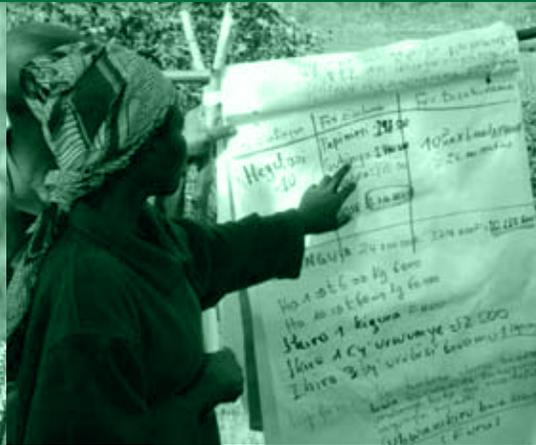




PLP in Building Alliances to Serve HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities in Sub-Saharan Africa



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TOOLKIT

Partnering to Achieve Economic Impact in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities

A Partnership Toolkit for Microenterprise Development

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Abstract

This toolkit was developed by the SEEP Practitioner Learning Program (PLP) in Building Alliances to Strengthen HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities in sub-Saharan Africa (BASICS). It is mainly intended for well-established microfinance and enterprise development organizations (either non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private consulting firms, national or international, to manage their partnerships with other organizations to provide more holistic services to HIV and AIDS-impacted communities. Partnerships with smaller NGOs and community-based organizations (CBO) that conduct programs at the grassroots level are common and may be especially challenging, so they receive special attention here. The toolkit has been designed to help organizations work through the process of establishing and maintaining a successful alliance that will allow each partner to contribute complementary skills, resources, knowledge, and experience that combine to better serve their clients and promote economic strengthening.

This document is also published as an addendum to The SEEP Network *Guidelines for Microenterprise Development in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities* at <http://hamed.seepnetwork.org>.

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List of Acronyms

AEE	African Evangelistic Enterprise
CBO	community-based organization
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation International
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EMG	Emerging Markets Group, Ltd.
MED	microfinance and enterprise development
MFI	microfinance institution
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
PLP	Practitioner Learning Program
PPAG	Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana
SAT	Sinapi Aba Trust
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WISE	Organization for Women in Self-Employment

Introduction

The SEEP Guidelines for Microenterprise Development in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities states that “microenterprise development is a crucial element of a holistic approach to HIV and AIDS prevention and mitigation.” It acknowledges, however, that “implementing integrated programming is challenging. It requires bringing together diverse technical approaches, different program priorities, and—sometimes—competing institutional and professional interests. The key to addressing these challenges is facilitating effective cross-sector partnerships among public health and MED (microenterprise development) professionals and organizations.”¹

Development organizations working in microfinance or enterprise programming often work with and through local partners. This is especially common for organizations working to serve HIV and AIDS-affected clients and communities, particularly when attempting to deliver or provide access to holistic services and integrated programming. The partner is frequently a grassroots organization that has emerged in the community in response to the needs created by the pandemic. Due to how they were formed and how they operate, community-level organizations (CBOs) carry out their work through unpaid group members and other volunteers, rather than (or in addition to) paid staff. On one hand, they are able to provide such services as social support, nutritional supplementation, and homecare. On the other hand, these groups have rarely been able to provide significant economic support (financial or income generation) prior to their partnership with the microfinance or enterprise development partner.

To leverage these complementary roles, this toolkit has been designed to help these parties work through the process of establishing and maintaining a successful partnership to better serve their clients with their combined services. It was developed by the SEEP Practitioner Learning Program (PLP) in Building Alliances to Strengthen HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities in sub-Saharan Africa (BASICS).

About The SEEP Network

The SEEP Network, founded in 1985 and headquartered in Washington, DC, is an association of more than 70 international NGOs that support micro- and small enterprise development programs around the world. SEEP’s mission is to connect microenterprise practitioners in a global learning community. As such, SEEP brings members and other practitioners together in a peer-learning environment to produce practical, innovative solutions to key challenges in the industry. SEEP then disseminates these solutions through training, publications, professional development, and technical assistance.

About the Practitioner Learning Program

The PLP methodology was developed by SEEP as a way to engage microenterprise practitioners in a collaborative learning process to document and share findings and to identify effective and replicable practices and innovations to benefit the industry as a whole. The PLP combines a small grant program with an intensive, small group-facilitated learning process, usually over a period of one or more years, and utilizes workshops, email listservs, conference calls, and distance learning. Practitioner Learning Programs focus on learning at three levels: the individual organization, the PLP group, and the industry at large.

1. The SEEP Network, 2008, online document. “What Kind of Microenterprise Development Strategies Work for HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities?” section 2.3, and “How Can We Facilitate a Cross-Sector Partnership?” section 2.5, in *Guidelines for Microenterprise Development in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities*, Book 2, *For Microenterprise Development Practitioners*, <http://communities.seepnetwork.org/hamed/node/38> and <http://communities.seepnetwork.org/hamed/node/40>, respectively. Section 2.5 contains guiding principles for integrated programming.

The objectives of the BASICS PLP are to empower microenterprise development (MED) practitioners —both microfinance and enterprise development—through peer learning to build and strengthen strategic alliances with partner organizations and to document and disseminate the most effective models for developing these alliances for maximizing impact. These models take into consideration the special circumstances of the HIV and AIDS-impacted clients, as well as the nature and capacity of the local partner.

Background to this Toolkit

Section 2.5 of the Guidelines sets forth guiding principles for integrated programming and discusses institutional and technical challenges to delivering integrated programming through partnerships.² This toolkit furthers that dialogue, and attempts to provide practical guidelines, tools, and tips for organizations that wish to form an alliance to better serve their clients impacted by HIV and AIDS. This may mean improved services, a greater variety of services,³ or outreach to a greater number of clients. Partnerships can help development organizations focus their time and resources on their core businesses, while offering complementary and needed services to clients.⁴ Further, partnerships may be an avenue to enhance capacity at the community level, so that the programming of microfinance or enterprise development partners can continue after the alliance has run its course.⁵

Implementing Partners: CRS and Caritas Rwanda

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works with Caritas Rwanda on a variety of development programs. The organizations share a common mission and values. CRS provides funding to Caritas, along with capacity building, program planning, and monitoring. As part of the SEEP PLP, Caritas develops community-savings groups in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, according to a CRS methodology that contributes to livelihood improvements, including income-generation activities.

The partnership toolkit draws from published resources on partnering, as well as the participants' and facilitators' experience in BASICS PLP. During the opening BASICS PLP workshop, participating organizations utilized and tested a number of generic tools through various exercises and activities. This led to expansion, adaptation, and refinement of the toolkit to the specific needs of microfinance and enterprise development initiatives in communities impacted by HIV and AIDS. During the life of the BASICS PLP, the participants further adjusted and embellished the toolkit, so that the final version incorporated much of the shared learning from the PLP collaborative learning activities and closing workshop. The partnership types were varied, and the learning on partnership development reflects this.⁶

For more information on partnerships for microenterprise development in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, please visit <http://hamed.seepnetwork.org> to view the other learning products in this series:

- Enhanced Service Provision for Economic Strengthening in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities
- Partnership Models for Successful Microenterprise Service Delivery to HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities
- Partner Capacity Building for Economic Strengthening in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities

2. The SEEP Network, 2008, online document. “How Can We Facilitate a Cross-Sector Partnership?” section 2.5, in *Guidelines for Microenterprise Development in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities, Book 2, For Microenterprise Development Practitioners*, <http://communities.seepnetwork.org/hamed/node/40>.

3. See companion publication from the BASICS PLP, J. Adams et al., 2009, “Enhanced Service Provision for Economic Strengthening in HIV and AIDS Impacted Communities,” PLP Technical Note (Washington, DC: SEEP Network).

4. Dan Mullins, 2002, “Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into Development: What It Can Look Like” (London: Oxfam Great Britain), 4, http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/hivaids/downloads/mainstreamind.pdf.

5. See companion publication from the BASICS PLP, E. Kaganzi et al., 2009, “Partnership Capacity Building for Economic Strengthening in HIV and AIDS-Impacted Communities: Two Cases from Rwanda,” PLP Case Study (Washington, DC: SEEP Network).

6. See companion publication from the BASICS PLP, J. Dada et al., 2009, “Partnership Models for Successful Microenterprise Service Delivery to HIV and AIDS Affected Communities,” PLP Technical Note (Washington, DC: SEEP Network).

Intended Audience

This toolkit is mainly intended for well-established microfinance and enterprise development organizations (either non-governmental organizations [NGOs] or private consulting firms, national or international) that are partnering with other organizations to provide more holistic services to HIV and AIDS-impacted communities. The partners may be other large development organizations, smaller local NGOs, or community-based organizations. Partnerships with smaller NGOs and CBOs that conduct holistic programming at the grassroots level are common and may be especially challenging, so they receive special attention here. Such partners might also find this toolkit helpful as they develop their capacity to form alliances and implement programs in collaboration with large national or international agencies. We encourage readers to use what they find useful and to adapt these tools as necessary to their particular circumstances.

Because the BASICS PLP focuses specifically on partnerships that lead to enhanced services for HIV and AIDS-affected communities (for example, teaming with a local health organization to offer HIV-prevention training to microfinance clients), the supporting examples here are specific to that target population. Further, CBOs may have few or no formal or paid staff, instead working through group members and other volunteers; therefore tools and examples are frequently geared toward such a situation. However, many of the lessons regarding productive partnerships can be extrapolated to alliances that serve other target populations or have different goals.

Defining a Partnership

A partnership is “a long- or short-term commitment between two or more organizations for the purpose of achieving specific...objectives by maximizing the effectiveness of each participant’s resources.”⁷ This definition was written for business partnerships, but is easily transferrable to microenterprise development initiatives where the increased income of micro- and small enterprises—and the consequent impact on household livelihoods—is a primary goal. Key words and phrases in this partnership definition are commitment, specific objectives, maximizing effectiveness, and resources.

Building strong partnerships takes strong commitment to specific objectives, forming the right partnerships by assessing the potential contribution of each party, and agreeing to specific activities and outcomes. When alliances work well and maximize effectiveness through the efficient use of combined resources, each partner can accomplish more than what it would achieve on its own. This applies to both project implementation, as well as the leveraging of donor funding to augment resources and increase impact. In the case of partnerships with CBOs, the ultimate goal of the partnership may be long term, continuing after the alliance has run its course. For example, an international NGO involved in value chain development might intervene to develop the capacity of CBOs to assist community members in market-focused income generation. The assumption is that this work by the CBO will eventually become independent, without permanent support from the NGO or its donor.

This toolkit uses the term “partnership” specifically to refer to *implementing* partnerships—that is, where both parties are engaged in making decisions about program services. Usually both parties are directly involved in providing the services, and often there is some form of capacity building or technical assistance provided by one partner to the other (normally from the large NGO to the CBO). In other contexts, the term “partnership” may refer to funding relationships, for example, between a donor agency and an NGO. This toolkit does not specifically address this type of relationship, although funds are commonly transferred from larger organizations to CBOs to assist with program implementation.

Contents of the Toolkit

This toolkit incorporates nine tools to help create, maintain, and exit partnerships that are organized according to the life cycle of the intended collaboration. These partnership stages have been identified as stage 1—forming a partnership; stage 2—process of formalization; stage 3—partnership management; and stage 4—final evaluation.

7. Construction Industry Institute (CII), 1996, *Partnering Toolkit*, Introduction. https://www.construction-institute.org/scriptcontent/more/ir102_2_more.cfm. (Austin, TX, USA: CII).

The box below briefly describes each BASICS PLP alliance pair and provides an illustrative example of each partnership.

PLP BASICS Participating Organizations

Fantsuam Foundation and community-based organizations, Nigeria: Fantsuam Foundation offers a package of microfinance, information technology, and support to HIV and AIDS- impacted individuals and households. Through several community-based partners, as well as self-help groups, Fantsuam has expanded its services to include psycho-social support in general and aid for orphans and vulnerable children, such as school uniforms, nutritional advice, and support.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas, Rwanda: Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works with Caritas Rwanda in implementing much of its development programming in Rwanda. The organizations share a common mission and values. CRS provides funding to Caritas Rwanda, along with capacity building, program planning, and monitoring. As part of the SEEP PLP, Caritas develops community-savings groups in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, according to a CRS methodology that contributes to livelihood improvements, including income-generation activities.

Sinapi Aba Trust (SAT) and Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), Ghana: SAT is a well-established microfinance institution (MFI) and member of the Opportunity International Network, serving 80,000 clients in Ghana. The BASICS PLP enabled Sinapi Aba to pilot the delivery of HIV and AIDS awareness, voluntary counseling and testing, nutritional support, and medical services to affected clients through its partner PPAG.

Mercy Corps and Women in Self-Employment (WISE), Ethiopia: Mercy Corps and WISE are collaborating to increase the range of services offered to WISE's 10,000 clients, who are members of savings cooperatives. With a focus on new income-generating opportunities, WISE and Mercy Corps are piloting briquette production and kitchen gardens, among other activities.

CHF International (CHF) and African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE), Rwanda: CHF implements a PEPFAR (President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief)-funded program in Rwanda with an economic development component for impacted communities. With AEE, CHF is developing new economic opportunities for impacted groups, such as the market development and facilitation for co-operatives who participate in agriculture value chains.

Emerging Markets Group (EMG) and Fruits of the Nile, Uganda: EMG is a private consulting company with strong experience in value chain programming. EMG is facilitating the relationship between clusters of caregivers (for orphans and vulnerable children) and a private agricultural processing and export firm—Fruits of the Nile—enabling rural women to sell dried fruits to higher-value markets.

It is expected that users of this toolkit will choose to apply one or a few tools, and sections have been set up to facilitate this usage. However, readers are encouraged to become familiar with the other sections where they may find valuable information relevant to their partnership.

The nine tools that make up the toolkit are:

Tool 1 Self-Evaluation

Tool 2 Partner Selection

Tool 3 Pre-Agreement Discussion Guideline

Tool 4 Agreement Templates

Tool 5 Action Plan (Detailed Partnership Planning)

Tool 6 Management Team Checklist

Tool 7 Personnel Assessment

Tool 8 Monitoring Guideline

Tool 9 Partnership Evaluations

Keeping Clients Front and Center

The ultimate goal of the partnerships described here is to bring benefit to the project clients—the individuals, households, and communities that have been impacted by HIV and AIDS. Right from the start, engaging clients in the analysis of the problems and decisions about solutions will ensure more appropriate demand-driven services. As final beneficiaries of the partnership effort, the clients will be the ones affected by project activities and outcomes. It is helpful to get their feedback on whether they think the partnership will provide them with appropriate services, and if they see any potential negative impacts. It is recommended that organizations cultivate an open understanding of roles, goals, and expectations; honesty and trust at all levels; and open discussion of project activities. When eliciting feedback from clients, it is important not to raise false expectations if the partnership or program is not definite.

Tips for Engaging Clients

Involve clients in the initiation or elaboration of the project and partnership, as reasonable.

- ✓ When working with CBOs, be aware that they are part of the community and may often be both your partner and your client. Manage relationships for this potential complication.
- ✓ Remember that clients know their problems and often have interesting solutions to suggest.
- ✓ Be open to new programming as client challenges are better understood.
- ✓ Understand if or how your clients will gain more from this partnership than if there had not been a partnership. Verify this with clients.
- ✓ Ensure client confidentiality is respected. Put in place mechanisms to reduce or not contribute to stigma related to HIV.
- ✓ Share and discuss partner and project information with clients on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ Elicit a response on the information that is shared.
- ✓ Manage client expectations and do not create false hopes.
- ✓ Develop a feedback mechanism from clients to partners and staff. Ensure that it is supported by clients.
- ✓ Build a process for handling disputes and correcting misunderstandings.
- ✓ Celebrate with clients as milestones are achieved by the team, implementers, and clients.

Forming a Partnership

Partnerships can be complex and time-consuming, with both advantages and liabilities. Before entering into a partnership, it is important to assess both the reasons for collaboration and the expected outcomes. Partnerships are formed for a variety of reasons, for example, to reach new target groups, expand service offerings, share resources, or apply for funding. When working with clients affected by HIV and AIDS, organizations often partner to provide economic, social and health services,⁸ which may require extra efforts in capacity building between partners.⁹ Any decision to establish an alliance will benefit from a strong understanding and articulation of the particular motivations of the organizations. This will assist in determining the type of partner that is needed, the objectives of the alliance, and the expected role of each partner. Later, this clear articulation will facilitate the development of a partnership that meets these original goals.

8. Adams et al., “Enhanced Service Provision.”

9. Kaganzi et al., “Partnership Capacity Building.”

Benefits and Challenges of a Partnership

Benefits

- Provision of additional services to existing clients who often require an array of holistic services
- Expansion to new clients; community outreach, which can be particularly difficult when anonymity and stigma are significant issues
- Sharing of resources, pooling of expertise, creative problem solving
- Ability to undertake larger or more challenging programs
- Capacity building of one or both partners, often of the CBO partner
- Combined forces to access funding, lobby government, and/or raise awareness
- Doors open to other projects, partnerships, and expanded impact

Challenges

- New effort to establish the partnership
- Additional workload to manage the partnership, coordinate work, and to build capacity of a CBO or other grassroots partner
- Increased commitment of resources; often extensive needs of HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, and local partners' lack of full resources
- Potential for funds to be wasted in ineffective partnership
- Possible conflict or tension among staff and between partners
- Confusion of clients, staff, or other stakeholders, especially regarding accountability
- Potential negative effects on clients and personnel (staff, group members, volunteers) with poorly functioning partnerships

Before collaborating, each member should examine its capacity to contribute to a joint effort, evaluating the expected role and responsibilities to ensure that it can adequately execute activities and meet goals. In addition to assessing the potential to contribute to an alliance, participants can gain clarity about the advantage that they and their clients will derive from the partnership. Sometimes potential projects are attractive in terms of increased funds or status, but the actual impact on an organization or its clients may not justify the level of effort entailed. Fantsuam Foundation in Nigeria found that the different reporting requirements of multiple partners and the unpaid extra work associated with each partnership could be onerous. A healthy debate among management, staff, volunteers, group members, and clients on the merits and risks of entering into a partnership can ensure ownership and commitment down the road.

Types of Partnerships

Alliances can be made up of any combination of one or more of the following: international development organizations, for profit and not for profit; national development organizations; microfinance institutions; government agencies; small local NGOs and CBOs; businesses; and self-help groups or cooperatives.¹⁰ The specific makeup of any partnership will impact its formation and management.

As noted earlier, a typical partnership for microenterprise organizations who wish to conduct economic strengthening is with grassroots, community-based organizations. These local partner organizations are usually operated by volunteer personnel who have not acquired formal training and generally do not receive any form of compensation.

Some partnerships are relatively egalitarian, where each party has comparable strengths and weaknesses. Other partnerships may strive to be equitable, but the collaborating organizations exhibit significant differences in size, experience, or financial or human resources. Or, the flow of funding and/or capacity building may only go one way. Since imbalanced

Needing a Partner: Sinapi Aba Trust

Sinapi Aba Trust is a well-established microfinance institution in Ghana. Sinapi Aba realized its clients needed greater awareness regarding HIV and AIDS, but had no expertise in health-related issues. They needed a partner with complementary skills who could be sub-contracted to fill this gap, and found Planned Parenthood of Ghana to be a perfect fit with their needs.

10. Dada et al., "Partnership Models."

partnerships are common in international development, particularly between a large organization and a CBO, many of the tools in this volume are designed to mitigate challenges associated with navigating this type of partnership. However, the tools are still useful for organizations working with partners of equal resources.

A large national or international organization may initiate a partnership with a smaller local organization by directly approaching the local partner or by issuing a request for partners in the country. Large organizations frequently have access to donor funds, deep technical capacity, and wide-ranging programming experience. Local partners typically bring a familiarity with and strong knowledge of the program’s target population, such as language, customs, expectations, past experiences, as well as a network of contacts that provides entry into a community. They may have specialized technical knowledge in service areas that the larger partner does not.

Different Forms of CBOs

CBOs can take a variety of forms. For example, in Nigeria, Fantsuam Foundation partners with local NGOs, as well as HIV and AIDS-support groups; EMG in Uganda works with caregiver clusters—local women’s groups that form economic units. CRS in Rwanda supports the efforts of local diocese and volunteer groups through its partner Caritas Rwanda; and Mercy Corps partners with the local organization WISE, which in turn works with many hundreds of local savings and credit cooperatives.

The following table provides an overview of the typical contributions of a large organization and a CBO when they form an alliance:

Typical Contribution of Large National or International Organization	Typical Contribution of Local NGO or CBO
Delivers funding to implement programs and reports back to donor	Directly provides services to the target impacted population, including training
Offers technical assistance or capacity building to the local partner	Provides information to the partner on the local community and program clients
Directly implements programs alongside, or in conjunction with, the local partner	Offers context-sensitive program delivery, based on local knowledge of language, culture, and business practices, etc.
Assists the local partner to prepare proposals and access local and international funding	Identifies constraints, sustainable solutions, and appropriate services and service providers for the target clients
Builds linkages on behalf of the local partner to other development organizations or to market actors	Provides linkages to clients and community members through established networks, including volunteers and group members
Develops and shares curricula, methodologies, good practices, and other internationally-tested program components	Recruits and manages volunteers or local employees to staff partnership programs; deals with issues of absenteeism and lower productivity associated with HIV

A true strategic alliance involves both partners in the decision-making process, recognizing that effective partnerships do not necessarily consist of equal role sharing, but of partners playing separate yet complementary roles. Alliance partners evaluate each others’ abilities to contribute; the resources of time, expertise, and finances that they bring to the table; and how they envision the partnership will work. Even before addressing these issues, if each partner agrees on a common vision and set of goals, specific objectives can be more easily attained. Once these goals are determined, individual roles, responsibilities, and expected benefits can be discussed. A sophisticated international organization may not always realize the value of the rich community experience and knowledge of grassroots organizations that are critical to successful programming in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities. Community networks, socio-cultural sensitivity, knowledge of the local language, and other benefits are commonly offered by partner CBOs.

Multiparty Alliances

As development organizations become more adept at serving their target population, new partnership configurations may arise. This is particularly common in market development, where a key role of a development organization is to facilitate market relationships between the target population and business actors in a market system (traders, exporters, etc.). Or, a large development organization or microfinance institution may choose to partner with a large number of local organizations in a unified manner to implement a wide-ranging program. For example, a single microenterprise development program in an HIV and AIDS-impacted setting may form partnerships with a health initiative for testing and counseling, a CBO for community outreach, a homecare service organization to benefit the sick, or a government or private facility that provides access to anti-retroviral therapy.

Three-Party Partnership: EMG

EMG in Uganda participated in a three-way alliance to support caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children. The partners are EMG as the development organization, Fruits of the Nile as a lead firm that sells to export markets, and the caregiver clusters, which process fruits to sell to Fruits of the Nile. Each has a role to play in implementation and development of a viable value chain. However, EMG's eventual goal is to exit, leaving a functioning business relationship between the firm and the caregiver clusters.

Partnerships with three or more parties pose their own challenges and opportunities. Often, all parties in the relationship will have something to offer each other, and so cross-cutting knowledge transfer or capacity building can occur. Additionally, in some partnerships, a large organization may be able to take advantage of economies of scale by holding regular meetings and capacity-building events with several local partners at the same time. However, with multiple parties, it is even more difficult, and therefore more important, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party. All members of the partnership need to feel that they are being treated fairly and that they have an equitable say in decision making, so there are no perceptions of favoritism or unfair treatment.

Although this toolkit's focus is not on multiparty alliances, some elements of the toolkit may be useful for organizations involved in such a partnership. The tools can be adapted as necessary to fit the particular circumstances.

Tool 1: Self-Evaluation

Purpose: Self-evaluation assists you and your partner organization to assess the purpose of the alliance, your respective roles and responsibilities, structure of the partnership, and expected benefits to your organizations and your clients. This tool provides a guideline for conducting such a self-evaluation.

Guiding questions	Comments/Further information required
What is the purpose of the partnership, particularly regarding support to impacted communities? Are there clear objectives and a rationale? Is a partnership the right decision?	
Will the partnership contribute to or detract from our organization's mission or goals?	
What are the specific activities and benefits vis-à-vis HIV and AIDS-impacted clients?	
What is our organization's role in the partnership: lead agency or equal partner, associate? Is this a good fit for us?	
What effort and resources are required to participate in this partnership? (e.g., time, personnel, finance, other such skills, etc.)	
Can or will our organization commit sufficient effort and resources over the required timeframe?	
Will resources be taken away from other projects or activities? If so, what will the impact of this be?	
Are there other options for accessing the needed resources? Do we need a partner with funds, for example?	
Will the partnership adequately cover special needs of impacted households to be successful in its goal or are other partners/services needed?	
Does our organization have the capacity to manage a memorandum of agreement (MOU) or effective partnership, including any funds that may be transferred?	
Can our organization contribute to an effective joint partnership management team/committee?	
Will the workload negatively impact the staff's or volunteers' performance and results?	
What benefits will result from the partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the realization of our organization's goals; • our organization's capacity and resources; • management (e.g., professional upgrading, increased learning); • personnel (e.g., capacity building, experience, new opportunities); and • clients, as either direct or indirect benefit? 	
Has our organization taken the time to review partnership options based on core competencies, shared objectives, and complementarity?	
Have management, personnel, and clients (as appropriate) been involved in the decision-making process? Will there be "ownership" and "buy-in" if a partnership is formed?	

Tool 2: Partner Selection

Purpose: After self-evaluation, the next step is to assess potential partners. Experience suggests that a short list of two or three partner candidates will improve successful selection and positive partnering. (It is suggested that one form be completed per potential partner.)

Guiding questions	Comments/Further information required
Which organizations are options for a partnership? Can we make a shortlist? (Underline the name of the partner described in this assessment.)	
What are this potential partner's short-, medium-, and long-term incentives? Why do they want to partner with us and do they have a strong HIV and AIDS mandate?	
What role would this potential partner play in the alliance? How would this role benefit HIV and AIDS programming?	
Does this partner have the capacity or experience already? If capacity building is an issue with a CBO or other partner, will we be able to undertake this?	
What are the specific characteristics and competencies that we are seeking in a partner organization? (Order by priority.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shared mission and/or HIV focus 2. Independent funding; financially stable 3. Specific skills (itemize) 4. Specific HIV and AIDS experience and capacity 5. Location and community outreach 6. Past relationships or strong references 7. Size of organization 8. Management capacity 9. Personnel resources 10. Friendly relations between personnel of other organizations 11. Volunteer resources 12. Knowledge of culture and language 13. Professionalism 14. Transparency 15. Good record-keeping and accounting 16. Experience in report writing 17. Interested in building their capacity 18. Part of NGO, government, CBO network 19. Other 	
How does this partner rate on our key requirements selected above? How does this partner compare to other potential partners?	
What else do we need to know about this partner to make a decision?	

Process of Formalization

To set the stage for preparing and signing an agreement, organizations may want to ask themselves and each other a series of questions. These will lead to the clarification of roles and responsibilities, and ensure that expectations are both realistic and shared. Tool 3 below provides a guideline for such a dialogue between the two potential partners. Remember that when dealing with CBOs, they may not have experience with formal partnerships, so simplicity and patience will be important characteristics to bring to the table.

Tips for Preparing to Enter an Agreement

- ✓ Be clear on why you are seeking a partner, why this particular potential partner would meet those needs, and how the partner would enable more effective programming in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities.
- ✓ Understand the potential partner's approach and attitude toward dealing with HIV and AIDS-affected clients and households to ensure your attitudes and activities will be compatible.
- ✓ Understand why the potential partner wants to work with you, anticipating that some reasons might be unrelated to client and program goals or incompatible with your own expectations (e.g., going into a long-term funding relationship). Address their expectations and incentives in a transparent manner.
- ✓ Listen to and address concerns and opinions of your staff, even before embarking on the partnership, and ask your proposed partner to do so as well.
- ✓ Conduct open discussions with your potential partner during the formation of the alliance. If a local language is easier for the partner, ensure suitable translation is available.
- ✓ Consult with clients about the purpose and activities of the partnership, keeping in mind that HIV and AIDS-impacted clients may have different or additional concerns than non-affected clients.
- ✓ Budget and allocate sufficient management and staff time to service the partnership, either to implement joint projects or to liaise with the partner and maintain the partnership.
- ✓ Formalize the partnership through signed agreement(s) when you have agreed on joint activities, with clear articulation of expectations. Keep things simple and straightforward, especially with CBOs that may not have worked with formal agreements before.

Types of Agreements

The process of formalizing a partnership usually involves some kind of written agreement. At first, this can seem like an overwhelming task that can only be managed by legal counsel. While complicated agreements with large financial implications will necessitate input from a trained professional, simpler agreements may also be negotiated between organizations. This section discusses variations in, and characteristics of, agreements and provides some tips and tools to prepare productive agreements between partners.

Informal Arrangements: Fantsuam Foundation

Fantsuam Foundation in Nigeria has multiple partnerships. Some of these are formal grant agreements with international NGOs, whereas others are less formal arrangements with community and self-help groups. The grant agreements each have specific requirements regarding timeline, reporting, and record keeping. The informal agreements enable Fantsuam to reach out to communities and to implement programming that serves their mission and fulfills their commitments to their donors.

Formal, Informal, and Short-Term Partnerships

Partnerships may be created on an informal basis when there is a recognized need that can be filled at the community level. A decision may be made to have a looser partnership without a written agreement, for example, when a large NGO provides a breakfast program for children in youth-headed households through a community self-help group. The NGO may not want a formal long-term commitment since funds may not be secured. The community group understands this situation and is happy to have help as available.

Another exception to a long-term strategic alliance is the temporary agreement. If a program requires support in an area that is not the expertise of the implementing organization, or if internal resources are limited, it may seek the support of a partner that has the capacity to address the short-term gap in programming. These temporary partnerships are generally of limited duration. For example, Sinapi Aba Trust in Ghana utilized the services of the Planned Parenthood Association for a limited term to raise HIV and AIDS awareness among clients.

However, in economic strengthening of HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, partners typically form strategic alliances that are the basis of longer-term initiatives. These alliances define clear roles and responsibilities for each partner,

and the success of the shared venture depends on each of the partners fulfilling their mandate. As noted earlier, true strategic alliances, as opposed to subcontracts, involve both partners in the decision-making process. Each partner contributes to assessing both partners' abilities to contribute; the resources that they bring to the table in terms of time, expertise, and finances; and the way the partnership will work. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis can be used to help define partners' capacity and potential contribution.

Memorandum of Agreement versus Partnership Agreement

A partnership brings together and builds upon the strengths of each party to best achieve the objectives of all parties within the relationship.

A *memorandum of understanding* (MOU) between two or more organizations is usually a statement of a general intent to work together. There may be areas of responsibility or contribution outlined, but MOUs do not normally detail specific outputs or amount of time contributed. In fact, an MOU might be so general as to encompass multiple joint initiatives. Because of the overarching nature of an MOU, it can be a good way to start a partnership, allowing each organization to better understand the other. An MOU may also be sufficient for an agreement between a large NGO and a smaller CBO that is less used to handling a complicated agreement. In some cases, an MOU does not progress to a specific contract and may reveal differences that would not be conducive to further collaboration.

Organizations with an MOU can take further steps toward formalization or they may forego an MOU and move directly to a partnership agreement. A *partnership agreement* is a tool that can be used to define the specific roles, responsibilities, contributions, outputs, and results of the individual organizations and their combined effort (which will have been defined in the pre-agreement discussion phase). A partnership agreement is often a formal grant or contract that provides a timeline for activities and deliverables, funding arrangements and transfer of monies between partners, methods to terminate the partnership if it is not functioning well, and other details. If a lead organization enters into a partnership agreement with a CBO or local NGO, it should ensure that enough time and support are allocated so that both partners understand clearly their roles and responsibilities.

Tips for Assessing an Existing Agreement

Your organization may already have an agreement in place that you would like to assess to determine if it is appropriate and addresses all relevant issues. In addition to the other information provided in this section, the following questions can help you review an existing agreement.

- ✓ Is there a clear, signed agreement or MOU on the partnership? How formal or informal is it?
- ✓ Does the agreement clearly state the purpose, objectives, and expected outcomes of the partnership?
- ✓ Does it outline the activities under the partnership? Is this still accurate? Does it need updating?
- ✓ Are the tasks and timelines mutually agreed on, and satisfactory to each partner? Have there been major changes to the division of work or the timeline since the agreement was signed?
- ✓ Does the agreement clearly state the resources needed and what each partner is responsible for providing or contributing?
- ✓ Does the agreement clearly explain how progress against the work is monitored and evaluated?
- ✓ Does it allow for changes as the partnership evolves? Have you made use of this?
- ✓ Are the roles and responsibilities well defined, so that each partner has a clear understanding of their commitments? Are these still accurate?
- ✓ Is each partner meeting its roles and responsibilities? If not, does the agreement need to be amended?

Revisiting an Agreement: CRS and Caritas

Catholic Relief Services in Rwanda and Caritas have an ongoing commitment to work together as partners in many countries. They had an agreement in place to support impacted communities with the development of savings groups when they joined the SEEP BASICS PLP. The PLP encouraged them to revisit their processes, especially issues around the nature of CRS's role and mediation of misunderstandings. This more participatory approach and increased dialogue resulted in enhanced understanding and more effective program facilitation.

- ✓ Is there a mutually agreed upon decision making process?
- ✓ Is there a mutually agreed upon process for addressing conflict or disputes? (This might start with meeting to discuss the grievance and attempting to resolve it and then move to a mediator and/or arbitration.)

Tool 3: Pre-Agreement Discussion Guideline

Purpose: Conducting an open and honest discussion with your potential alliance partner and with the key personnel who will be involved in the alliance is crucial. It is also important to allow enough time for dialogue before the agreement is signed and partnership activities begin, so you can address as many potential problems as possible ahead of time. The following discussion questions will help you build a constructive dialogue that will result in a more productive partnership.

Before beginning the dialogue, it is important to decide which topics should be discussed with which members of each organization. The discussion guideline is not meant to be used exhaustively; rather, discussants should choose those questions that seem most relevant and crucial to their circumstances.

Why are we considering this partnership?

What does each party bring to the table? What are we lacking? Will our combined skills and expertise sufficiently overcome the barriers related to HIV and AIDS to successfully run the desired program? Do both organizations feel that the planned exchange of effort, funding, assistance, capacity building, and/or personnel is fair? If not, how might we address those concerns? Will a capacity-building plan for a partner CBO be a significant activity of the partnership? Does one party “need” the other (i.e., there are no other potential partners available)? Does this create tension or problems?

How well does each organization know each other?

What is the level of trust between the two organizations? What are our respective missions and visions? What is the organizational culture and administrative structure of each? A large international organization and a local CBO will be structured and will operate very differently; will the partnership allow for this? Have we worked together before? If not, what references or reputation do we each bring to the table? What is the client base of each organization and what services do we each provide? Are both organizations familiar and comfortable with partnerships in general? If this is the first partnership for a CBO, how can the process be adapted to support it in this new venture?

What kind of partnership are we considering?

Do we want an equal venture or is one organization sub-contracting to another? How close of a relationship do we want? Which individuals will be responsible for final decisions about this partnership? Who is responsible for reporting? Will the partnership be very focused on particular activities and a set timeframe, or is it more open and flexible? Will the partnership type fit the requirements of both sides?

What specific activities would we undertake?

Why have these activities been chosen and how are they of specific relevance to HIV and AIDS-impacted clients? Do we have the necessary resources (time, personnel, finances, expertise) to undertake them? If not, how will we handle any shortfalls? Is there a need for another partner who will fill any programming gap related to the complexity of dealing with affected communities? Do both organizations agree on these activities? Do both sides find them reasonable and achievable in the given time frame with available resources?

What is the level of buy-in about the potential partnership?

Does each organization’s board of directors understand the partnership and do they support it? If working with a CBO, does the general membership support the partnership? Is this amicable or has tension been created in the group? What mediation is available to deal with such issues? Are the senior personnel of each organization supportive? Do personnel generally know about and support the potential partnership? Do any third parties (government, donors) have a large influence on this partnership? Do key personnel on both sides agree about the planned goals and activities? What else might we do to get key players in agreement?

Who are the key personnel who would be involved in the partnership?

What will their specific roles be? Will they be part of a formal partnership management team? Do they have the experience or capacity to manage partners? Do they have sufficient authority to make major decisions? What issues or concerns do key staff, volunteers, or group members have about this partnership? How often would they interact with or report to their colleagues in the other organization? Is staff turnover a problem in either of the organizations? If dealing with a CBO or other volunteer group, are members stretched and unable to fully commit? Are there incentives for them to remain active if workload increases?

What are each side's expectations?

Will one partner provide funding, technical assistance, capacity building, or other support to the other organization? If not now, is this envisioned for the future? Will one partner second staff or volunteers to the other? How open, honest, and regular are the communication flows between us? Are the expectations reasonable on both sides? Have we taken the time to really understand what each other can offer in very real terms? Does one partner use a targeted approach, while the other avoids labelling to prevent HIV and AIDS stigmatization?

How long are we planning to work together?

How long are the partners planning to be involved in operations in this area? Is either organization hoping for a longer-term relationship? Is this realistic? Will either side actively search for follow-on funding? Are the planned activities or programs expected to be financially sustainable? Do both organizations agree on the exit strategy or the plans for the future, if any? What will the decision-making process be as the program evolves? Is there a possibility to extend or expand our work? Are plans for knowledge management or organizational learning included?

What barriers are there to the formation of this partnership?

Are there socio-cultural, language, educational, or other differences? Are there different expectations or a lack of resources? Are there disagreements about our work plan? Do we share a common attitude and approach regarding working with HIV and AIDS-affected clients? Are there external factors (e.g., donors, government, another partner) that will need to be overcome or managed? Is there any internal resistance? Do we trust one another? Are we ready to deal with capacity issues if one partner is a less-experienced CBO or a volunteer group? Have we planned for this so that it is part of the program and not an impediment to it? Are there any serious issues that might block this partnership entirely? How can we address these concerns?

At the end, what do we want out of this partnership?

What does success look like for each partner? What goals or targets do each party have? Are these acceptable to the other organization? What benefit do we want our clients to realize, and is this demand-driven (i.e., will client satisfaction improve)? How can these be phrased in terms of outcomes for HIV and AIDS-impacted clients? If we have different visions of success, are they compatible? Do we have institutional goals (e.g., improved capacity, opportunities for learning) in addition to our program goals? Are we providing enough time and resources to these goals to ensure they will be realized?

Going forward, how will we negotiate problems and changes?

How will we check in with each other to ensure we are making progress towards our goals? What monitoring and evaluation processes are in place and are these feasible and acceptable to both sides? Have we adjusted our thinking to deal with the volunteer nature of a partner (if this applies), as well as their level of capacity in terms of reporting? What will we do if there is conflict or serious disagreement? What will we do if one side cannot or will not meet its obligations? What happens if one partner wants to dissolve the partnership? Is the conflict resolution process open and collegial, with a defined communication, feedback and resolution strategy?

Tool 4: Agreement Templates

The templates in Tool 4 show how different types of agreements may be written or formalized. Readers can also view:

- a sample letter of agreement at <http://contracts.onecle.com/digital-angel/cicp.invest.shtml>;
- a sample MOU at <http://www.thecre.com/fedlaw/legal89/mou.htm>; and
- a sample grant agreement at http://www.dysonfoundation.org/usr_doc/SampleGrantAgreement.pdf.

Donors often have specific formats for sub-agreements and may also be a source for them.

1. Basic Agreement Template

Purpose: This is a simple letter of agreement. This agreement would work well for simple, short-term, defined activities, where both partners already know and trust one another, and there is no financial cost involved or it is well-defined.

This letter confirms an informal agreement whereby [ORGANIZATION 1] has agreed to partner with [ORGANIZATION 2] in order to [insert purpose of work].

Duties

Specifically, [ORGANIZATION 2] will:

[List specific activities that Organization 2 will undertake]

- a.
- b.
- c.

In order to facilitate these duties, [ORGANIZATION 1] will:

[List supporting duties that Organization 1 has, such as providing necessary information or making contacts for Organization 2]

- a.
- b.
- c.

Calendar

[ORGANIZATION 1] and [ORGANIZATION 2] shall complete their respective duties in a timely and thorough manner. It is envisaged that this agreement shall be completed by [insert date].

Compensation

There shall be no financial compensation to [ORGANIZATION 2] from [ORGANIZATION 1] for its work, nor shall [ORGANIZATION 2] pay [ORGANIZATION 1] for [insert specific activity].

OR

[ORGANIZATION 1] agrees to pay [ORGANIZATION 2] the sum of [insert amount] for the completion of the duties listed above.

[Add sentence that clearly states schedule of payment, for example, upon signing, at completion of work, etc.]

Agreement

Name and title:

[Organization 1]

[Address]

Date

Name and title:

[Organization 2]

[Address]

Date

Tool 4: Agreement Templates

2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template

Purpose: *This is an MOU, which outlines a general intent to work together and may be quite broad.*

MEMORANDUM (MOU) FOR STRATEGIC ALLIANCE TO *[insert purpose]*

Submitted by:

[name of organization]

[date]

Introduction

This collaborative partnership on *[insert name of program/purpose]* is made and entered into between [ORGANIZATION 1] *[insert description]* acting per its representative, *[insert name and title of representative]*, of the first part, and [ORGANIZATION 2] *[insert description]*, acting per its representative *[insert name and title of representative]*,

Optional *[list objectives of organizations]*

Optimal *[insert brief description of background to the agreement]*

Roles And Responsibilities

[ORGANIZATION 1] will do the following:

[list roles and responsibilities of Organization 1]

- a.
- b.

[ORGANIZATION 2] will do the following:

[list roles and responsibilities of Organization 2]

- a.
- b.

Services to Be Provided under This Agreement

[insert description of joint services provided]

Constitution and Roles of Project Management Committee

For smooth, effective implementation of project activities and direction, a project management committee will be constituted to perform an advisory role and to review quarterly the activities of the project. The composition of the committee shall include X *[insert total number of representatives from each organization]* representatives from each organization and X *[insert number of representatives from outside the 2 organizations]* other members:

[list names and organizations of ALL committee members]

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization.

Our guiding principles in this partnership are *[insert principles]*.

It is in the light of the above developments that the two institutions, [ORGANIZATION 1] and [ORGANIZATION 2], are making these statements of willingness and commitment as alliance partners/collaborators to the course of the project on this day *[insert date]* at *[insert place]*.

Agreement *[insert signatures, printed names, and titles]*

Name and title:

[ORGANIZATION 1]

[Address]

Name and title:

[ORGANIZATION 2]

[Address]

Date

Date

[Add witness signatories below, if desired or necessary by law]

Tool 4: Agreement Templates

3. Grant Agreement Template

Purpose: Grant agreements are useful when one organization is providing another with a sum of money for the express purpose of implementing a specific program. The grantor may be involved in providing services to clients to a greater or lesser degree. If the funds given are a sub-grant from a donor organization, there may be specific grant formats that must be used. This template is given only as one example.

Grant Agreement to *[insert grantee's name]*
Award no. *[insert award number]*

1. Recitals

This Grant Agreement is entered between *[insert name of institution giving grant]* (hereinafter referred to as “Grantor”) located at *[insert city, country]*, and *[insert name of institution receiving grant]* (hereinafter referred to as “Grantee” with offices at *[insert city, country]*).

GRANTOR is a *[insert type of organization]* dedicated to *[insert description of mission]*.

GRANTEE is a *[insert type of organization]*, active since *[insert year of inception]*; located at *[insert grantee's address]*.

The parties assure that they exercise their free rights and have the power afforded to them in the execution of this Agreement, which contains the following clauses:

Grantee is a *[insert type of organization]* active since *[insert year of inception]*; located at *[insert address]*.

The parties assure that they exercise their free rights and have the power afforded to them in the execution of this Agreement, which contains the following clauses:

2. Purpose of the Agreement

GRANTOR has selected GRANTEE to receive funding through this Grant Agreement to *[insert description of service or project to be funded]* as per the final approved proposal presented by GRANTEE. *[Add statement on purpose and higher-level goals of the agreement.]*

3. Scope of Work

The work plan in Annex X *[insert annex number]*, approved by GRANTOR for GRANTEE is an integral part of the agreement and as such is considered as the basis for the grantee's compliance with its scope of work and deliverables.

4. Deliverables

[insert list of deliverables with information on what deliverables are, when they are due, contingency of future funding, etc.]

5. Period of Performance

- 5.1 The estimated period of performance under this agreement is *[insert beginning date]* to *[insert ending date]*. The effective date of this Agreement is *[insert date]*. No charges may be claimed against this award before the initial effective date or after the closing date.
- 5.2 Funds obligated hereunder are available for program expenditures for the period *[insert beginning date]* to *[insert ending date]*.

6. Estimated Amount of the Award

- 6.1 The total value of this grant is US \$ *[insert amount of grant in applicable currency]* which GRANTOR will award to GRANTEE and shall be incrementally funded to cover allowable costs incurred for implementation of the stated project. Any budget variances over X *[insert percent number]* percent per budget section must be pre-approved in writing by GRANTOR. Payments made under this agreement cannot exceed the equivalent of USD \$ *[insert amount of grant in applicable currency]*, irrespective of any local currency fluctuations.
- 6.2 GRANTOR hereby obligates the amount of US \$ *[insert amount of grant in applicable currency]* for program expenditures during the period of *[insert beginning date]* to *[insert ending date]*, and as shown in the attached budget.
- 6.3 *[Add information on whether Grantor will reimburse Grantee for costs above the budgeted amount]*
- 6.4 GRANTOR is providing funding for this project in the form of a grant. The funds may only be used for the purposes described in the approved work plan and budget. GRANTEE will be required to return to GRANTOR any funds advanced and not spent or any funds not properly used according to the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

7. Disbursement of Funds

[insert details on how the funds will be disbursed]

8. Allowability of Costs

[insert details on allowable costs, for example, travel or purchase of equipment]

9. Procurement

[insert details on procurement regulations; what may be purchased and from what source]

10. Reporting Requirements

GRANTEE shall provide to GRANTOR and retain in its permanent files the following written reports necessary to monitor the progress of program activity and ensure compliance with GRANTOR requirements.

- 10.1 *[insert details on requirements of financial reports]*
- 10.2 *[insert details on requirements of program reports]*
- 10.3 *[insert details on requirements of annual report or final report]*

11. Inspection and Audit

[Add information if GRANTEE must undergo an audit as a condition of receiving funding]

12. Indemnification

GRANTEE shall hold GRANTOR, its officers, agents, and employees harmless from third party liability for loss or damage to property or injury or death to persons or any course of action of whatever nature that may arise out of or during the performance of this Grant Agreement. However, nothing in this section shall require GRANTEE to indemnify GRANTOR for any liability arising out of GRANTOR's own negligence.

13. Obligations of GRANTEE

GRANTEE assumes the following responsibilities during the implementation of the program:

- Implement the project as per the terms and conditions of this Agreement;
- Provide an adequate level of office/project space, equipment, trained personnel and supervisory staff for the successful completion of the project;
- Ensure that there is no discrimination in beneficiary services based on gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, civil status, and age or class discrimination;
- Adhere to all local laws with respect to payment of salaries, taxes, fringe benefits, permits, etc that apply during project implementation;
- Ensure the timely submission of reports required by GRANTOR; and
- *[insert other requirements if any].*

14. Unforeseen Acts

[add information on how GRANTEE can apply for an extension if unforeseen circumstances arise]

15. Transfer of the Sub-Grant to a Third Party

The rights and obligations of this Agreement shall not be transferred by GRANTEE to a third party without the prior written approval of GRANTOR.

16. Modifications

- 16.1 All requests that require modifications to the work plan or budget must be in writing and bear the signature of an authorized official of GRANTEE. Only the undersigned GRANTOR representative or formally designated representative may approve modifications.
- 16.2 *[insert details on under what circumstances GRANTEE would need to request a modification]*
- 16.3 *[add information on whether and how GRANTEE could request a modification to the budget]*

17. Disputes

[add information on handling disputes]

18. Notification

Official communication related to this Agreement shall be directed to the following: *[insert contact information for both Grantor and Grantee official representatives, including address, email, phone]*

19. Termination and Suspension

[add information on when the Agreement may be terminated, for what reason, and by whom]

20. Program Income

[add information on what happens to income generated by GRANTEE from program, if any]

21. Cost Share/Match

[add information on whether GRANTEE must provide cost sharing or match, and the amount or percentage]

22. Annexes

The following documents are included as annexes and are considered integral parts of this Agreement: *[insert list of annexes and their contents, e.g., Annex 1, Budget]*

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the duly authorized representatives of both parties have signed this Agreement in two original forms, on the date specified below.

Signed by the duly authorized officer
for and on behalf of **GRANTEE**

Signed by the duly authorized officer
for and on behalf of **GRANTOR**

[add printed NAME and TITLE]

[add printed NAME and TITLE]

Date: _____

Date: _____

Partnership Management

Commitment and Trust: Mercy Corps and WISE, Ethiopia

Mercy Corps and WISE have developed an open and collegial relationship. They have an ongoing commitment to one another, preparing joint funding proposals, working on several projects, and participating in meetings and trainings together. In working with HIV and AIDS-impacted clients, this foundation has ensured an open dialogue with its partner to deal with the challenges, cement a positive and trusting relationship, and produce the most effective outcomes, based on knowledge of each other's capacities, approaches, and organizational goals and culture.

Deciding on the type of partnership that will serve best, selecting the most suitable partner available and agreeing with the partner on joint activities, approaches, and processes are all important steps in setting up the partnership. However, this is not the partnership itself. The actual management of the partnership calls for ongoing effort and commitment from both parties in order to succeed on a day to day basis. The initial steps set the stage for the collaboration going forward, but there are still implementation issues to consider. These issues are covered in this section.

An open process from the start builds trust among participants and demonstrates a commitment to communication. If the partnership is asymmetrical, where one organization

has greater power and decision-making authority, this may negatively impact feelings of ownership and motivation. For example, if one partner controls the funds, there may be a tendency for unequal power dynamics to develop, requiring special attention to communication and the decision-making process. Such a decision-making process may be spelled out in dialogue upfront and/or the partnership agreement to avoid misunderstanding or conflict down the road.

Tips for Maintaining Healthy Partnerships

- ✓ Be respectful of one another's ideas, confidentiality, efforts, and work. Large NGOs need to be especially aware of the potential real or perceived inequality when working with smaller local organizations.
- ✓ Note that, when working with HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, confidentiality and even anonymity may be required regarding each others' clients.
- ✓ Promote and support collaboration whenever this makes sense: encourage joint work and meetings, and training between personnel of both organizations. Tailor this collaboration to the capacity and resources of each partner.
- ✓ Develop collegial relationships, get to know the names of the participants you meet regularly, and meet in less formal circumstances as appropriate to your context.
- ✓ Create channels of communication at various levels and through various formats, being aware of the local culture and language and the positive incentives for ongoing and open communication.

- ✓ Be transparent: showing and discussing with your partner all documents pertaining to the partnership, including budgets as is appropriate and helpful.
- ✓ Promote knowledge management and share learning, experiences, and accomplishments through meetings and peer visits, as well as by documenting processes and lessons for one another.
- ✓ Introduce your partner to other organizations that could be useful to it. By strengthening your partner, you strengthen your partnership, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of outcomes.
- ✓ Acknowledge your partner in all relevant media items, website articles, and documents.
- ✓ Build open relationships in which the key liaison people can tell each other what they think, including topics of a sensitive nature, such as personnel performance.
- ✓ Ensure that all relevant groups in the community have the option to participate and that the community takes ownership of the projects, and ensure that issues of confidentiality and stigma are considered seriously.
- ✓ Support your partner's capacity building when and where appropriate.
- ✓ Keep the focus on achieving impact for clients.

Detailed Planning

Once a partnership has been formed and an agreement signed, an action plan can be formulated to guide project implementation. This process may involve several meetings within both partner organizations. Keep planning to the appropriate level of complexity for the partner organization.

Partnership Management Team

Once the partnership has been established and a plan of action created, maintaining a collaborative effort takes work. An MIT study confirmed that the presence of a dedicated partnership management function increases alliance success rates.¹¹ Although this sounds like a sophisticated mechanism, adjustments can be made to suit the form of partnership and the type of partners involved.

The first step in partnership management is having an open discussion by all parties during the formation of the alliance—a transparent process that identifies the potential for members to contribute to and gain from a joint initiative. In this way, the partnership can optimize the contribution of each party in achieving objectives in the most effective and efficient manner. This was outlined in the earlier sections on formation and formalization of partnerships.

Formal partnerships are often negotiated by senior managers, who may or may not be managing the joint initiative and/or participating on the management team. Further, in larger ventures with high organizational impact, there may be management at various levels within the organization (strategic and tactical) that will be involved with the partnership. For smaller initiatives, middle- to junior-level managers may be the best people to oversee the collaboration and manage relationships, activities, and outputs.

Analyzing Personnel Needs

Although a strong management team is important, it is the day-to-day staff, volunteers, or group members who will determine the success of the project. With appropriate involvement, orientation, support, and guidance, they are the ones who will achieve the initiative's goals. Because of this, staff, volunteers, and group members function best when they clearly understand what the partnership is about, the goals and objectives of the partnership, and their roles in making it a positive venture. Further, opportunities for implementing individuals to contribute to decision making, particularly when those decisions affect them directly, will promote ownership and commitment. Management is responsible for assessing and supporting personnel, and accountable for project results.

11. J.H. Dyer and H. Singh, 2001, "How To Make Strategic Alliances Work in Corporate Strategy" (Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT), pp. 37–43.

Partnership Monitoring

Organizations can evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships throughout the project. Standard project monitoring and evaluation can be positively enhanced by supplemental partnership monitoring when an alliance is a significant structure in implementation. Such a methodology can be streamlined and simple and should not add a huge workload for management or monitoring staff. With regular monitoring, timely feedback is possible—enabling remedial action and adjustments as needed.

Regular monitoring of the partnership consolidates input from all staff and partners, including volunteers, group members, and other community stakeholders, as well as from program clients. Experience has shown that monitoring is an excellent management tool and can assist everyone in working towards significant outcomes. If monitoring reveals that there are gaps or shortfalls, make adjustments to the plan, and possibly to the partnership as well, to achieve the stated goals. Changes that arise in the project or partners as a result of monitoring need to be fed back into the monitoring process.

Joint planning and implementation of the monitoring plan is critical, affording each partner the opportunity to measure its own progress and plan its own changes. This is supported by a partnership agreement or consensual measures that facilitate agreement on results. With openness from the start, partners are less likely to withhold information about what may seem like “failure,” but which is vital to the partnership. Learning from what does not work well is as valuable as learning what succeeds, and the earlier the better. This also applies to staff in each organization; if monitoring is participatory in nature, then it will not be perceived as “checking up” on people, but as a tool that can benefit all in their work.

As the project and partnership progress, it may be necessary to make changes to the partnership, including adjustments to the respective roles of each partner, or their level of contribution. For this reason, if the partners remain flexible, adjustments may be made in response to the evolving situation. It is also crucial that both partners partake in planning and evaluation, while making the time to measure their own progress and make changes. Community-based partners can play a critical role in early detection of problems, becoming aware of when things are not going as planned, recognizing specific impediments, and offering context-sensitive solutions. Therefore, regular monitoring and communication can provide timely feedback for when there is a need to modify the partnership or the agreement (including activities) and how this might be done.

Finally, monitoring will allow both organizations to detail the process of partnering. Alliances evolve and provide many new experiences, which often go undocumented. By recording the process, lessons can be carried on to future relationships. This is particularly important for economic strengthening in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities, where there are many new lessons for the microenterprise industry regarding program activities and types of partnerships.¹²

Tips for Monitoring Partnerships

- ✓ Aim to formally monitor the progress of the partnership at least twice per year.
- ✓ Consider more frequent check-ins with partners, particularly community-based partners, which are closest to the clients and know how the program is moving forward.
- ✓ Work together with the partner to jointly plan and execute the monitoring.
- ✓ Involve staff and other personnel, as well as clients when appropriate, in setting up and implementing the process.

Participatory Monitoring: CHF and AEE

CHF and AEE have partnered in Rwanda under the PEP-FAR initiative to provide a range of services to communities impacted by HIV and AIDS. In particular, they have implemented an economic strengthening initiative with self help groups (SHGs) to develop economic cooperatives. Clients and partners are involved in setting goals and expectations for these programs. Everyone is involved, from SHGs to international staff, and all are eager to measure progress and to make adjustments to ensure the project's successful outcome.

12. For further elaboration of these topics, see Dada et al., “Partnership Models,” and Adams et al, “Enhanced Service Provision.”

- ✓ View, and encourage others to view, monitoring as a valuable learning tool.
- ✓ Capture important information that is explicitly available in reports and known by staff and other stakeholders, but possibly not included in formal reporting.
- ✓ Create a feedback loop so that monitoring information leads to discussion and adjustments.
- ✓ Consider changes to both project activities and partnership roles in order to realize goals.
- ✓ Ensure that adjustments are reflected in the monitoring plan as you move forward.
- ✓ Keep the partnership monitoring simple, as a supplement to normal project monitoring, and in a format and level of complexity that is tailored to the capacity of the partner in question.
- ✓ Take advantage of the additional learning opportunities provided by the monitoring system.

Tool 5: Action Plan (Detailed Partnership Planning)

Purpose: This tool provides a simple framework for planning with a partner and to clarify activities, roles, timelines and expected results.

Objective 1

Activity	Outputs	Who is responsible?	Expected outcome	Timeline

Objective 2

Activity	Outputs	Who is responsible?	Expected outcome	Timeline

Objective 3

Activity	Outputs	Who is responsible?	Expected outcome	Timeline

Tool 6: Management Team Checklist

The partnership management team will function best with a full complement of skills:

- ✓ Proven project management capacity or identified potential in leadership of community group
- ✓ Ability to develop and maintain good interpersonal relationships
- ✓ Ability to negotiate and problem solve (*Remember that an array of issues may threaten the success of economic strengthening initiatives in HIV and AIDS-impacted communities.*)
- ✓ Adequate capacity to see the larger picture and integrate with project goals
- ✓ Experience in previous partnership projects, if possible
- ✓ Knowledge of, and experience in, community responses to the impact of HIV and AIDS
- ✓ Awareness of non-economic development issues (social, political) in affected communities and how these impact economic development programs
- ✓ Knowledge of and experience in microfinance or enterprise development
- ✓ Good communication skills, both at the management-team level and by implementers who report to the team (e.g., ownership of a cell phone is often critical in selecting a community representative)
- ✓ Flexibility and adaptability to any new situations that may arise

The following questions can be asked in assessing the overall management of a joint initiative:

- ✓ Do we have a partnership management team in place that represents both partners?
- ✓ Does our management team have the right skills to manage and guide the partnership?
- ✓ Is there a signed agreement or a clearly written understanding by the partnership that the management team can use to guide its direction and activities?
- ✓ Does the management team understand the needs of the implementing personnel, and is there a process for feedback and support between the two organizations?
- ✓ Is there a senior manager within each of organization to whom the management team can go for decisions or problems beyond their authority?

Tool 7: Personnel Assessment

Purpose: This tool will assist you in analyzing personnel needs and considerations, and to understand what management can do to adequately support staff, volunteers and group members.

Guiding questions	Comments/Further information required
What are the personnel needs of the project in terms of skills, experience, and time commitments?	
What are the positions we will use to meet these needs? (Specify position name, organization, and percentage of time required.)	
Do we have adequate personnel to meet these commitments or should we consider recruiting?	
Will existing roles change as a result of the partnership? Will personnel have additional tasks?	
Are our personnel adequately trained to work well within this partnership? If not, is further training desirable and available?	
Have staff, volunteers, and group members received the necessary orientation, support, and guidance?	
Do our personnel understand the objectives of the partnership and their roles in its success?	
Has the organization and the management team modeled transparent behavior and flexible working approaches?	
Are staff, volunteers, and group members ready and open to learning new ideas/new ways of working?	
Are our personnel open to partnership? What are their questions and concerns? How have we responded to these concerns?	
Are there processes in place to facilitate a positive and productive working relationship among personnel and managers of the collaborating organizations?	
Are personnel willing to share and communicate information with others from the partner organization?	
Are the interests of personnel represented on the partnership creation and management team?	
Do staff, volunteers, and group members feel like they have a stake in the partnership?	
Do staff, volunteers, and group members have decision-making roles in the partnership?	
Will professional development of management and other personnel result from the partnership?	

Tool 8: Monitoring Guideline

Purpose: The monitoring tool is designed to assist partners in monitoring the effectiveness of the partnership. This supplements regular project performance review information on the partnership itself. Monitoring is recommended twice or more a year, allowing partners to identify and address issues before they overwhelm and/or threaten the alliance, and enabling partners to review roles and responsibilities so they can make necessary adjustments in the project or partnership.

Guiding questions	Comments/Further information required
Project implementation	
Is the project being implemented according to plan?	
Are we fulfilling our obligations?	
Is our partner fulfilling its obligations?	
Is the management team active and effective?	
Are personnel willing and able to complete tasks?	
Are there any (unexpected) bottlenecks or other issues that need to be addressed?	
Are any adjustments needed in project activities?	
Clients	
Are clients participating?	
Have clients benefited from this partnership?	
Are clients satisfied?	
Resources	
Are committed resources available?	
Were estimated resources accurate?	
If no to either, what solutions exist?	
Communications and feedback	
As partners, are we exchanging key information with each other?	
Is there regular communication with clients?	
Is there a feedback mechanism from clients?	
Are we collecting, assessing, and applying new learning as we go?	
Are communications about problems addressed in a timely manner?	
Results	
Are we achieving the projected results?	
If not, can we explain the variance?	
If not, what is our mitigation plan?	
Exit and wrap-up (final stage only)	
Is our exit strategy in place?	
Are we moving toward effective project wrap-up with our partner?	

Final Evaluation

The objective of a final evaluation is to review the partnership by looking back on the entire joint initiative and to determine its success both in terms of achieving project goals as well as the functioning of the partnership itself.

This toolkit aims to assist organizations in facilitating the delivery of improved services to HIV and AIDS-impacted clients of microfinance institutions or enterprise development programs for the purpose of economic strengthening. Therefore, the most critical question is whether the partnership has led to greater benefits for the clients than if it had acted alone or with a different partner(s), or if it had conducted the partnership differently. If one partner is planning to exit, it is especially critical to determine whether benefits to clients will continue and if the local partner has the capacity to continue working with the community without external support. For these reasons, it is valuable to gather feedback from clients before and during the evaluation, using open questions without prompting, to learn their true opinions. Quantitative information about changes in situations of the clients over the course of the partnership brings useful objective details to the evaluation. Finally, reports from intermediate monitoring offer material on lessons learned that can be consolidated with the final evaluation.

Monitoring a Partnership: Sinapi Aba Trust and PPAG

Sinapi Aba Trust and Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana formed a successful partnership to raise awareness among microfinance clients about HIV and AIDS. This led to some clients getting tested, accessing medications, and improving nutrition, while others began to take more preventative measures. The process began with an MOU, was monitored throughout, and ended with a positive evaluation by the board of Sinapi Aba, who allocated additional funds to expand the program.

Management and personnel of both partners can offer relevant information, enabling a solidly-based and thorough evaluation. This information can be collected from interviews, focus group discussions, and interim monitoring reports. A neutral third party may be selected to collect this information, so that staff, volunteers, group members, and other stakeholders feel comfortable in sharing information. In some cases, an anonymous system, such as an online survey tool, can be useful. These decisions can be made by each organization according to its own context and situation.

Conclusion

This toolkit has been prepared by the SEEP BASICS PLP facilitators and participants to share learning about the formation and operation of strategic alliances for economic strengthening programs in communities impacted by HIV and AIDS. Many of the issues surrounding partnerships are common issues—building trust; ongoing communication; and clarity of goals, activities, roles, and responsibilities. However, interacting with HIV and AIDS communities can be different because they require more holistic programming due to the impact of the pandemic, and partnerships may often involve grassroots organizations that have little or no experience working with large NGOs or international donors. With luck, this toolkit holds valuable insights and support for those organizations planning an alliance to better serve these deserving communities.

Tool 9: Partnership Evaluation

Purpose: This evaluation tool can assist you and your partner to separately assess the alliance from your own point of view. You may then subsequently share the results of the evaluation with each other. This tool may also be used in a joint evaluation, and in making decisions about future collaboration.

	Successes	Challenges	Recommendations
Partner Selection			
Decision to seek a partner			
Selection process			
Suitability of partner selected			
Partnership agreement			
Appropriate agreement in place			
Negotiation of agreement			
Adherence to agreement			
Clients			
Client participation			
Specific benefit to clients			
Clients' level of satisfaction			
Resources			
Availability of adequate resources			
Contribution from partners / clients			
Other solutions to resource issues			
Project Implementation—Self			
Achievement of goals			
Staff performance			
Management team			
Feedback from clients			
Effective monitoring			
Project Implementation—Partner			
Achievement of goals			
Personnel performance			
Management team			
Feedback from clients			
Effective monitoring			
Resolution of problems			
Communications			
Process in place, adequacy of process			
Negotiated solutions or compromised			
Impact or results			
Goals achieved			
Pros and cons of partnership			
Extension or expansion plans			

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