



Institute On Governance

Partnerships:

Putting Good Governance Principles in Practice

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I. Introduction

In many countries, civil society organizations are rising to the fore as partners who can help meet modern governance challenges. Why is this? As more authoritarian and ineffective approaches to governance lose ground, the civil society, also known as non-governmental or voluntary sector organizations has emerged as a qualified agent in the search to define and implement policies and programs that concern them directly. Moreover, engaging civil society enhances the legitimacy of a democratic government. In consequence, the civil society organizations are increasingly recognized as the most appropriate actor when dealing with public policy and program problems which may be beyond the easy reach of state bureaucracy and of relatively little interest to the private sector. Yet governments have much to learn about this new partnership: Can or should policy and program processes include non-government organizations? How do you frame and manage constructive policy and program partnerships? How is civil society best brought into the equation? How do you build successful dialogue?

The push for partnership is not one-sided. Civil society organizations, increasingly better organized and informed, are more than ever aware of their potential role in the policy process. They understand the importance of building more effective relationships with government in order to create and implement policies and programs that are responsive, sustainable and cost-effective.

Partnerships: Putting Good Governance Principles in Practice analyzes the research and project work of the Institute On Governance in civil society - government partnerships from the point of view of both players. The paper first explores the meaning of 'governance' and 'partnership'; then blends these concepts with good governance principles used by the United Nations Development Programme and the Institute On Governance to create a tool for assessing good governance in partnership arrangements. Finally, the paper draws on the Institute's work in Canada and internationally, to illustrate some of the lessons and best practices in the governance of partnerships.

II. Good Governance in Partnership Arrangements

Defining Governance: Who are the players? Who has influence? Who decides?

There are many definitions of governance, but we prefer one that speaks of governance not only as a destination, but as a journey. Governance is more than government, more than public administration, more than a governing model or structure, though of course these are important. Governance, and in particular good governance, is also about effective ways of continuously engaging various sectors of society. Governance is therefore closely aligned with democracy and the central role that citizens must play in any effective governance system.

The Institute On Governance defines governance as the process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine who has voice, who is engaged in the process and how account is rendered. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP *Governance and Sustainable Human Development 1997*) put forward a set of principles that,

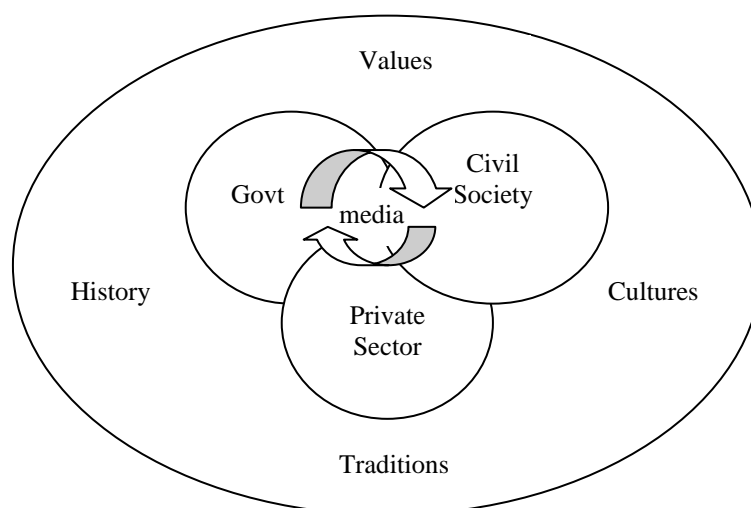
with slight variations, appear in much of the literature, including work by the Institute On Governance.¹ These principles are not only about the results of power but about how well power is exercised. According to this approach, good governance exists where those in positions of power are perceived to have acquired their power *legitimately*, and there is appropriate *voice* accorded to those whose interests are affected by decisions. Further, the exercise of power results in a sense of overall *direction* that serves as a guide to action. Performance is a fourth criterion: governance should result in *performance* that is responsive to the interests of citizens or stakeholders. In addition, good governance demands *accountability* between those in positions of power and those whose interests they are to serve. Accountability cannot be effective unless there is *transparency* and *openness* in the conduct of the work being done. And, finally, governance should be *fair*, which implies conformity to the rule of law and the principle of equity.²

Institute On Governance Five Principles of Good Governance³	
The Five Good Governance Principles	The UNDP Principles and related UNDP text on which they are based
1. Legitimacy and Voice	<p>Participation – all men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.</p> <p>Consensus orientation – good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.</p>
2. Direction	<p>Strategic vision – leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.</p>
3. Performance	<p>Responsiveness – institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.</p> <p>Effectiveness and efficiency – processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.</p>
4. Accountability	<p>Accountability – decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external.</p> <p>Transparency – transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.</p>

5. Fairness	<p>Equity – all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.</p> <p>Rule of Law – legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.</p>
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In exploring these principles it is important to note two points. First of all, it is not enough to meet only some of the principles; all of the principles need to be present, to at least some degree, to ensure good governance. Second, there can be friction between the principles. For example, demands for increased accountability, and the resources required to achieve this, may work against goals for improved performance, as more time spent writing reports means less time delivering a program. This example is not provided to show that accountability is not important (it is!) but rather to illustrate the need to recognize the inherent conflicts within the principles and the importance of finding balance among them.

The concept of governance can be applied in different contexts – global, national, institutional and community. The following graphic describes governance at the national level by depicting the different entities, or players, that occupy the social and economic landscape.



Three sectors of society participate in the governance equation, all of them situated among citizens at large: the private sector, the institutions of civil society (including the voluntary or not-for-profit sector), and government. Media, a fourth player, can be an intermediary, providing for a flow of information between the major players, and between the players and society at large. However, media, even if not controlled by the state, is part of the private sector and therefore not a dispassionate player.

The relative size and strength of each of the players varies depending on the history, culture and politics of the country. There are no firm boundaries between these players (and in fact they often overlap) because the borders of these sectors are permeable (e.g. state-owned organizations may have a foot in both government and the private sector; government-funded NGOs also straddle two camps).

In Canada, the relative strengths of government, the private sector and civil society are fairly well balanced. However, other countries show a very different distribution of power. For example, the military, or political or religious parties might occupy a significant or even the largest part of the terrain. In other cases the private sector may play a more dominant role. In most countries, power is shifting across sector borders. The size of the private sector in many countries seems to be expanding, with some state functions being transferred to business. In other cases the shift is to civil society organizations, where this sector is expected to take over the provision of programs as governments withdraw from funding and/or the direct delivery of services to the public.

Partnerships: What are they? Why partner?

The word “partnership” is another term that means different things to different people. Broadly speaking, a partnership may be defined simply as a collaborative venture between two or more organizations that pool resources in pursuit of common objectives. But if an NGO meets with government officials to press for change, is this a “partnership?” Is a government-run consultation session “partnership?” In our view, these do not qualify as partnerships. Although seeking input and seeking change are both key reasons to enter into partnership. Partnership is more than a one-off chance to discuss a particular policy or program. Partnerships, by their very nature, represent a sustained commitment to move forward together to reach a common objective. That said, what “sustained commitment” means in a partnership context will vary depending on the complexity of the issue, the players involved, the political and cultural backdrop, the resources available to support the partnership, and more.

The term “partnership” does not imply an equal distribution of power, resources, skills and responsibilities. In fact, partnerships may encompass a broad array of arrangements, from informal associations or networks to formal legal agreements. Partnerships are about power, both individual and collective, and although power is always present, it is rarely equal. A successful partnership values and openly acknowledges the different types of power that each individual or organization brings.⁴

In a partnership arrangement, government may contribute public funding; infrastructure; political will and support; the power to create and enforce laws, regulations, policies and procedures; and the power and formal authority (given them by the electorate) to speak to national vision and values. Civil society may contribute the ability to mobilize local resources; participation and access to informal networks; flexible structure and procedures; a closer understanding and emotional commitment to community issues and concerns; and a community-based self-help attitude. While not the focus of this paper, it is worthwhile noting that the private sector can also be an effective contributor to partnerships with government and/or civil society through the provision of financial support, technical resources and know-how, a consumer service orientation, etc. Finally, the media, although usually part of the private sector, can provide public profile, pressure, a sense of urgency, focus, outreach and education.

Another key issue in partnerships is how civil society and government deal with the challenge of representation. Given the vast number of civil society organizations out there, whom should government partner with? Who do civil society organizations speak for, and is the voice of those

they represent (as opposed to the voice of the staff of the organization) truly being heard? These are tough questions to be asked when forming a partnership and are fundamental to the successful involvement of community and civil society in government policy and program processes.

To ensure an inclusive partnership, ways must be found to a) ensure wide representation from across the civil society sector and b) ensure that community voices are brought forward to government by their representative organizations. Civil society organizations must be able to state whom they do and do not speak for, and how the voices of their membership and/or stakeholders are heard and represented. In other words, there must be effective governance, including legitimacy and voice, *within* civil society organizations themselves. If civil society is willing to deal with issues concerning representation, the benefits are clear: greater influence on public policies and programs, better accountability to their various stakeholders and improved governance.

Of course, partnerships can bestow significant benefits on governments as well. These include increased legitimacy (in the eyes of civil society and citizens more broadly), the ability to draw on grass-roots expertise, buy-in from those who may be asked to support the implementation of programs and policies, and improved accountability to citizens. If governments are to attain these benefits they must be able to address some of their own governance challenges, including demonstrating a democratic spirit (welcoming and recognizing the value of a diversity of voices) and making a greater commitment to transparency.

Together, civil society and government, with their combined strengths, resources and motivations, are in a good position to build effective partnerships, and, through these partnerships, policies and programs that better serve the interests of the public.

Good Governance Principles applied to Partnerships

Building more effective civil society - government partnerships certainly helps move along the road to good governance. But can the good governance principles be applied to partnerships? We believe they can and, moreover, that a useful template or tool can result through which partnerships can be evaluated and, ideally, improved. We suggest the following characteristics illustrate how the principles might appear in successful partnerships.

A Good Governance Principles' Based Tool for Assessing Partnerships

Legitimacy and Voice:

- Everyone who needs to be, is at the table;
- There are forums for bringing the partners together;
- The forums are managed so that the various voices are listened to and the dialogue is genuine and respectful; and,
- There is a consensus orientation among all those at the table.

Direction/Strategic Vision:

- All parties share a joint and clearly articulated vision of their goal;
- Each party to the partnership sees how their organization can contribute to the vision;
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined; and,
- The parties have adequately adjusted to any changes to the vision that have occurred over time.

Performance:

- There is a clear idea among participants as to what constitutes success;
- Performance is monitored and reported;
- The framework for performance measurement and reporting is developed jointly;
- There are sufficient resources to build and maintain the partnership; and,
- The different contexts in which the parties work is understood and accepted.

Accountability:

- The accountabilities of all of the parties are clear;
- There is an open, transparent and accountable relationship between the parties;
- The accountability relationships of the parties to their respective organizations is recognized and respected; and,
- The effectiveness of the partnership is reported publicly.

Fairness:

- All parties believe they receive sufficient value from the partnership;
- The clients of the parties, and the public more broadly, benefit from the partnership; and,
- The laws that govern each party are recognized and respected.

III. Good Governance Principles in Practice

Civil society organizations and governments alike want better public policies and programs. Partnerships between civil society and government can use the relative strengths of each partner in order to achieve policies and programs that better reflect society's needs and expectations. In the course of the Institute's work, there have been many examples of effective partnerships that reflect the good governance principles outlined above. This section provides snapshots of some examples from the Institute's work⁵ in Canada and internationally. It appears that, despite differing social, economic, political and cultural contexts, civil society and governments all over the world are working together to achieve change.

Legitimacy and Voice

A defining trait of a successful partnership is that it is considered legitimate in the eyes of both civil society and government, and that different voices are heard. But how do you make sure that everyone who needs to be at the table is there? Are there forums and mechanisms, both formal

and informal, for bringing partners together, and do these forums permit all voices to be heard? How do partnerships deal with issues such as representation and collaboration among NGOs?

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, a voluntary sector organization, works in partnership with the Canadian Coast Guard (part of the federal government), to respond to requests for search and rescue (SAR) assistance. The national Auxiliary is itself made up of 5 regional auxiliaries, each of which has its own board of directors and mechanisms for engaging its membership. The President of each regional Auxiliary sits as a member of the national board. The auxiliaries are thus able to engage with each other and with Coast Guard in a manner that ensures that both the voices of the regions are heard and that there is a national voice.

A senior government official from the Public Safety Commission of Canada highlighted the mutual benefits of their partnership with the John Howard Society. The partnership, which allows for better coordination and networking opportunities, provides the John Howard Society with occasions to share experiences and practices from organizations across the country. The government benefits from the synthesis of competing views and the development of a national perspective the support allows.

In Thailand,⁶ a successful maternity leave amendment for government officials led to increased awareness of the importance of maternity leave for all women workers. As a result, women worker groups started working toward improved benefits for women in the private sector. However, their message gained greater recognition and broader support when other civil society organizations, including academics, labour unions and others, lent their voices to the debate. The success of this initiative speaks to the value of ensuring a broad range of voices is heard on policy issues.

In Lesotho, the Institute's initiative to build governance capacity in three regions has encouraged civil society organizations, youth, local government and members of the community to jointly address issues related to HIV/AIDS. Although the project is just beginning, early indications are that the creation of forums to share views and build a better understanding among the key players will have a positive impact on the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Diversity is the hallmark of a flourishing civil society and the desire to hear a diversity of voices is one of the key reasons that government seeks civil society input on policies and programs. Yet in many cases civil society organizations compete for funding, and different organizational cultures, governance processes, mandates and agendas can put a damper on potential collaborations. Reaching consensus among such a diverse group of organizations can be difficult and sometimes impossible. However, if a group of civil society organizations can find common ground on a particular issue and collaborate in moving that issue forward, their larger, more unified voice can have a greater impact both on government and the general public. Collaboration among civil society organizations has other benefits as well, as the Malaysian case study on children demonstrates:

In Malaysia,⁷ the NGO Forum is a coalition of NGOs that form strategic alliances to address the complex realm of children's issues. The structures and systems of the Forum are aimed at pulling together the broad mix of capacities and resources, expertise, experience and commitment that are needed to address the issues. While no one organization can provide all the resources and expertise required, their combined strengths have been used to great effect.

From a government perspective, engaging civil society effectively can often be challenging because of the number and diversity of organizations working on any particular issue. Limited time and resources can restrict the number of organizations consulted. The question then is – which civil society organizations to engage? When civil society organizations collaborate on a particular issue, and therefore have a larger, more representative voice, government is more likely to involve them in the policy process.

In the Philippines,⁸ a Technical Working Group was asked to pull together all the proposed bills on children's rights and then draft a consolidated bill. The case study indicates that the consultation process in the drafting of this bill was made easier because a network of civil society organizations and government agencies already existed.

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) represents approximately 100 civil society organizations working towards the shared goal of ending global poverty. Members must certify compliance with the CCIC Code of Ethics, which delineates minimum ethical standards in the areas of governance, organizational integrity, management/human resources, financial management and fundraising communications. CCIC has a membership strategy that defines its position and purpose in relation to its membership and the environment in which it works, as well as the methods it uses to accomplish its mission. Government officials benefit from the opportunity to know who they are engaging with, and from the work CCIC does to build agreements and effectively represent their members.

Getting input from civil society can also be a challenge. Examples from the IOG's work contrast approaches and results:

In Latvia,⁹ the desire to ensure input from NGOs led the Government of Latvia to invite commentary on all decisions coming forward to Cabinet for approval. Although the intention was good, the invitation was given to only one NGO (albeit an umbrella organization) which did not have the capacity to engage to the extent desired by government and did not feel it could adequately represent the diversity of views of the sector. In addition, input was sought only at the end of the policy process and there was little opportunity to shape proposed policies in their early stages.

Partnerships in IOG's MAGNET project¹⁰ (Media and Governance Network with projects in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka), consisted of local governments, civil society organizations, representatives from the communities (e.g., slum dwellers) and the media. Regular meetings were convened with all the partners present. In this case, the active participation by slum-dwellers gave immediate legitimacy and voice, as their voice was heard directly, not through intermediaries.

However, a diversity of voices at the table is not enough to ensure legitimacy and voice. Appropriate and effective forums for engaging the partners are also critical.

Meetings of the national board of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary are organized in two stages, to allow time for the board to meet on its own, followed by a session with Coast Guard representatives to address common issues. In addition, regular communication occurs between the regional auxiliaries and the regional offices of the Coast Guard, and between the national office and Coast Guard Headquarters in Ottawa.

In Indonesia,¹¹ the local government of Surakarta established the Forum Aspirasi Masyarakat Surakarta (The Aspiration Forum of Surakarta's Residence) in 2000, which encouraged discourse among small communities, and accommodated demands from civil society organizations for more active public participation in the policy-making process. However, the program lasted only six months, in part due to dissatisfaction within the local legislative body who were being directly challenged.

In Canada, there has also been a drive over the last decade to strength the voice of civil society on policy and program issues.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI)¹² was a five-year joint initiative between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. VSI focused on strengthening the relationship between the sector and government, and enhancing the capacity of the voluntary sector. The resulting *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* was a public commitment by both parties to more open, transparent, consistent and collaborative ways for the two sectors to work together. The VSI process itself, and many of the projects and capacity building initiatives that took place under its auspices (including several undertaken by the Institute) was very much an opportunity to create an ongoing dialogue and begin to build a more trusting and respectful relationship between the two sectors.

Direction/Strategic Vision

A shared understanding of a partnership's purpose and direction, and how each partner can best contribute, is necessary to build and maintain a strong partnership. In addition, as direction and vision evolve, partnerships must respond to changing environments. But how is a shared vision developed, and how can partners adapt?

In some cases, particularly those where government is providing significant amounts of funding, the direction for a partnership comes from a public policy or program initiative. In other cases, the direction might originate in civil society or be developed jointly.

Search and rescue (SAR) is considered a public service and the Coast Guard is mandated by government to, among other things, ensure safe, secure and accessible waterways. However, the vastness of the Canadian coastline makes direct provision of all SAR services by government unfeasible. The Auxiliary, a volunteer-based organization, was therefore formed to work in partnership with the Coast Guard in the delivery of SAR services. Representatives from both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary highlighted the great value of the CCGA service to Canadians in terms of lives saved. The volunteer commitment in the direct provision of SAR is clear – the Auxiliary has 4704 members and 1339 vessels.

In the case of the Canadian Voluntary Sector Initiative, the federal government and the voluntary sector jointly developed a vision for how they would work together in a more open, transparent, consistent and collaborative manner. This vision led to the development of a framework document entitled an "Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector."¹³

Reliance on government funding can also present its own set of challenges, as the following example illustrates.

A senior executive with the National Association of Friendship Centres says that a challenge for their and other voluntary sector organizations is presented by “program chase.” He characterized this as circumstances where momentum and resources can build temporarily behind a particular program or issue and then switch to another as the climate shifts (whether or not the issue has itself been comprehensively dealt with). For example, in recent years there were a number of initiatives to address Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. This led to a flurry of activity, programming and resources for a short while.

No matter the origin of the vision and direction, it is important that all partners have a clear understanding of the purpose and goals of the partnership. A well-defined purpose and goal also helps both partners to define where they can best contribute.

In the case of the Coast Guard – Auxiliary partnership, the Coast Guard contributes funding and in-kind support, and, through government, the power to create laws, regulations, policies and procedures. The Auxiliary contributes local resources, a more flexible organizational structure, a closer understanding and emotional commitment to community concerns around boating safety, and a community-based self-help attitude.

In the case of the partnership between the National Homeless Initiative of the Government of Canada and the Canadian Red Cross, simple tools, such as keeping good records of meetings, helped to forge a common understanding and direction according to a senior Red Cross official. Common understanding and shared overall goals of doing something about homelessness in Toronto were developed and kept at the forefront of the partnership simply by keeping and sharing notes on joint meetings.

As mentioned earlier, direction and vision can, and sometime must, change, and both partners must be willing to adapt.

Aware of the changing relationship between the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard, and the need to adjust to changes in the SAR environment, the Auxiliary recently undertook a governance review. The primary objective of the review was to help improve the ability of each regional CCGA organization to work more effectively with each other at the national level and with the Canadian Coast Guard, with the ultimate goal of maintaining and improving the delivery of services to Canadians. The review actively engaged both Auxiliary and Coast Guard representatives in a series of interviews and sessions. The result is a number of jointly supported recommendations for change.

Recognizing the changing nature of corrections in Canada, Corrections Canada and the various volunteer organizations that they partner with, including the John Howard Society of Canada,¹⁴ formed a Task Force on Community Corrections. The Task Force had representation from Correctional Service of Canada and a number of voluntary sector representatives. The terms of reference for the Task Force included addressing the respective roles and mechanisms required for effective involvement of the voluntary sector in providing community-based corrections, reviewing and making recommendations on methods of service delivery and examining issues related to funding. The result of this work was a jointly produced draft document called “Towards a Principles-based Relationship.” This document outlines core values, strategic objectives, accountability relationships and a clear articulation of what each partner contributes to the other in the relationship.

The Nepalese project under MAGNET suffered badly from changes within each partner organization. The leadership of the main NGO partner, Kathmandu 2020, changed twice, as did the leadership of the Kathmandu Municipal Corporation. The leadership of the media partner, the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), changed three times. The project's local coordinator changed once. The Kathmandu Forum was therefore in a state of perpetual re-launch which hampered its effectiveness.

International commitments and agreements or external events can also provide direction to partners working on a policy issue.

The impetus for the transfer of a federal government building to the Canadian Red Cross in Toronto stemmed in part from federal and municipal concern around an expected increase in new immigrants to Toronto from Eastern Europe. The original idea for the negotiations surrounding the transfer of the surplus federal building at 1859 Leslie Street was to build a permanent long-term shelter for new immigrant families.

In Malaysia,¹⁵ the World Fit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child campaigns led to the birth in 2001 of a National NGO Forum—a coalition of over 60 NGOs involved with children. The Forum held several discussion forums in partnership with the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In Thailand,¹⁶ wide news coverage of a fire in a brothel in Phuket raised the issue of prostitution in the public eye and gave those working toward a new law on prostitution the support they needed to move their agenda forward.

Performance

A shared understanding of what success in the partnership means, sufficient resources to support the partnership and jointly developed performance measures are all required in meeting the performance principle of good governance. In addition, an understanding of the different contexts in which civil society and government work is, in our view, one of the essential building blocks of performance.

Financial, information and human resources—whether from government or elsewhere—are required to support partnerships and ensure performance.

In the case of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary partnership with the federal government, government provides funding support. Both government and the voluntary sector organizations contribute staff and/or volunteer time. In addition, mechanisms are in place to share information. The impact of government funding to the Auxiliary is clear - the CCGA responds to 20-25% of all Maritime incidents in Canada.

Core funding for programs and administrative work is a key element of the partnership between the John Howard Society and the Public Safety Commission of Canada according to senior officials in both the government and the John Howard Society. The funding supports coordination and networking opportunities for the John Howard Societies across Canada and the government benefits from the efforts to develop a singular national voice and perspective.

The Government of Canada provided funding to both federal government departments and voluntary sector organizations to engage in the VSI process and in a variety of research and capacity building initiatives. In the case of the VSI, a Secretariat was set up, funded by government, to support the Initiative.

The partnership between what was to become Heritage Canada and the National Association of Friendship Centres began in 1972. From these beginnings the relationship has now evolved to the point where the National Association of Friendship Centres receives funding from Heritage Canada for all of the 117 Friendship centres in Canada. The National Association then provides the role of funding agency by allocating and assessing performance of each of the local organizations.

In Thailand,¹⁷ international donor agencies and organizations, such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), supported prominent Thai NGOs in their work on child prostitution. Thai NGOs and international organizations established a working group to share information and engage with government for policy change.

Understanding your partner's world is fundamental to successful partnering. Civil society must learn how government works and how to steer an issue through the policy process (executive, bureaucratic and political) or program development and delivery systems. They must also recognize political realities, especially the bargaining and compromise that creates support for a policy or program initiative. Civil society organizations need to appreciate that although they generally represent a particular group or issue, government is responsible for, and must balance the needs of, all citizens. In turn, governments must recognize and make an effort to understand civil society's context in terms of whom they represent, how they govern themselves and make decisions, the realities and challenges of their financial circumstances and the voice they offer in the policy and/or program processes.

Government and civil society organizations function in different time frames and time horizons, and it is important for both partners to keep this in mind because it can present both challenges and opportunities. For example, unlike civil society organizations, governments are subject to electoral cycles, and their opportunities, priorities and commitments can change. On the other hand, governments tend to speak with one voice when they do reach a decision, which is something that the consensus-based nature of civil society organizations often precludes, even though they can usually make decisions more quickly than governments.

In addition, a country's electoral cycle and related processes can mean that a policy or program process that was steadily making headway may suddenly rush forward, take several steps back or even need to start again.

A representative from the National Aboriginal Friendship Centre said that it is at times difficult to engage government decision-makers on issues that are priorities for voluntary sector organizations but that haven't yet been adopted as government priorities.

In Thailand,¹⁸ a proposed law on prostitution was left unfinished due to the short tenure of the government of the day. However, efforts continued to move the agenda forward, and the next government initiated its own campaign to battle child and forced prostitution.

The Philippines case study¹⁹ on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act suggests that familiarizing civil society organizations on the formal legislative process and the informal dynamics of Congress was a key challenge to achieving success.

Finally, it is important to note that even with resources and an understanding of each other's contexts, it takes time to build an effective partnership, as the following example illustrates.

To support the relationship between the volunteer based Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, (CASARA),²⁰ and itself, the Department of National Defense has created a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) for each of the CASARA squadrons. These individuals have supported the development of shared understandings of the realities and expectations of both organizations. According to a senior CASARA member, one of the most important outcomes of this relationship has been an increase in the level of trust and respect for each others' capabilities. This trust and respect has evolved over the years. "It took 15 years before CASARA was fully accepted," said a senior CASARA member. Early stumbling blocks were seen to be a concern around taking away paying jobs, questions around experience and expertise and the idea of it being a partnership simply through "lip-service." The 'professionalization' of CASARA members through certification and training courses, regular evaluations, as well as better understanding of each others' roles, contributed to the strength of the current partnership. The Department of Defense's dedication of resources and time to supporting the relationship was seen by CASARA as one of the key ingredients.

Accountability

Growing demands for improved accountability and transparency have made these terms almost synonymous with good governance in the eyes of the general public, fuelled by media reports on scandals in both private and public sectors. Civil society organizations are not immune and must respond to their funders, members and other stakeholders by adopting better governance practices.

So, what is accountability? The Office of the Auditor General of Canada suggests that accountability is "a relationship based on the obligation to demonstrate and take responsibility in light of agreed expectations."²¹ Two key concepts stand out in this definition – the notion of "a relationship" and the concept of "agreed expectations." Both ideas take the definition of accountability beyond the more traditional hierarchical approach, and allow it to be applied more readily to the partnership context.

Accountability and transparency are important in partnerships, as is the need to balance or reconcile the accountability relationships of the partners to their respective organizations. The accountability requirements of a government is first and foremost to its citizens, and government can be held accountable through a number of direct (e.g. elections, media) and indirect (e.g. Auditor General, Courts) mechanisms.

Accountability within the civil society organization context is sometimes less obvious. Clearly there is a need for a civil society organization to account to its members and/or clients. In addition, organizations may have direct accountability relationships with government, particularly if they receive government funding support. Most civil society organizations will also feel some accountability toward other stakeholders and the public at large. Clarity around

who is accountable for what, and responding to and reconciling often competing accountabilities, is essential to sustain trust and credibility. However, achieving effective accountability with stakeholders presents its own set of challenges.

In the case of the Coast Guard Auxiliary there are multiple accountability relationships which have presented some challenges. First, the board of directors of each regional auxiliary is accountable to their regional membership. At the same time, each regional auxiliary is accountable to the Coast Guard for the funds they receive. In some cases, the direction provided by an auxiliary's membership does not fit well with the expectations of government, leaving the boards of these regional auxiliaries in the difficult position of having to balance competing demands. Second, the national board consists of the Presidents of each of the regional auxiliaries and the national chair of the board. In this case, the Presidents are faced with trying to balance their duty to their region with their responsibility to the national organization. These challenges have been recognized by the auxiliaries, and work is underway to clarify bylaws to ensure that roles and responsibilities at all levels of the organization are clear. The Auxiliaries are also working with the Coast Guard to ensure that roles and responsibilities in their relationship are properly defined and that they are meeting the increasing accountability requirements of government.

A Canadian Red Cross representative highlighted that one of the impacts of increasingly detailed and stringent accountability requirements from governments has been a reformulation in the staffing contingent for some civil society organizations as increased data management skills and administration is increasingly being needed to meet expectations.

The Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative has produced a public "Partnership Courier" that reports on some of the outcomes of Homelessness Initiative projects and partnerships. For example, the Winter 2005 edition highlights the benefits of partnerships between the government and Wigwam Incorporated, a non-profit housing provider, regarding the construction of 92 units of transitional and affordable rental housing in Toronto.

The Government of Latvia recognized its duty to share information with NGOs, business and the general public and so placed all its laws and regulations on a website for ready consultation. However, detailed, clause by clause information meant little on its own. People needed to know what various changes to laws and regulations meant to them. In addition, few citizens or businesses had access to the web. Some umbrella NGOs and business associations downloaded information from the government's website, analyzed and interpreted it, and then mailed copies to their members. This was expensive, time-consuming and sporadic and the resulting interpretations were not always consistent with reality. Far from being pleased with the Government's actions, the public accused it of shirking its duty. The eventual solution lay in the Government supplementing information with communication.²²

Fairness

Finally, we come to the principle of fairness, which encompasses the concepts of equity and rule of law. Partners in an endeavour seek, and expect to derive value, from partnerships – it is one of the main reasons they enter into partnerships in the first place. But value for the partners alone is not enough. The members and/or stakeholders of civil society organizations, and citizens themselves (who are, after all, the stakeholders of the government), must also benefit from the partnership, since in a civil society-government partnership all the players are

presumably working toward the public good. In particular, the desire to address the needs of the most vulnerable – working toward greater equity within society – is essential to meet the principle of fairness.

The National Association of Friendship Centres has seen its partnership agreement with government evolve over the years in reflection of the increasing capacity and expertise of the National Association itself. According to a senior executive, this evolution was also in recognition of the new directions and principles being adopted for effective service delivery to Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

In Thailand,²³ broad civil society engagement with government on the issue of maternity leave for non-public employees led to both greater public awareness of the issue within the broader Thai society and to increased maternity leave support for non-government women workers (supported through both employer and government mechanisms).

In Lesotho, the purpose of building the capacity of civil society organizations, youth and local government to work in partnership with each other has at its root the goal of improved capacity to fight HIV/AIDS within the broader communities, and particularly among the poor.

In addition, the rules, policies and laws of both government and civil society organizations (e.g. bylaws) must be respected by all partners. Government cannot ask a civil society organization to act in a manner inconsistent with its bylaws or other governing documents. Civil society organizations must work within their governance framework to ensure they are representative and accountable to their stakeholders. By the same token, government must treat all citizens in an equitable manner, according to the rule of law, and be held accountable for this. Civil society organizations must recognize and respect that government is obliged to work within a legal and regulatory framework that is not easily changed, and cannot expect government to act in a way contrary to the broader public good.

In the case of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Coast Guard partnership, there is recognition by the Coast Guard that the Auxiliary has articles of incorporation, bylaws and policies, approved by the Auxiliary's membership, which the Auxiliary must follow. The Auxiliary, in turn, understands that federal government laws, regulations, policies and processes, both in terms of funding arrangements and in meeting standards for service delivery, must be respected.

The principle of fairness must be integral to all elements of a partnership – both structures and processes – as it is this element that is tied in most closely with the desire to effect change.

In the case of the Auxiliary-Coast Guard partnership, the ultimate goal of both partners is to provide effective search and rescue services to those in need, whether they be fishermen or pleasure boaters, and whether on the west or east coasts or in the Arctic.

The MAGNET project in India focused on providing toilet blocks for two slum communities. Once built, these provided privacy (especially for women and children), reduced sickness, managed effluent and odours (benefiting neighbouring communities), and eliminated dangerous open sewers, which had ringed the slums. In Sangli, the new bio-gas plant created a job, supporting a family. In addition, the newfound confidence of community leaders, who discovered their voice through the partnership, prompted both slums to set up small community

funds, based on voluntary monthly contributions from each family. In time, these funds will be used to provide loans to people setting up cottage industries.²⁴

IV. Conclusions

Partnership offers a promising approach to solving challenges faced by government and civil society alike in shaping public policies and programs. Partnerships between civil society and government, if done properly, can indeed build effectively on the relative strengths and resources of each partner to create results that better reflect the needs of society. However, partnerships can also be fraught with difficulties. In this paper we have argued that effective partnerships between government and civil society require recognition and respect for the five governance principles: (1) legitimacy and voice; (2) direction/strategic vision; (3) performance; (4) accountability; and (5) fairness. Partnerships that apply these principles are well along the road to achieving sustainable and equitable growth and democratic development.

Endnotes

- 1 Defining principles of good governance is challenging and not without controversy. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP “Good Governance and Sustainable Human Development, 1997”) has provided a set of principles that, with variations, appear in much of the literature. There is strong evidence that these UNDP-based principles have a claim to universal recognition. In particular, those tied to human rights, such as legitimacy and voice (participation and consensus orientation) and fairness (equity and rule of law), are reflected in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For further information, see the Institute On Governance Policy Brief “Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century.”
- 2 Graham, John et al. “Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century,” Institute On Governance, 2003. P. 3.
- 3 Graham, P. 3.
- 4 Frank, Flo and Smith, Anne. “The Partnership Handbook,” Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2000. P. 15.
- 5 Examples on partnerships have been taken from a number of Institute On Governance projects, including:
 - Building Governance Capacity and Community Engagement in Lesotho:** A 2005-08 initiative in collaboration with Help Lesotho. The project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is designed to build the governance capacity of youth, civil society and local government to fight HIV/AIDS, focusing on three of Lesotho’s poorest districts.
 - Social Policy Partnerships:** Funded by CIDA, the IOG led a project, from 2002-2004, on the evolution of government-civil society ‘partnerships’ on social policy. The program involved case studies in Indonesia (trafficking of women; role of women in local government); Thailand (maternity leave; prostitution); Malaysia (women’s rights; children’s rights; consumer rights); the Philippines (Indigenous peoples; children’s rights) and Canada (children’s rights). The project culminated in the 2004 publication “Strengthening Social Policy: Lessons on Forging Government-Civil Society Policy Partnerships.
 - MAGNET (Media and Governance Network):** This IOG program involved three South Asian cities and was designed to bring together the forces of community representatives, local government, NGOs and media to address the pressing needs of the urban poor. Funded by CIDA, the Ford Foundation and the Asian Development Bank.
 - Government Communications Policies for Latvia:** The IOG, in association with Brad Man Communications, conducted seminars in Riga for senior government officials, and then assisted in applying the newly-minted communications policy to a pilot project on Social Integration. Sponsored by CIDA.
 - Governance Review of the Canadian Environmental Network** – conducted a review of the governance of the CEN and assisted them in developing a governance structure that better suited their needs. This involved writing the report *Building Policy Partnerships: Making Network Governance Work*.
 - Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary:** The Institute is currently working with the CCGA on a governance review. The primary objective of the work is to help each CCGA organization to work more effectively with each other and with the Canadian Coast Guard, with the ultimate goal of maintaining and improving the delivery of services to Canadians. The second objective is to develop a better understanding of the best practices and lessons learned in the governance of voluntary sector organizations and in forging effective government-voluntary sector partnerships for public program service delivery.
- 6 Vichit-Vadakan, Dr. Juree et al. “Civil Society and Governance in Thailand,” Strengthening Social Policy: Lessons on Forging Government-Civil Society Policy Partnerships, Institute On Governance, 2004. PP 69-90.
- 7 Jayasooria, Dr. Denison. “Strengthening Partnerships Between Civil Society and Government,” Strengthening Social Policy: Lessons on Forging Government-Civil Society Policy Partnerships, Institute On Governance, 2004. PP 27-52.
- 8 Magno, Dr. Francisco and Lusterio-Rico, Ruth. “Children’s Protection and Indigenous People’s Rights in the Philippines,” “Strengthening Partnerships Between Civil Society and Government,” Strengthening Social Policy: Lessons on Forging Government-Civil Society Policy Partnerships, Institute On Governance, 2004. PP 53-68.
- 9 Institute On Governance. “Many Voices, One Song: A New Approach to Government Communications in the Republic of Latvia, 2001.
- 10 Ezekiel, Zachariah. “Beyond Bylines: Engaging the News Media in Urban Governance,” Institute On Governance, 2003. PP 1-2.

- 11 Fernandez, Joe. "Preventing Trafficking of Women and Voicing Women's Political Interests," Strengthening Social Policy: Lessons on Forging Government-Civil Society Policy Partnerships, Institute On Governance, 2004. PP 13-26.
- 12 Voluntary Sector Initiative web site, <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng>
- 13 Voluntary Sector Initiative web site, <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng>
- 14 The John Howard Society of Canada is a federation of provincial/territorial and local Societies comprised of people whose goal is to understand and respond to problems of crime, to work with people who have come into conflict with the law, to review, evaluate and advocate for changes in the criminal justice process and to engage in public education on matters involving criminal law and its application. Across Canada, there are 78 John Howard Society offices providing 451 programs serving clients, clients' families and the public at large. Generally, the provincial/territorial Societies take primary responsibility for reform and community education activities and provide administrative support to the branches and affiliates. Activities such as communications (for example, compiling, publishing and distributing A Directory of John Howard Programs across Canada) and research on federal matters tend to be done through the national Society. All levels of the organization are governed by voluntary Boards of Directors. Volunteers are extensively involved in the direct service work of the Society. Many also support the work of the John Howard Society through donations.
- 15 Jayasooria, PP. 43-46
- 16 Vichit-Vadakan et al., PP. 69-90.
- 17 Vichit-Vadakan et al., PP. 69-90.
- 18 Vichit-Vadakan et al., PP. 69-90.
- 19 Magno, PP. 53-68.
- 20 The Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, (CASARA), is a Canada-wide volunteer aviation association dedicated to the promotion of Aviation Safety, and to the provision of air search support services to the National Search and Rescue Program. Membership is open to aircraft owners and pilots, as well as to those who wish to receive training as spotters and navigators. Members receive training in fields such as aviation safety, meteorology, survival awareness and search techniques and procedures.
- 21 This definition was proposed in a draft paper developed by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada
- 22 Institute On Governance. "Many Voices, One Song: A New Approach to Government Communications in the Republic of Latvia, 2001.
- 23 Vichit-Vadakan et al., PP. 69-90.
- 24 Marshall, Claire E. "Governance and the Common Toilet," Institute On Governance, 2003. P. 3.

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