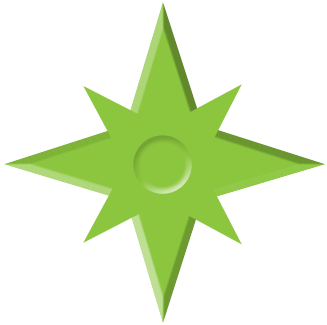
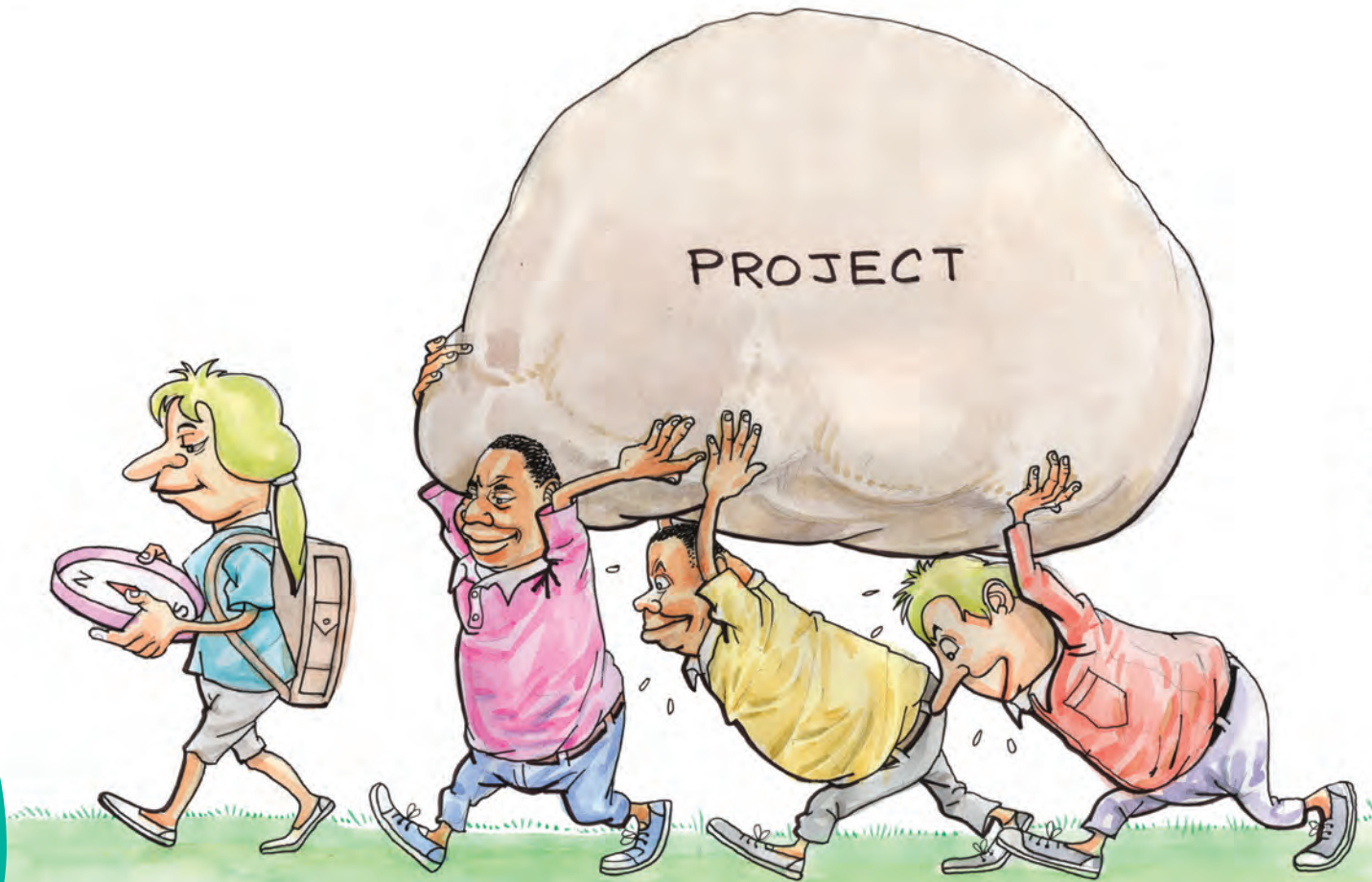


Compass for partners



TOWARDS QUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



Introduction

This is a partnership check-list. It is a tool developed to support KEPA's member organizations and their Southern partners to get concrete ideas to strengthen the North-South dialogue and effective cooperation and to build up true partnership. It is based on Finnish and Southern NGOs' experiences and views collected from Finland, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia.

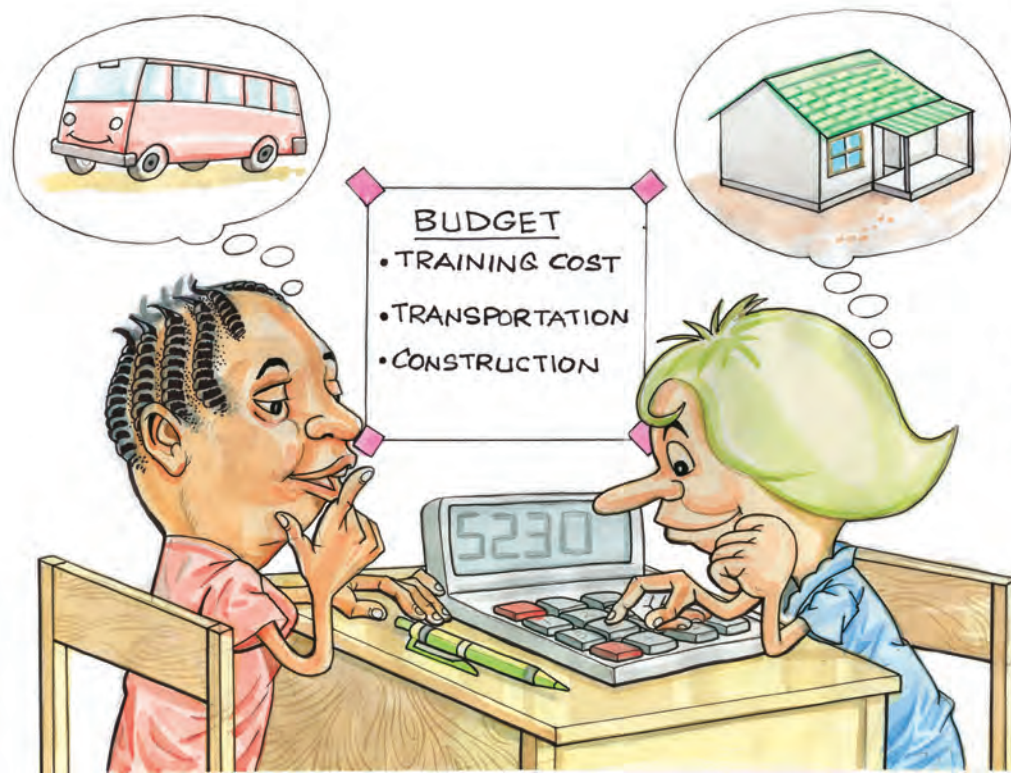
The term partnership is used in a variety of ways in different contexts depending on the models of cooperation. In ideal cases, Northern and Southern NGOs jointly define program goals, evaluation criteria, and implementation strategy, and both partners have mutual influence on the program. Many times the long-term goal of the collaboration is to strengthen the organizational capacity of the Southern NGO, so that it can become less dependent of the Northern partners. In that case the institutional development of the Southern NGO is a key success criterion of the partnership.

Partnership is too often used as an empty word without clear meaning. The content needs to be clarified when the term is used. Hopefully these concrete tips will help you and your partner to do so. The tool is not all-inclusive; it is only meant to support the development of your partnership. It is good to remember that there is no "obligation" to "have partnership". Cooperation can also be contractual, activity based or merely networking. But if you are committed to a long-term journey aiming at partnership, this tool might help you and your partner to find your way.

Quality criteria

The NGO working group was set up to create quality criteria for NGO cooperation. The group has concluded that the quality in North-South cooperation is first and foremost about good partnership.

The results are presented in the form of a star with four points. The star illustrates how different dimensions and criteria are closely related and interlinked.



The “Partnership Star”

VALUES express the ideals and guidelines of partnership. Together with the **PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION**, they steer the **JOINT ACTIVITIES**. The success of carrying out the activities in the spirit of partnership is fundamentally dependent on **GENUINE INTERACTION** between the partners.

I VALUES

- Equality and mutual respect
- Trust, transparency and honesty
- Democratic decision-making and participation

II PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

- Long –term relationship as objective – both North and South participate and have responsibility
- Joint ownership and commitment
- Joint learning
- Sustainability



IV GENUINE INTERACTION

- Getting to know each other
- Functioning communication
- Time for mutual interaction
- Discussions of joint, also sensitive, concerns

III JOINT ACTIVITIES

- Initiative for co-operation from South
- Joint planning
- Joint objectives
- Co-operation agreement and interaction
- Relevance of the activities
- The scope of the activities in harmony with the size of the organisation
- Principle of participation
- Taking the working environment and culture into account

More information about each criterion can be found in the report of The Quality Working Group to KEPA Board in 2004. The process was later carried forward by defining the indicators to measure each criteria. This partnership check-list is compiled from the indicators formulated.

The conversation and inclusion of both partners in defining the terms of cooperation increases the quality of the joint work. It keeps you on the right track in building up true partnership.

Step 1.

First, each partner goes through the list within their own organisation adding relevant questions for their partnership.



Partnership check-list for Finnish NGOs and their Southern partners

I VALUES

YES NO

Do you have a signed cooperation agreement which defines the following issues: Objective(s) of the cooperation, roles and responsibilities of each partner and planned activities?		
Were both partners involved in preparing the agreement?		
Are suggestions/recommendations of each partner genuinely taken into account in cooperation agreement?		
Do both partners have access to annual audit and narrative reports, monitoring reports and other relevant reports of each other?		
Are all the relevant documents in a language accessible to all partners involved?		
Do both organizations fill their positions of trust democratically?		
Are all relevant stakeholders, such as staff, board members, members and beneficiaries from both sides, involved or informed regularly about the co-operation process?		
Are there equal opportunities for men and women to participate in the cooperation?		
Is gender inequality taken into account in the partner organizations in North as well as in South? (For example, are special actions taken to facilitate the full participation of women?)		
Are vulnerable groups considered separately?		
Are your and your partner's actions in harmony with the environment? (For example, do you recycle and sort your waste; are you critical about using air travel etc.?)		

Add your own questions and notes:

Step 2.

Look at both assessments together. Are they similar? Compare the results together. If there are big differences, discuss why this is so. This alone will help the partners understand each other better; and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship. The number of `yes` answers in each section shows how sharp this point in your partnership star is.



II PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

YES NO

Does the Southern partner have priority in setting the agenda and defining the planning and reporting processes?		
Have you agreed jointly on book-keeping and financial reporting and other accountability systems?		
Are the activities implemented and reported in a timely manner?		
Are all the changes in the implementation agreed in advance and reported?		
Are funds transferred according to a planned schedule?		
Are the beneficiaries in North and South involved in the activities?		
Does the project plan include a capacity building component?		
Do you have “a phasing out” plan written into the project plan?		
Will Southern NGO be sustainable after the funding ends?		
Have you defined what each partner benefits and can learn from the partnership?		
Are both partners committed to long-term cooperation?		
Do you know the other actors your partner cooperates with and what they are they doing?		
Would it be possible to work with other partners to develop joint accountability systems and to harmonize reporting requirements?		

Add your own questions and notes:

Step 3.

Agree which points of your partnership star you want to strengthen.

Step 4.

While reporting include observations of your partnership within the report. You can also prepare a separate partnership report to reflect how you are doing.



III JOINT ACTIVITIES

YES NO

Did the initiative for cooperation originate from the Southern partner?		
Is the partnership a joint North-South initiative?		
Are plans and budgets made jointly?		
Do you have a clear division of responsibilities in your work plans?		
Does the cooperation agreement define the ways of reporting and giving feedback?		
Do you give and receive feedback to plans and reports?		
Are both partners involved in the reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland?		
Does each partner contribute financially or non-financially to the project resources?		
Are the scope and nature of activities in harmony with the capacity and size of the partner NGOs?		
Can you also benefit from the networks of your partner?		
Does your partner know enough about your culture to behave appropriately?		
Do your partner's actions take into consideration the general development processes taking place in the society?		

Add your own questions and notes:

Step 5.

Next time when you are meeting your partner, repeat the exercise to see how you have managed to strengthen your partnership.

IV GENUINE INTERACTION

YES NO

Are you familiar with the origins, history, constituency, vision, mission and funding sources of your partner?		
Do you know what kind of other activities your partner has currently?		
Do you know all the key people in your partner organization?		
Do you have regular contact with all the relevant people in your partner organization?		
Do you know who to contact and how when a particular issue arises?		
Do you get feedback from meetings organized by your partner?		
Do you know who has been present at those meetings?		
Do you communicate regularly?		
Do you have a plan or jointly agreed methods of information sharing?		
Do you have regular meetings and exchange visits with your partner?		
Are the visits to South and North in balance?		
Do new people in your organisation get the chance to travel?		
Do you have and share other than project related issues with your partner?		
Can you share your challenges with your partner?		

Add your own questions notes:



