

Guidelines for “heal-solving” solidarity work

My 28-year-long learning process with people in need has produced some suggestions for successful action, which can be summarized in a number of principles, in guidelines for action. They were also integrated in my contributions to the above-mentioned Global Marshall Plan Initiative. Those most basic guiding principles are equally valid on the micro-level, when working with people and their direct representatives, on mezzo-levels and on a country’s macro-level as well as on a global level. Here they are again:

- TRANSPARENCY of all development goals, objectives, plans and activities,
- SUBSIDIARITY – giving preference to the smallest possible unit,
- PARTICIPATION of all, who are concerned for true holistic (integral) development – and:
- SUSTAINABILITY of the natural environment, the base of all existence and of our cultural heritage.

Those basic principles are widely accepted and may even sound a bit simplistic. I am, however, sure that if they were truly and fully observed in reality, development efforts in our world would by now have been much more successful than reality shows. Sustainability is at the same time an important guideline and a very basic vision when applied to nature and to our global cultural heritage. Social and economic structures are the results of people’s efforts to serve their needs and desires. They should be sustained, as long as they function well in the interest of humanity.

There are additional guiding words, which can also be applied like principles, but which should better be considered as methodical development goals. Those guiding words indicate desired

working directions. They are not yet precise objectives with quantitative and time specifications, but most important general action goals. They do not describe any kind of development like the “Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” or the “Education for All (EfA) Goals”, which are content goals. Those methodical development goals are relevant for all trustworthy levels in formal structures like states, regions or global institutions:

- EMPOWERMENT of those without power,
- CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT to initiate self-help structures – and particularly delicate:
- OWNERSHIP of those, who want to develop themselves.

These first two methodical goals are equally vital for the micro, mezzo- and macro-levels. On the micro-level, on the direct level of the concerned individuals, all three goals are even of the utmost relevance and importance. The ownership goal, however, stops to be a valid goal upwards on the ladder of formal governance structures, where trustworthiness must be questioned. When corruption exceeds an acceptable basic level, it is counterproductive to pursue this valuable goal. Here, such ownership may simply lead to even more corruption.

Increasing the power and developing the capacity of corrupt structures may still be defended in some situations as measures to fight corruption. However, fully applying the valuable ownership principle to corrupt states is a grave mistake made by well-meaning donors. Here it is often said that corrupt states will change for the better when given a financial chance to develop their governance structures. That is wishful thinking as long as those in corrupt governments do not overcome their egoistic attitudes (or as long as their populations cannot chase them out of government).

For a donor state or an international structure it is, of course, much easier to transfer large amounts of money from one banking structure to another. Even when seemingly strict control mechanisms are being agreed by donors' and recipients' structures, there is still too much room for misusing funds. Even in situations, where states truly make an effort to use budget money in a good way, the temptation of large amounts being transferred to the recipients' budgets can be simply too much.

The ownership goal should always be applied together with these three principles: *transparency*, *subsidiarity* and *participation*. In this context, it is in my view a most valuable goal and working-tool to almost guaranty success in development efforts. Especially on the micro-level, on the level of the people themselves, ownership is a key to success.

Transparency is vital for success on all levels, but much easier to realize on the micro-level than on “higher” levels. On the people's level there is more possibility of a social control. Where everybody knows each other, it is much more difficult to act in a secretive, corrupt way.

Subsidiarity as a most valuable principle which, I feel, is not getting enough public support. People “on top” unfortunately often do not like the principle. There is a fear that sharing power with “lower” levels, as the principle asks for, may have negative effects on the “top”. In reality, at least in good management, the success of an organization can greatly increase if the subsidiarity principle is fully applied. The same could be true in formal structures, in states – and certainly on a global level.

The principle *participation* is a tricky one. It is easily claimed and often proclaimed (I include myself and my Foundation). There are, however, psychological stumbling blocks involved, which are

difficult to overcome. Participation is directly connected to partnership. They may almost be considered to be a pair of guiding words, since they are so closely linked to each other. Partnership mostly leads to participation, but not necessarily the other way around. Participation is even possible – and valuable – without true partnership.

Partnership is truly a valuable word, which carries an important emotional value in itself. It is a programmatic expression, which I consciously used in my Peter-Hesse-Foundation's working name: **SOLIDARITY IN PARTNERSHIP** – later, after the Foundation's creation, enlarged to *for ONE world* and later again to *for ONE world in diversity*. This reflects my own waking-up processes and is meant in a programmatic way – beyond just being a working name. All the more, the word *partnership* must be critically reflected. It carries the danger of being misused.

The difficulty of true partnership

I would like to shortly quote here, what I wrote in December 1993 for the 10th anniversary of my Foundation. My German article was titled “*Partnership in the field of development cooperation – problematic, but needed to heal misery*”. Here is the essence of those reflections:

Partnership is used a lot as an expression, but also often misused. It, therefore, needs clarification. I define partnership as a participation on the same level of rights, on “something” people share in common. This could be a shared goal, a shared task, a shared path. This does not necessarily need to be all-embracing, but honest in relation to the limited “case”. Such partnership does not necessarily require participants, which are totally equal in type and strength, but participants, who are at least truly willing to achieve “something”, which is clearly defined in common. This is the rational level. There is, however, an equally – if not more – important level, a mutual “wavelength”, an emotional aspect. Partnership needs basic harmony, this does not exclude content-differences. Harmony is difficult to limit to the “something” which shall be achieved together.

In the field of development cooperation, such true partnership is rarely to be detected. Here one side usually wants to “help” the other side – often at least partly ideally motivated (even if an official participant is involved). Rarely both sides are comparable in type – and in strength. Equally rarely the development goals are truly and deeply shared by everybody on both sides. After realizing those differences, strength of character is needed on both sides. The helping participants must be willing and capable to “feel” like the participants on the other side and their environment. The helping side must be willing and capable to learn. The recipient side must be able to resist dependency of the giving side, and resist the reduction

of their own desire and motivation for self-initiative. Most important: The recipients must be able to maintain their dignity. One other requirement in such partnership is directness. Since it is frequently difficult to truly work with the people themselves, but with their representatives, the integrity of those representatives is important.

To summarize the problems of true partnership in short: The biggest problems are hidden in the “soft” qualifications of partners and frequently also in their “egos”.

In my own experience, a second level of problems became evident: It was not only difficult to establish true partnership between the materially giving and the receiving side, there were – and are – equally problematic relations inside the donor groups. Here there are frequently power conflicts, which might be compared to the macho struggles in the animal world, where mainly males fight for dominance. I have seen some amazing situations even – and quite frequently – between fractions of the basically same religion, in their diversity. That realization was not anticipated by me before venturing into the fascinating field of human development.