

3. Suggestion for ONE world development

A method for truly demand-driven aid to alleviate poverty:
"Partnerschafts-Helfer" (partnership-helpers)

FACILITATORS in partnership

How to reach the materially poor

The Problem: Funding from outside a developing country to **alleviate poverty** mostly passes through governments and/or government related central agencies of the developing country, and does very often not - or at least not sufficiently - reach the target groups of the poor. Corruption and/or mismanagement on all levels are frequent reasons for this problem. But even well-intended honest help-projects are often conceived on levels too remote from the truly needy people. The poor are rarely in a position to formulate and articulate their needs in a way that enable public funding from outside their country. Even with best intentions of those "higher levels" who formulate projects for international funding there is too much diversion and administrative cost involved for effective and direct alleviation of poverty.

International funding is rarely direct enough.

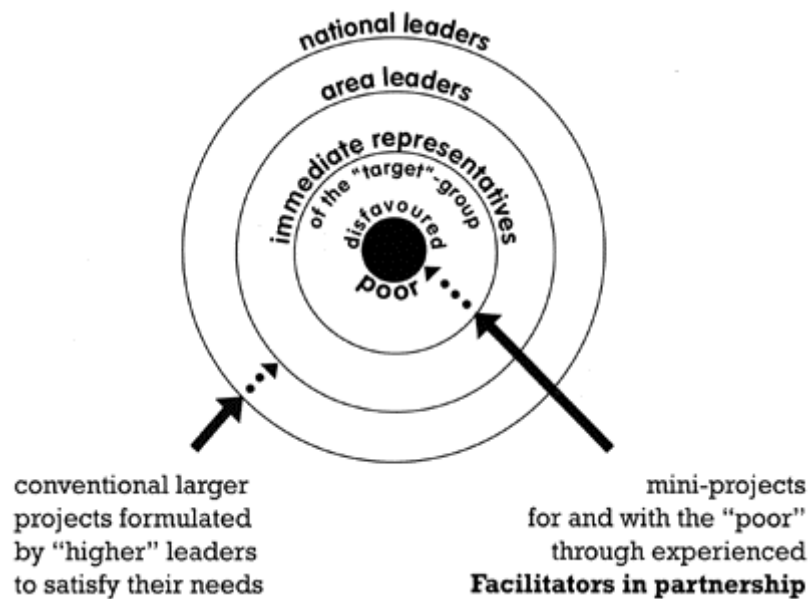
An additional problem can be over-funding which kills local self-help-initiative.

International funding strategies are usually "demand-driven" - but by whose demand? The only area where the usual system may work is for larger infrastructure-projects but not for multiple microprojects to alleviate poverty through small bottle-neck-opening contributions directly for those needy people who try to help themselves.

"Trickle-down" rarely works; "trickle-up" is effective.

At least for funding which is intended to alleviate poverty directly by strengthening the productive capacity of the poor we need a strategy through which **the true needs** of the poor are established locally **in the true partnership with trustworthy facilitators.**

Only where trustworthy self-help organizations of the poor exist, facilitators do not need to work predominantly and directly with the poor themselves or their immediate self-elected local representatives but also with the "higher" level of those self-help organizations.



To reach the suffering people directly (or at least their immediate representatives) experienced helpers - **facilitators** - are needed who are **trustworthy, capable** and **willing** to work **directly** with the poor and their immediate representatives to find out **in true partnership** where and how self-help initiatives can be supported without damaging local self-help motivation. To bridge cultural and language gaps, **partnership-facilitators** from donating countries or international organizations may have to cooperate with trustworthy local partners, which could be called **partnership-agents**.

The purpose of the partnership-facilitator-model is direct bottle-neck-opening help for self-help-initiatives. The final goal of all assistance should be to enable **sustainable holistic self-development in peace, freedom and dignity.**

The partnership-facilitators

Facilitators in partnership should be morally reliable citizens of the donating countries or from member-states if multinational organizations are the donators. They should be mature people who have gained experience with the poor target group; preferably speak their language and respect their culture and value systems. They should be willing and able to locally work as partners with the poor.

They may either be **part-time facilitators in partnership**, if they mainly work in specific projects with and for a target group - or they may be **full-time facilitators in partnership** if they return to the target groups with no other specific assignment but after having gained experience there in previous projects.

In the original German model it was foreseen to install facilitators in partnership through **accreditation** by the minister, responsible for development-assistance. This was supposed to be an honor and be granted in recognition for successful work in former projects with the poor. The state-agency or private organizations who sends help-workers to developing countries were supposed to suggest such qualified help-workers to the minister. In reality this accreditation does not (yet?) work, but the responsible minister has delegated the task of selecting and sending out facilitators

in partnership to a semi-private Organization (German development service, ded), who receives funding mainly from the ministry for this task. - (Please see end of text for a short history of the model in Germany.)

The selection process may be structured to be an "honorable distinction" of qualified experienced practitioners or in any other suitable way. It is however essential that partnership-facilitators truly accept such guidelines for their work

Guidelines for facilitators in partnership

- The priority group to receive development assistance should be people who are deprived of their basic needs like clean air and water, food, basic health care and clothing, shelter and learning opportunities for a life in dignity, but who cannot fulfill those basic needs, even though they try.
- It is equally important to strengthen the will, the skills and opportunities for self-help as well as for helping others (charity).
- Help must be directed to the smallest possible self-help-structure.
- Working partners of the partnership-facilitators are predominantly the local natural traditional leaders of the poor, as long as they are truly recognized by the poor and do in no way exploit or suppress them.
- Groups, including informal groupments and specially neglected segments of the population - often women - should receive priority. It should however be possible to help individuals too, provided this is not unjust to the individuals environment.
- All help must be given, consciously observing that it does not create any undesirable side-effects, like social injustice towards those who do not receive help, environmental damage, a passive recipient-mentality or new human, technological and financial dependencies.
- Help may only be given where those responsible are personally reliable and honestly engaged, live in adequate modesty and possess a minimum of problem-solving capability in the respective value-system.
- Self-help structures in traditional rural and village environments should receive priority.
- Self-help organizations which are not only created to obtain foreign aid are to be supported. Motivation, skills and opportunities to create honest self-help organizations should be furthered.
- Development-goals must not be decided without those who need help. They must participate as partners in all planning and implementation .
- Problem-solving paths of those who want to help themselves have priority. To avoid pseudo-modernistic erring, problem-solving-paths must however be checked through dialogue.
- Peoples' dignity, value-system and culture, their spiritual and religious beliefs as well as their human relationship must always be respected.
- Logic and rational thinking should only be used predominantly as long as they do not damage local cultural value-systems.
- Where traditional values block harmonious holistic development because of changes in framework-conditions, peoples' attitudes may only be addressed with utmost care and responsibility.
- Those who are being helped must at least contribute their own engagement and must make - whenever possible - some adequate contribution.

- All help must lead to lasting improvements and must therefore be reflected beyond its duration.
- All help must be limited in time. The recipients self-help capacity must grow to be self-sufficient.
- All technical assistance must be adapted to the future local maintenance-capacity and energy resources of the recipients.
- Where training is involved, skills and problem-solving capacities have priority over mere transfer of knowledge.
- Problem-solving experience must be shared.

The key idea of the partnership-facilitator-model is to enable **smallest financial bottle-neck-opening-contributions** directly where they are needed most - along with help to **connect people** who could better help themselves by cooperating in a given local situation. Facilitators in partnership should also link knowledge on basic needs of the poor with their sending state or multinational organization and be a transmitter for problem-solving know-how.

Financial aspects of the model

Facilitators in partnership shall be given a budget for direct financial bottle-neck-opening contributions to the poor. This budget shall allow unbureaucratic fast small-scale help without administrative burdens. The partnership facilitator should have the right to decide himself (or after **local** consultation with his sending Organization) who should receive how much help for what purpose. The total amount to be allowed for each needy situation should be limited to 10 % of the budget of a part-time facilitator, respectively to 3-5 % of a full-time facilitator. There should be no minimum. Full-time facilitators should receive a budget of 2-3 times the amount of the part-time facilitator. Part-time facilitators receive no remuneration for this task outside of their regular pay for their specific main project-assignment. Full-time facilitators are paid like development personnel assigned to projects.

Local partnership-agents may receive contributions for their relevant expenses but no salary. Full-time partnership-facilitators may also receive some contributions for their relevant expenses but part-time facilitators only as much as they are active outside of their project areas.

The size of the budgets for the part-time and full-time facilitators in partnership depend on the spending capacity of those help-workers. Guided by field experience it was originally suggested in 1988 that German part-time facilitators shall receive DM 50.000,- and full-time facilitators DM 150.000,- (plus expenses). Since bottle-neck-opening mostly needs very small amounts and since overspending is dangerous, even full-time facilitators mostly need less than DM 100.000,- per year to be effective. Their own "cost" is of course relatively high compared to their budget; but it is more important to spend small amounts well to truly alleviate poverty than to save on the cost of facilitating and waste large amounts of project-money as in many conventional big projects.

Facilitators in partnership have given proof of very careful small scale spending effectively supporting development self-help initiatives. Of course it is most important to select the right people for this facilitating task.

The model implies a strong component of **voluntary engagement** by the facilitators. "Partnership-facilitator" should never be considered a financially interesting "job". More important is the privilege to spend public money in a limited way and according to the above "guidelines" with a minimum of bureaucratic procedure and being "officially" **trusted** to do so.

Of course there will be more or less administrative necessities remaining according to the sending states or multinational organizations' laws and regulations. But in this framework, there should be as much freedom and trust and the least possible bureaucracy. (The system even works in highly bureaucratic Germany - see below).

Limits of the model

Of course the partnership-facilitator-model is limited in quantity to the number of suitable and willing applicants. It also needs to be acceptable to the respective developing country and it cannot replace larger integrated state-projects. But it can be a tool for effective alleviation of poverty with public money from outside through a decentralized flexible decision-structure. It does not pretend to be totally new or sensationally different. But it was certainly new in Germany when it was inaugurated in 1988 after 4 years of conceptual and political preparation and most important: **It works.**

Trusting experienced people to spend public money for effective help to fight poverty without damaging self-help initiatives by overfunding and without loss of funds through corruption is worth trying.

The history of the partnership-facilitator-model

(Partnerschafts-Helfer-Modell - but now called differently by the deed) in Germany:

Soon after initial small-project experience with and for poor village people in Haiti in 1981 it became obvious to me that the really poor in those remote areas had no chance to express their self-development needs in an effective way to benefit from international funding. The mostly illiterate villagers generally knew quite well what would help them in their struggle for survival but there was nobody to interpret their very modest small scale needs to allow the formulation of an international project. Their needs were simply too small. Foreign helpworkers assigned to larger projects with the "target group" of the poor did however very often get in contact with the "real" small-scale problems of the poor but rarely had sufficient "free" funds for unplanned bottle-neck-opening help. German development-workers in larger projects in Haiti (and some "free" voluntary helpworkers like myself) sometimes were able to effectively help with their own small more or less private "side-budgets" and occasionally tap into an embassy-fund which the German embassy was given by the German foreign minister (not by the minister responsible for development-assistance!). In the early eighties this used to be DM 50.000,- per German embassy in a developing country. Some other countries' embassies practised comparable systems.

It was therefore simply logical to envisage the enlargement of a system of "down-to-earth" small-scale development assistance. At that time I was however

underestimating how rigid bureaucracy can be in defending its right to the final decision on how and where public money should be spent. Trusting its own experienced citizens in the field to make the right decision without asking "at home" first, was new in Germany at that time - at least in the development ministry.

Fortunately - with access to open minded German members of parliament - such administrative hurdles could be overcome. In our case, Professor Dr. Winfried Pinger, MdB, chairman of the CDU-parliamentary fraction for economic cooperation and development, discussed the idea in detail with me and encouraged me to present a concept of the model. Later Prof. Pinger and other leading members of parliament, like Rudolf Binding and Dr. Volkmar Köhler, all curators of our foundation, continued to help promoting the idea. It took 4 more years to refine the model step by step in discussing it with the parliamentarians, ministry-officials and field-practitioners and passing it through political working-groups until - in June 1988 - a two year test-project was started with one facilitator (Partnerschafts-Helfer) in each of those 4 countries: Dominican Republic, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Togo. The responsible ministry had commissioned the semi-private German Development Service (ded) to test the model in using partly full-time facilitators and partly part-time facilitators in various local structures. During the test-phase I visited each of the 4 countries - one week each - to integrate field-experience into the final model.

The model was clearly a success but its planned enlargement in 1990 was financially restrained by the German reunification. However, by now, January 1999, 50 facilitators in partnership are successfully working in 38 countries, half of them in Africa. Half of the facilitators are financed by the development ministry, the others by large German NGOs. Their average yearly budget is "only" DM 70.000,-, which has proven to be sufficient, since they even pay smallest contributions to mini-self-help-projects very carefully and in a responsible way.

On the basis of the right selection of experienced and engaged practitioners trusting them to do "the right thing" has proven to be "the right thing".

Peter Hesse