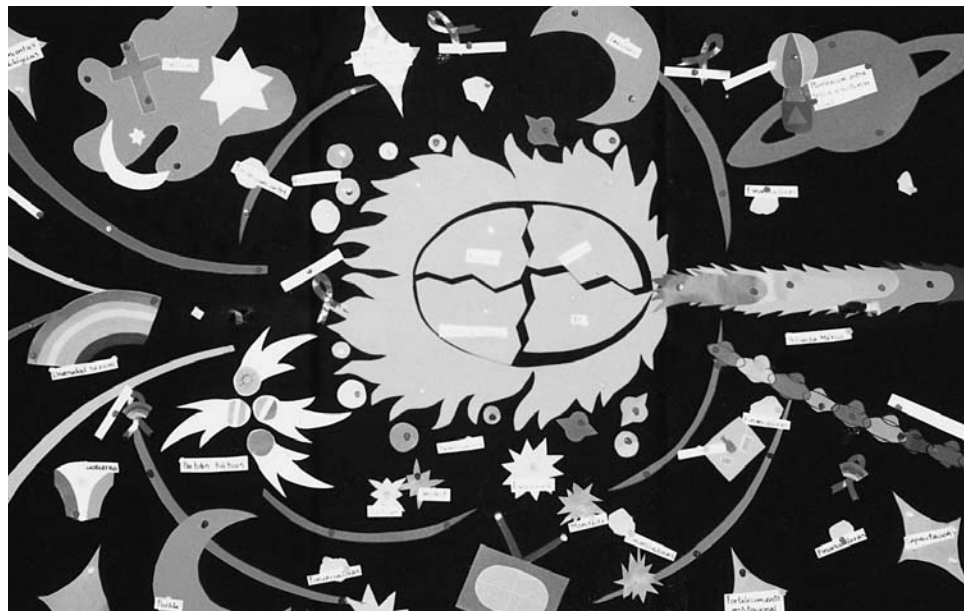


Image produced by participants during the first phase of the Partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme in Mexico showing how their work would be during the programme.

Recommendations

Image produced by participants during the first phase of the partnerships capacity-building Pilot Programme in Mexico showing how their work would be after the programme.



This helps to reinforce the concept and practice of partnerships being a core function integrated into an NGO's overall strategic plans.

■ NGO support programmes should encourage NGOs to consider the value of partnerships that go beyond financial provision. For example, partnerships can include collaborations concerning advocacy and policy issues, as well as shared resources, 'in-kind' support and technical expertise.

■ While using regional or international expertise to provide specific technical inputs, NGO support programmes need to prioritise building local human capacity for partnerships work. For example, it is often more appropriate to start with a training of trainers initiative than a workshop for NGOs. By developing a pool of local resource people, their training can help to build local expertise and sustain efforts. This is also the first step in adapting tools and methodologies to reflect local priorities.

■ Workshops and other forms of intensive technical support should not be delivered in isolation. Instead, wherever possible, they should be complemented by providing follow-up support as part of an NGO support programme's on-going relationship with an NGO.

■ Monitoring and evaluation efforts should be

specifically included in technical support provided to NGOs in building partnerships. For example, NGO support programmes might help NGOs collect baseline data and set goals as they begin their initiatives, or they might insist that NGOs include reporting on partnerships within their quarterly reports or end-of-project reviews.

■ Workshops and meetings facilitated by NGO support programmes that focus on partnership work between NGOs should emphasise that this is a mutual learning experience for NGOs. For example, NGO support programmes should not offer a set of prescribed answers to questions about sustainability and partnership. Emphasis on local priorities and problem solving helps to encourage NGOs to work together and overcome differences.

■ NGO support programmes need to consider how to measure their own success in terms of partnerships capacity-building. For example, in addition to recording the number of people involved in efforts such as workshops, they should think about how to assess how their work actually enhanced the long-term skills of the NGOs involved. Programmes should also continue to learn and to develop their approaches – by identifying and sharing their lessons within their own organisations and with others.

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