

“Exploring the Effectiveness of Humanitarian NGO-Private Sector Collaborations; Interesting & Unlikely Alliances?”

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Purpose – Why?

This research project arose from my desire to reduce suffering bumping into my passion for problem solving & innovation.

Overview – What?

Historically, the private sector & humanitarians have been perceived as ‘opposites’ with very different contexts, cultures, goals & drivers.

AND

“What would be possible if one combined the business motivations of performing at maximum efficiency & minimum cost with the humanitarian motivations of contribution and suffering reduction?”

Overview – How?

A case study of 2 large international collaborations, each composed of:

- An International Humanitarian NGO or UN Agency &
- ≥ 7 Multinational Corporations (MNCs) – Fortune 500.

Inquiry into what worked & what facilitates effective collaboration through:

- Source document review,
- Multi-disciplinary research &
- Interviews.

Findings

These findings seem intuitively obvious & simple – they are.

The *Challenge* is in the execution.

Findings

Top Twelve Factor Codes



Findings

12 factors contributed to collaborative success:

Trust & Transparency - #1

Trust was defined as:

- Doing what you said you would, &
- Operating within agreements, policies & procedures.

Transparency was defined as:

- Expectation management , &
- Being direct about what you would do, would not do & WHY.

KEY POINT: This takes time & requires people to participate.

Findings

Communication - # 2

Defined as both written & oral:

- Internal to each partner, internal to collaboration, &
- External to collaboration.

KEY POINT: Create communication structures & protocols and follow them.

Roles, Responsibilities & Accountabilities - # 3

Defined as:

- Parametres for roles, responsibilities & accountabilities, &
- Clearly stated and recorded.

KEY POINT: Separate these from Policies & Procedures to address power imbalances & perceived power imbalances.

Findings

Policies & Procedures - # 4

Defined as:

- Written records of meetings, actions, procedures & policies, &
- Lead agency/person responsible for deploying collaboration resources, coordination & activities.

KEY POINT: Formal procedures facilitate decision making & reduce conflict. Informal procedures build relationships & trust.

Skills, Expertise & Knowledge - # 5

Defined as:

- Resources i.e. money, assets, experience, experts, skills.

KEY POINT: Investigate resource fit; make sure your collaboration partners need & want what you have to offer.

Findings

Comprehension of Culture & Context - # 6

Defined as:

- History or past experience working with NGO or private sector, &
- Brokers, interpreters or conveners – individuals that translate & bridge humanitarian & private sector cultures.

KEY POINT: Work as hard to understand your partners' culture as you work to have them understand your culture.

Critical Assessment - # 7

Defined as:

- Assessment of best skill sets for situation,
- Accurate assessment of one's strengths & weaknesses, &
- Ability to acknowledge & learn from mistakes, quest for improvement.

KEY POINT: Awareness and acknowledgement of your strengths & weaknesses will create respect in collaboration.

Findings

Commitment - # 8

Defined as:

- Resource donation/loan – assets, materials, services, people, \$ &
- Time investment.

KEY POINT: Be clear on what you will commit & what you will not. It will take time.

Collaboration Level - # 9

Defined as:

- Local, national, regional &/or global levels.

KEY POINT: Ensure you have compatible management structures.

Findings

Evaluation - # 10

Defined as:

- Continuous or periodic evaluations to improve performance,
- Constructive criticism, &
- Recognition of contribution of self & others.

KEY POINT: Be willing to ask hard questions. Acknowledgment

Aligned Interests - # 11

Defined as:

- Common goals,
- Goals that intersect but are not the same, &
- Different goals.

KEY POINT: Identify aligned and non-aligned interests. Ensure you have at least one aligned interest or goal.

Findings

Sponsor/Champion - # 12

Defined as:

- Presence or absence of a strong sponsor or champion,
- Sponsor = individual with prestige, authority & resource access but not necessarily involved in daily aspects of collaboration.
- Champion = Operational people who actively participate in the collaboration's success.

KEY POINT: Identify project sponsors & champions. Allow them the time to collaborate.

Benefits

These collaborations can provide the following benefits:

Corporations

- Enhance employee recruitment.
- Increase employee satisfaction.
- Better employee retention.
- Increase employee participation.
- Enhance & improve corporate reputation.
- Improve local knowledge & cultural understanding (very important for emerging markets & growth).
- Increases in creativity & flexibility.
- Improve risk management, continuity & disaster management planning.

Benefits

These collaborations can provide the following benefits:

Humanitarian Organizations

- Access to scarce resources.
- Infrastructure improvement & support.
- Access to industry best practices
- Access to new knowledge, expertise & methodologies.
- Access to technology.
- Local knowledge & government expertise/connections.
- Ability to operate in country faster thru established corporate networks & infrastructure.
- Rapid resource mobilization.
- Opportunity to impact & shift corporate cultures.

Future

If you are *considering* a Humanitarian NGO – Private Sector Collaboration:

- Investigate resource fit
- Ensure that you require your partners' competencies.
- Investigate organizational & mandate fit.
- Identify aligned interests.
- Identify a project sponsor & potential project champions.
- Allocate sufficient time (2-3x your original estimate).

Future

If you are *creating & developing* a Humanitarian NGO – Private Sector Collaboration:

- Communicate formally & informally.
- Schedule & attend meetings.
- Be clear on what, when & where your organization is prepared to commit.
- Be clear on the time commitment.
- Identify a project sponsor & project champions.
- Create policies & procedures.
- Define roles & responsibilities of all partners.

What do YOU think?

What do YOU think is the most important thing for any successful humanitarian – private sector collaboration?

What is the biggest barrier for successful humanitarian – private sector collaboration(s)?