



Rebuilding partnerships, Kiteto District, Tanzania

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IN 1995, A tripartite partnership was developed in Kiteto District of Arusha Region of Tanzania to support village based water, hygiene and sanitation initiatives throughout the district. The partnership was formed between KINNAPA, a local pastoralist NGO, the Kiteto District Council and WaterAid, an international NGO. However, after a few years of operation, the partnership began to falter.

This paper describes from the viewpoints of each organisation, what in their views were the problems and the most important steps to rebuilding the partnership and also what they see as the possible future pitfalls and challenges to the partnership.

When looking at the different perspectives, it can be seen that the Kiteto District Council has viewed equity of involvement in decision making as one of the key issues for the success of the partnership. KINNAPA has highlighted the importance of confronting and responding to the sensitive issue of livelihood conflicts and land and water rights. And WaterAid has focussed on getting practical results, through appropriate capacity building and on discussing problems and issues in an open and transparent way.

Acknowledgement and value of the partners differing viewpoints and priorities, flexibility to respond to the changing internal and external environments, tackling jointly any difficult issues, and joint planning and decision making, were all identified as key requirements for continued success of the partnership in Kiteto.

Introduction

Kiteto, is a semi-arid district in Arusha Region of Tanzania, covering a land area of approximately 17,000 km² and with an average rainfall of between 450-650 mm per annum (President's Office, 2001). The population is estimated at 155,727 (President's Office, 2001) made up of approximately 50% Maasai pastoralists and 50% of people of other tribes such as Wagogo, Warangi, Wanguu and others. The pastoralists in the district mainly practice transhumance, where they have a settled base from which they migrate to and from during the changing seasons and increasing numbers now also practice small-scale agriculture. The agriculturalist communities grow crops such as maize, beans, sunflower, groundnuts and finger millet.

In 1994, a needs assessment was undertaken in every village of Kiteto District, of Arusha Region of Tanzania, in order to assess the villages priorities and needs. In every village without exception, water was found to be a serious

problem and was either top, or near the top, of the villagers priorities (Robertson, 1994).

KINNAPA Development Programme (KINNAPA) a local pastoralist NGO [working with both pastoralist and peasant communities], the Kiteto District Council (KDC) and WaterAid, an international NGO, started working together in a tripartite partnership in 1995. WaterAid as an international NGO, always works through local partners rather than implementing directly and aims to phase out direct support, as and when the partner organisations are able to effectively implement on their own.

The goal of the partnership as formed in 1995, was to support the needs and demands of the communities in Kiteto District, to improve their water situations, as well as integrating the areas of improved sanitation and hygiene practice. However, after a few years of operation, the partnership began to falter.

This paper discusses the process of rebuilding the partnership, through full participation of the partners. It describes from the perspective of each organisation how they observed the problems, the process of rebuilding and what in their opinions the keys were for success, as well as possible pitfalls or constraints for the future.

From the Kiteto district council perspective

The problems with the partnership

The previous partnership agreement was not formalised in a written Memorandum of Understanding, which led to confusion and a lack of clear definition of the roles and responsibilities which each organisation has to carry out. At the same time, during the first period of implementation, it was also clear that some of the roles needed to be modified, or more clearly defined to ensure effective implementation.

Important steps in rebuilding and why the success so far

The steps taken in rebuilding the partnership started by organising the three partners and other stakeholders to hold meetings and interviews, to analyse the past situation and the strengths and weaknesses of each partner. These meetings and interviews led to an agreement that the partnership needed to be revised. Therefore the partners then continued on to formulate / develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding to incorporate essential items, such as an improved partnership structure. After capacity building of the local partners, it is hoped that these

steps will lead to the sustainability of the partnership, even after shifting the power to the local partners, so that they will be able to continue supporting the communities in the future.

The rebuilding of the partnership has succeeded due to the way the evaluation of the partnership was carried out. It involved a wide range of stakeholders in assessing the progress of the programme and the past commitment of the partners. The findings of the initial interviews were then again shared in a plenary session where joint visions were developed for the Kiteto society and for the partnership itself. The partnership structure was also revised to ensure a strong and committed team for the sustainable implementation of the community projects and all of these new agreements have been developed into a formal Memorandum of Understanding for a proper and effective partnership.

The KDC representative noted on behalf of the three parties, the vision, which the partnership developed during the review:

The partnerships visions for Kiteto society:

The Kiteto society in which no-one suffers, or struggles in their livelihoods, due to poor hygiene practices or inadequate access to safe water and sanitation.

The partnerships vision for the KDC / KINNAPA / WaterAid partnership:

A strong committed and capable partnership, led by the local partners and working with mutual trust and respect, with a wide understanding of equity and the environment, working in a participatory and community-based way, and therefore effectively responding to their vision for the society of Kiteto.

Possible pitfalls/challenges

There were several burning issues, which were identified by the stakeholders as of specific concern during the review, which will have an impact on the programme implementation and the partnership. When the partners come to analyse these issues, the outcomes are likely to have differing impacts on each of the partners feelings towards the partnership programme. Therefore care will need to be taken to agree on the methodologies to discuss and agree on each of these burning issues, taking care not to end in unresolved issues due to the conflicts of interest of the different parties, conflicts in roles, and building inferiority and superiority complexes in the differing partners. Also the partnership will need to take care to respond to the weaknesses of the partnership and the individual organisations, identified in the earlier review versus the order of priority, which was linked to the perceived level of impact on the programme.

From KINNAPA's perspective

The problems with the partnership

Pastoralist / agriculturalist diverse interests and livelihood differences drove the programme actors belonging to the different partner institutions to compete for power over

ownership, management and decision making on the programme main issues, policies and resources. This further created mistrust between KINNAPA, being a pastoralist, community-based organisation and the Kiteto District Council. Each of the local partners acted defensively to control any assumed negative biases by the other side which may have been imposed by the other, in order to prevent attempts to hijack the programme's benefits. WaterAid also did not have the capacity at the time to respond and adapt to the tough working environment of Kiteto and hence was unable to lead an effective decision making and planning process.

Other reasons for problems with the partnership were that the division of roles between the three organisations was insufficient during the initial partnership formulation, and that the implementation of activities lagged behind for some time, which delayed opportunities for building up trust. There was also not enough monitoring of the work environment of the field staff versus what was planned.

Important steps in rebuilding and why the success so far

There was recognition by each party of the importance of the other two and the relevance of rescuing the programme to benefit the needy population in such a remote environment as Kiteto District. At the peak of the partnership problems KINNAPA had to review their position as to whether they should continue in the partnership at significant expense. This was in terms of effort and unknown time inputs. However, KINNAPA decided to remain in the partnership for the possibility of benefiting, even in a small way, the poor people of Kiteto, the majority of whom are pastoralists or other marginal communities. Had they not supported the tripartite partnership arrangement, it appeared that WaterAid would not have supported the programme and hence that benefit may have been lost.

To minimise the common marginalised situations of the pastoralist communities, such as lack of access to water and other socio-economic activities and benefits, KINNAPA committed themselves to influence solutions through development of conflict resolution strategies, partnership rebuilding discussions and promotion of clarity within the partnership programme. One of the most important roles that KINNAPA has had in this process has been to act in the role of a community nexus, to promote the community's awareness to participate in the programme. As an extension of the same, their other key roles have been to support the voices of the community to advocate their issues, have influence on the programme focus and actively take on their important responsibilities.

Keeping the partnership well grounded in its focus of supporting communities, has helped to mediate the power frictions, minimise misinterpretation and maintain harmony whilst looking realistically at policy, strategies, approaches and any burning issues.

Possible pitfalls / challenges

The identified key risks to the future of the partnership

come from complex dimensions that seem insufficiently explored. Examples of these include:

- The sustainability of the partnership depends on the capacity of the partners to become capable of undertaking the planning and leading and supporting the programme. The risk is therefore whether the time frames envisaged for development of the partnership will also be realistic versus the time frames required for capacity building of the local partners. Capacity building takes time;
- Also, the change of the Government's role towards public services is practically in a state of transit. The shift from it being a service provider to a facilitator, might have implications for its staffing and thus technical provisions to our partnership and programme. Even in the near future changes in the Government's role may weaken the partnerships structure and also limit its capacity for growth;
- We have also observed that livelihood differences on issues such as land and water rights can appear and violate our partnership's stability. Special attention will be required to progress in that area within our partnership which will mean having a more strongly mobilised programme with clearer strategies. If the partners are not committed enough for positive change in this area, then the problems related to it may also continue to be time-consuming and cause confusion; and
- The challenge is how will this partnership be equipped to take in full the task of promoting land and water rights for the poor people of Kiteto.

From WaterAid's perspective

The problems with the partnership

From WaterAid's perspective the key problems with the partnership as viewed in mid-1999 were based on a series of inter-linked aspects:

- The first was that the original partnership was never formalised and key personnel had changed since this time, leading to confusion over the roles and responsibilities;
- Limited success in programme implementation, due to limited staff capacity, but a programme, which was trying to work in a district, which is technically, logistically and socio-politically complex. This led to an environment where all parties were frustrated and blame towards the other parties was made very easy;
- There is historical mistrust over the land and water use and control issues in Kiteto. In particular, this was between the pastoralist communities (the interests of whom the KDC perceived KINNAPA as representing the most) and the agriculturalist communities (the interests of whom KINNAPA perceived the KDC as representing the most). [Note that in reality both organisations support both types of communities]; and
- Lack of trust had led to a lack of communication and this had a spiralling effect on relationships.

Important steps in rebuilding and why the success so far

The first step to rebuilding the partnership was to openly acknowledge with the partners that there was a problem and that we needed to deal with it, together. Both of the local partners seemed to resent the other, for feeling that the other was being involved and having more control and decision making power than the other. However the reality was that at this time WaterAid were actually making most of the decisions on the programme. So the next steps were to try and identify what were the actual realities on the programme and to start to work towards a joint improved reality.

All important documents were circulated to the three parties for information and approval and wherever possible all three parties were involved in making decisions. For sensitive issues WaterAid facilitated meetings between the three together to discuss the issues and slowly, as the number of opportunities increased for working together, the lack of trust began to break down.

Significant effort was also made on sorting out the programme work, and an additional WaterAid staff member was brought in to help with capacity building and team building of the implementation team. With increased progress in the villages, the team members had less to blame each other for and confidence and trust began to build between the KDC and KINNAPA members of staff working at field level. Joint planning and recording of all decisions made has also helped to reduce misunderstanding of decisions made and encouraged joint ownership.

The success so far has occurred because personnel in the three organisations have been open enough to discuss the problems, the issues and the areas of concern and to compromise where necessary to allow the partnership to move forward. Each partner has kept in mind the overall goal of helping the communities in Kiteto to improve their situations and this has helped to keep perspective when relationships are not so smooth.

Possible pitfalls/constraints

The programme has now identified a number of key issues which it needs to tackle, including issues such as identifying selection criteria for the project villages, discussing the wider issues such as re land and water rights, issues of level of community contribution and others. Some of these issues are very sensitive and to come up with a joint policy, particularly on the land and water rights issue will be a difficult step.

The partnership arrangement and structure as determined by the new Memorandum of Understanding involves a lot of people and actors. This could lead to a situation where the local partners do not start to take responsibility, and / or WaterAid does not become prepared to hand over responsibilities, due to their view that the funds would be wasted through inadequate management or in adequate quality project work. At present there is still significant reliance on WaterAid for leading the

programme activities and undertaking most of the actual day-to-day planning and co-ordination. The local partners are being involved in the decision-making and the activities themselves, which is a big step forward, but due to their other workloads, they currently do not have much time to actually contribute to the practical management or leadership (in a pro-active sense) of the programme itself. This situation needs to be turned around over the next few years, if the partnership is to be realistic and have any chance of being sustainable over the longer term.

With limited Government staff members and the arrival of additional actors in the district, particularly through the Government's new Tanzanian Social Action Fund (TASAF) programme, where the money coming into the district (including for new water projects) is to be channelled through the local council, then there is a significant risk of derailing the partnership programme, even at an early stage. The partnership programme already has to compete for time of the Government staff and even with the amount of time input at present, this will unlikely be enough to make the partnership sustainable without WaterAid's continued presence and daily work inputs. If the new TASAF programme also demands the input of the Government key staff (and in-particular those of the Water Department for whom there is already a high demand), and hence takes them further away from the programme activities, without providing funding for additional staff, then the tripartite arrangement as stands, is likely to fail.

Conclusions and lessons learnt

The three organisations summarise the past problems of the partnership as:

- Lack of a formal written and agreed MoU;
- Historical mistrust between the organisations relating to the difference in priorities between the pastoralist and agriculturalist communities;
- Lack of capacity of staff without adequate capacity building measures; and
- Limited communication on the programme between the three partners.

The three organisations summarise the important steps in remedying the situation as:

- Acknowledgement by all three parties that there was a problem and it needed sorting;
- Improved communication and documentation on all matters;
- Joint planning for all activities;
- Joint planning to develop a formal partnership review;
- Honesty and openness to discuss sensitive issues;
- Simplifying the partnership structure and making the leadership tripartite at all levels; and
- Respecting each other's differing opinions.

The three organisations note that they see the key risks to the future of the partnership as:

- KINNAPA and KDC workloads continue to be too heavy and hence they are unable to take over more

responsibility for organising/managing/leading the partnership programme work;

- WaterAid not being prepared to hand over responsibility, due to lack of evidence of partners increased capacity, time commitment, or ability to manage the programme;
- New responsibilities for the Government staff due to increased activity in the district, such as through TASAF, without additional staff being brought in;
- Change in key personnel to those not committed to openness and agreed partnership principles; and
- Partners not able to come to agreement over key strategic issues such as policy for the selection of villages and policies on livelihood and land and water rights issues.

From the points highlighted by the representatives of each of the partner organisations, it can be seen that although there is some lap over, each has highlighted different key issues as to what they consider as the most important in relation to the problems, reasons for success and possible constraints for the future. It seems that acknowledgement that there are different viewpoints has also helped in the success of re-building the partnership so far. If the partnership can build on these different strengths and perspectives, rather than allowing them to lead to conflict, then there is potential for an effective partnership with a wide vision and impact.

From the experience in Kiteto, it has also been observed that for the partnership to be productive over the longer term, that the partnership will also need to be flexible in order to respond to both the changing internal and external environments. Space for this flexibility needs to be written into the partnership agreements in the form of regular reviews and acknowledgement that sometimes change will be necessary. From the initial efforts in Kiteto to do just this, to adapt to the changing environments, whether through increased capacity, responding to new opportunities or problems, or to changing Government policies, then there is hope for the long-term sustainability of the partnership. However it is also clear to each party that many challenges, also still lie ahead.

References

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