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The Post-2015 Agenda:
POLICY**PAPER**

ADVANCING THE DEBATE:
Cross-sector partnerships, business and the post-2015 development agenda

Cross-sector partnerships will be key to reaching those left behind in the MDG era and so, ultimately, to achieving the SDGs. However, in order for such partnerships to succeed:

- **It is imperative to acknowledge and address the current lack of trust between stakeholders**
- **There is an urgent need for capacity building to ensure that all actors are fit both to partner and to hold each other to account**
- **Common agreement is needed as to what, in the SDG era, constitutes good practice in development and development financing**

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POLICYPAPER

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVA	Citizen Voice and Action
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EWEC	Every Woman Every Child
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LICs	Low Income Countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MNC	Multi-National Company
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

Executive summary

This paper is part of a series by World Vision on the subject of cross-sector partnerships, business, and the post-2015 development agenda.[1]

To succeed, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) must change the lives of those who are most vulnerable in our world: those who have been left behind in the era of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). A business-as-usual approach will be insufficient for this task and will not deliver the degree of development gains that are essential to reaching 'zero targets' in areas such as preventable child deaths, hunger and violence against children. World Vision believes that cross-sector partnerships – between government, business (and other private-sector actors[2]), civil society and/or UN agencies – are one of the primary modalities through which the innovation that is necessary should be created and delivered.

This current stage of the post-2015 process – leading up to the UN General Assembly in September 2015 – will include a critical debate on the means of implementation for the SDGs. This paper explores four interrelated areas in which World Vision has observed growing confusion and concern in the discussions on cross-sector partnerships (one of these means of implementation). These four areas are (1) the question of what the 'rules of the game' now are regarding good development (and development finance) practice; (2) asymmetries of power between different development actors; (3) the changing modalities of development financing; and (4) the need for greater accountability of all actors.

The paper seeks to provide some clarification and possible avenues for resolution in these four areas (as they relate to cross-sector partnerships in particular) and so help to advance agreement on what is needed to ensure effective partnering between sectors of society. It concludes that the following issues are particularly critical and provides recommendations for addressing each one:

- the need to develop a new, common agreement of what now constitutes good practice in development and development financing in the context of new models of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnering
- the urgent need for capacity building to ensure that all actors are fit both to partner and to hold each other to account
- the imperative to acknowledge and address the lack of trust between stakeholders in order to facilitate progress on cross-sector partnerships – and on the broader aim of development cooperation.

1. Introduction and notes on terminology

In World Vision's recent research, interviews with a range of representatives from government, business, civil society and UN agencies showed there was unanimous agreement on the importance, to the post-2015 project, of strong cross-sector partnerships. World Vision's two earlier policy papers on cross-sector partnerships, business, and the post-2015 development agenda (which built on this research) – 'Getting Intentional' and 'Reaching the Unreached' – offered recommendations on: how targets could be articulated in the post-2015 framework to ensure an enabling environment for cross-sector partnerships; how the framework could ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met; and how companies might most effectively contribute to that end.

As the post-2015 process has evolved, World Vision has noted some particular concerns and (potential) confusion, either directly or tangentially, in the debate on cross-sector partnerships (and, in particular, the role of business therein). This third paper, therefore, seeks to provide some clarification and possible avenues for resolution on these interconnected areas (below) as a contribution to the critical debate over the next few months on means of implementation (particularly as this applies to advancing agreement on issues regarding cross-sector partnerships):

- **(Re-)defining the 'rules of the game':** The new ideas being discussed in the post-2015 process (such as new models of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnering) are not yet anchored in a revised common understanding and agreement of what now constitutes good practice in development, and this is aggravating a mutual lack of trust between stakeholders.
- **Asymmetry of power:** Concerns have been expressed by some stakeholders about asymmetry of power and inappropriate influence by powerful actors, whether from business, civil society or government.
- **Financing:** The different perspectives between key stakeholders on the future commitments and uses of ODA (official development assistance) and the discussions of new private financing models are a major stumbling block to progress on cross-sector partnerships (and, indeed, perhaps even the post-2015 project itself).
- **Accountability:** Lack of trust is one of the key bottlenecks currently limiting the progress and potential of cross-sector partnerships. Strong accountability mechanisms are needed to provide the short- to medium-term safeguards necessary to bridge this trust gap.

Before looking at these four areas, it is important to touch on the issue of partnership terminology. The term *partnership* is used in post-2015 discussions inconsistently and interchangeably to refer to a wide range of very different arrangements; there is now a 'need to be much more specific about what the fuzzword "partnership" actually means'.[3] There is a danger that this fuzziness may not only diminish the quality of the post-2015 discussion, but also result in a missed opportunity to construct and agree on a useful way forward for cross-sector engagement and cooperation.

Many types of partnership have been mentioned (or meant) in the post-2015 discussion to date (including in targets 17.16 and 17.17 of the proposed SDGs[4]). Terms are generally used quite loosely: *Global Partnership* is used primarily in MDG and post-2015 circles to refer to the *intergovernmental* Global Partnership for development. As a generic term it is also used to refer to any global partnership operating at the international level. *Capitalisation* is not used consistently, resulting in ambiguity. *Public-Private Partnership (PPP)* was originally used to describe legal (regulated), contract-based arrangements between a government and a business, most commonly to deliver public infrastructure. However, *Public-Private Partnership* is also used by some organisations (and sometimes within post-2015 discussions) to describe general, voluntary partnerships between government, civil society and business.[5] *Multi-stakeholder partnership* is another term in common usage: this is applied as a descriptor both for what World Vision defines as a cross-sector partnership (see below) and for global, MDG-era entities such as Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), for which perhaps *platform* or *fund*[6] might be a more accurate description of the primary function performed.

The main subject of this paper, as of World Vision's previous papers on business and post-2015, is *cross-sector partnerships*. In the absence of commonly agreed terminology, World Vision has adopted The Partnering Initiative's definition:

> A 'Cross-Sector Partnership' is an ongoing working relationship between organisations from different sectors, combining their resources and competencies and sharing risks towards achieving agreed shared objectives whilst each also achieving their own individual objectives.

Cross-sector partnerships involve two or more actors from government, business (and/or other private-sector actors), civil society, and/or UN agencies. These partners typically leverage their respective core knowledge, skills, resources and assets in such a way as to create solutions which none of the partners could have developed on its own. For example, governments might provide technical, policy and regulatory expertise; businesses their product and/or service development, delivery competencies, and value chains; and civil society organisations (CSOs) their understanding of, relationship with, and last-mile access to local communities.

A common language, terminology and definitions for partnerships would be a very helpful step forward.[7] Greater specificity during discussion as to what type of partnership is being referenced would also make a big difference. In particular (and in the absence of agreed terminology), it is not helpful to use the term *partnership* or *PPP* without further qualification. Simply specifying the level of operation of a partnership – local, national, regional, global – would also be a step in the right direction.

Similarly, non-specific references to *business* also have the potential to cloud debate. In the discussion on financing, for example, it is not always clear whether the business (or private sector) referenced is a finance institution or a 'real economy'[8] corporation (such as a fast-moving consumer goods company). Yet this distinction can have a significant bearing on the issues being discussed: a financial private-sector organisation (for example, a bank) –

and a partnership therewith – plays a very different role in the development space than a 'real economy' private-sector organisation/business that is partnering with a government and CSOs to help implement that government's national development plan.

In the post-2015 process to date, *business* has also, more often than not, in the consultation phase at least, meant multi-national corporations (MNCs). The post-2015 process (in contrast to the process that resulted in the MDGs) has recognised business as a development actor, stakeholder, and legitimate interlocutor in the international development space. MNCs have made valuable contributions to the process, but there is a shared feeling (including from leading MNCs[9]) that more input is needed to the discussions from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – and, World Vision would suggest, also the larger, domestic companies from developing countries[10]; the 'voice of the South' needs to include its business sector. For example, in developing countries SMEs play a key role in achieving inclusive economic growth and job creation.[11]

Support for a weaving business in a World Vision programme area, Laos ©2014 World Vision

SMEs and larger domestic companies must also be viewed as potential partners in cross-sector partnerships and supported by governments and other development partners to be able to contribute effectively to development outcomes. Cross-sector partnerships will be critical at all levels, including at the local or community level (whether in urban or rural settings). At this level the expression of the private sector can be of any size. SMEs (despite the relatively limited time and resources at their disposal) and larger domestic companies (which can include subsidiaries of MNCs) can be both partners and/or beneficiaries of cross-sector partnerships (for example, as suppliers to partner companies who may be looking to increase the local content in their supply chains).

It is, of course, recognised that it can be challenging to identify effective points of engagement and representation with the SME sector in some developing countries. The sector may lack the formal organisation same-sized businesses enjoy in more developed economies, as well as suffer from a lack of resources and capacities for engagement in the relevant processes and in cross-sector partnerships. However, domestic industry associations (such as Chambers of Commerce), cooperatives, UN global compact local networks, international aggregators such as GBCHealth, and MNCs through their value chains, can all play a key role in reaching, educating and enabling the participation of these domestic business actors.

2. (Re-)defining the 'rules of the game'

Substantive change in the international development space has been evolving for a number of years. The rise of South-South cooperation; the emergence of business as a mainstream development actor; the recognition of the interdependence of economic, social and environmental prosperity; the increased emphasis on domestic resource mobilisation; the development of new financing instruments; and the focus on sustainability in the post-2015 process are just a few of the key shifts.

These changes (and no doubt more to come in the next few years) are here to stay, because change is needed. The SDGs represent a very different agenda from the MDGs. The post-2015 vision of a world in which no one is left behind has highlighted the fact that the international community cannot simply carry on with existing development practices – and financing approaches – and expect to achieve the (rightly) ambitious targets that it is hoped will be agreed in the SDGs.

Much of the (potential) change being discussed in the post-2015 process is hugely exciting, but like all change it is accompanied by some discomfort and disquiet. Whilst some of the established narratives and practices of development are being placed aside, the new ideas are not yet anchored in a revised common understanding and agreement of what constitutes good practice in development. Neither have corresponding accountability frameworks yet been established for these new actors and new practices.

Furthermore, the lack of a common language and understanding across all stakeholder groups around these new development actors and practices is aggravating a mutual lack of trust. Many of the concerns that have been voiced during the post-2015 process appear to have their basis in a fear of conflicts of interest. For example, there are concerns that actors are promoting economic growth models and/or conflating these with social development policies for their own benefit and at the expense of the poor, or concerns that donor governments are championing international private-finance sources so they can reduce or renege on their own commitments on ODA and/or as a way to retie their aid; or concerns that, as traditional funding becomes more scarce, CSOs' activities are becoming driven more by donor requirements than by the needs of the communities they serve. Such lack of trust is a serious threat to the negotiation task on which the post-2015 process is now embarking – not just specifically on targets related to cross-sector partnerships, but also more broadly with the respect to the wider set of goals and targets and indeed how they will be resourced (see 'Cross-sector partnerships and financing' below).

World Vision suggests that part of what is needed to address these issues is a commonly agreed (including by non-governmental actors), updated set of principles defining what constitutes good practice in aid and development *in the context of the SDGs and new models of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnering*. Such principles would reiterate and reinforce the foundational role of government as the primary duty bearer for fulfilling the rights and basic needs of its most vulnerable citizens, and also build on the principles endorsed as part of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development

Cooperation (and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness). However, these existing principles are likely to need adjusting and/or augmenting to meet the contemporary needs of the SDGs; for example, in order to establish and undergird best practice for different modalities of partnering and/or of financing (and with regard to non-traditional actors, in particular). This work – of designing, supporting and ensuring accountability for all actors of these new 'rules of the game' (principles) for the SDGs – could form part of the remit of whatever monitoring and accountability architecture is created for the delivery of the SDGs. These new principles could also be incorporated into existing commitment frameworks for non-governmental actors, for example, being added to the commitments made by participants in the UN Global Compact.

In 'Getting Intentional', World Vision recommends a design for a single, government-led, multi-stakeholder platform in each developing country, covering all of the SDGs and enabling the establishment and execution of cross-sector partnerships in support of the government's development priorities, and incorporating the main tenets of aid and development effectiveness.[12] Such platforms could provide national-level mechanisms for embodying these new principles for effective, SDG-era development.

World Vision with Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan enabling the participation of children in the United Nation's multi-stakeholder consultation process 'My World Survey', New York ©2014 World Vision

3. Cross-sector partnerships and asymmetry of power

Asymmetry of power exists between organisations in all partnerships, at all levels.[13] Which partner is on the 'wrong end' of the imbalance of power will vary from one partnership setting to another.

The well-intentioned actor with power will consciously manage how it projects its power in order to respect the necessity for 'equity' – a key principle in establishing genuine partnership.[14] However, organisations vary in their awareness, understanding and capacity to manage their own or their partners' use of power, and major problems arise when power asymmetry is abused, whether intentionally or otherwise. Unfortunately, there are many negative examples – real or perceived – to draw on in the history of international development, and these inevitably influence stakeholders' responses to concepts and labels such as 'partnership': 'In the name of "partnership", poverty-focused development outcomes have often been severely distorted and compromised by self-serving motivations on the part of more powerful donors, by the unilateral imposition of severe policy conditions on developing country governments and implementing partners.'[15]

In the post-2015 process, also, concerns have been expressed in relation to asymmetry of power and *inappropriate* influence by a range of organisations including those from civil society, but particularly by powerful corporations, in the context of access to the development of government policy and priorities and to multilateral processes.[16] On the other hand, as companies become major contributors to the implementation of governments' development plans, they may understandably feel they should be treated as true partners in development,[17] and consulted as such, rather than be treated simply as implementers, contractors or 'cash cows' for pre-generated solutions. At the same time, CSOs may feel that they are being side-lined in the rush to embrace business and its resources.[18]

Partnering capacity building workshop with World Vision staff, Dhaka ©2014 World Vision

Strong targets on capacity building will be a critical part of a successful post-2015 agreement. Targets are needed to ensure the necessary investment is made in building the capacity of organisations from *all* sectors such that they are 'fit to partner' – including having the necessary capacity to mitigate power asymmetry. World Vision suggests that Target 17.9 in the SDGs (as currently proposed[19]) should incorporate a multi-stakeholder perspective to capacity building. Whether in regard to multi-stakeholder consultations or cross-sector partnerships, capacity broadly – specifically in relation to managing power asymmetry – is lacking across all major sectors (business, civil society, governments and the UN) and at all geographic levels. Some governments and many CSOs lack the capacity to engage effectively with business and the opportunities offered by cross-sector partnerships. The unfortunate consequence is that companies (with good intentions) can struggle to find local or national partners who are willing and able to work with them to make sense of how to leverage their business activities to maximise sustainable development returns. Contrary to popular belief, progressive and well-intentioned businesses *prefer* to deal with governments and other stakeholders who have strong capacity (*including* strong contract-negotiation capacity); it is only in partnerships where all partners are able to bring their best to the table that game-changing opportunities can be realised.[20] In Fragile States specifically, World Vision also encourages companies to contribute (as members of cross-sector partnerships) to building capacity more broadly in, for example, national public institutions and domestic business sectors. This could constitute part of a long-term business investment strategy in those countries.

Building capacity to be fit to partner

World Vision is already involved in many cross-sector partnerships, including those with the local private sector. Nearly 2,000 frontline staff members are working in a programme to build and strengthen their capacity for brokering collaborations.[21] They are full of praise for the approach: 'It builds ownership, capacity and contribution of resources'; 'the response to our new approach has been overwhelming. When we did our action planning collaboratively, people were saying "I can provide this", "I can provide that". This wasn't happening before.'

Citizens, especially the most vulnerable, also need their capacity built so that they can collaborate with others and hold more powerful actors to account. Accountability generally – and social accountability in particular (see 'Cross-sector partnerships and accountability' below) – are fundamental to mitigating risks related to power asymmetry. And CSOs have a critical role to play in this respect.

Also very important to managing the real risk of undue influence in multi-stakeholder processes (such as post-2015) is transparency about who is consulted and on what basis accreditation is awarded. Further, provision should be made for those with the least resources in order to ensure that they can engage on an equal footing with other stakeholders. Cognisant of the potential for inappropriate influence, such processes should also include mechanisms that ensure appropriate action when breaches occur. These are critical ingredients if multi-stakeholder processes are both to stand up to external scrutiny and to avoid further undermining mutual trust.

4. Cross-sector partnerships and financing

Many would argue that finance was always going to be the make-or-break discussion of the post-2015 process, and there is a tangible sense now of all eyes turning to Addis and July's Financing for Development conference. Significantly more funding is needed to deliver the SDGs than for the MDG; the SDG agenda is much broader in scope (including, for example, goals on climate and peace) and more ambitious in its vision (for example, 'zero', rather than partial, goals). Traditional financing sources are not only insufficient in *scale* to fill this gap, they are also insufficient in their philosophy and design to deliver the long-term goal of sustainability that the post-2015 agenda has set itself – for example, presumably a country's development cannot be described as sustainable if it is dependent on others' 'hand outs'.

The fact that there are many new and innovative financing propositions on the post-2015 table should be a cause for celebration – that it might, actually, be possible to find the funds needed to realise the SDGs – but it is also currently a cause of concern for many. These concerns might be described in simple terms as falling within one of two interlinked categories: (1) what is going to happen to ODA, and who is going to win/lose? (2) what exactly are these new funding models being proposed, and who is going to win/lose? The fears around conflicts of interest discussed above (see '(Re-)defining the 'rules of the game" above) appear to be fuelling both these debates. And, in their turn, the concerns around financing are fuelling some of the other concerns covered by this paper (such as those around asymmetry of power and accountability) and could disable further constructive discussion on subjects such as partnerships.

For example, concerns about the use of ODA to leverage or catalyse private finance (some of which, such as the potential 'retying' of aid, are shared by World Vision) are in danger of colouring attitudes towards cross-sector partnerships for development when, in fact, the current proposals around blended or leveraged finance appear to refer most often to specific arrangements (very different to cross-sector partnerships), such as legally contracted PPPs (for example, for major infrastructure projects) and/or complex financial investment models. Continuing disquiet amongst some stakeholders about business – both as a development actor and more generally regarding the harmful behaviour of some MNCs in developing countries – also taints some views about the cross-sector partnership approach. Some of this disquiet might be ideological, but some is based in a fundamental lack of understanding of or conviction in the potential of for-profit entities to contribute to good development practice. At the same time, many other stakeholders in government and civil society have been happy to explore such shared-value concepts.[22]

In turn, and in contrast, World Vision is concerned that a wholesale rejection of leveraged finance approaches could leave some of the essential needs of the most vulnerable unmet. Government, business and civil society working together in partnership can make vital breakthroughs in provision of essential goods and services to the poorest, where the short- to medium-term market or product entry/development costs are prohibitive for any one actor alone. (It should be noted that the use of more innovative approaches to subsidies –

such as loans or equity – are preferable in these cases, in World Vision's view, to straight public grants.) Also, market-based solutions (such as sustainable, inclusive business models) developed in cross-sector partnerships, to supply products and services, applied in a middle-income context could 'free up' aid funding to address the needs of those at the very base of the pyramid – that is, increasing the financing available to help the most vulnerable.

It is important to stress, however, that these new modalities of financing need to be recognised as *additions and complementary to*, not *substitutes for*, more traditional donor sources of ODA (and debt relief) – at least, in the medium term – and the critically important area of domestic resource mobilisation. All developed countries should, therefore, recommit to meet both the 0.7 per cent ODA target by specified dates and the 0.15–0.20 per cent commitment to the least developed countries (LDCs). It is concerning that the OECD's [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's] *2014 Global Outlook on Aid*[23] reports that 'CPA [country programmable aid] to LDCs and other LICs [low income countries] is programmed to decrease by 4% from 2014 to 2017, leaving two-thirds of the LDCs with less aid in 2017 than in 2014'.

Although now over a decade old, the following statement from The Monterrey Consensus (2002) still holds true today as we enter the SDG era (as it did for the MDGs): 'ODA plays an essential role as a complement to other sources of financing for development, especially in those countries with the least capacity to attract private direct investment.…For many countries in Africa, least developed countries, small island developing states, and landlocked developing countries, ODA is still the largest source of external financing and is critical to the achievement of…internationally agreed development targets.' The percentage of ODA to fragile contexts and most vulnerable groups should be increased continuously over the medium term, while middle-income countries (given their more market-based and less risky economic profiles) increase their use of newer financing mechanisms to meet their own needs.

With regard to domestic resource mobilisation, World Vision welcomes the current momentum and inclusion in the post-2015 framework of measures to ensure companies make full and proper contributions of tax and notes that developed countries also have responsibilities on this issue. Further, World Vision calls for all countries which are rich in natural resources to sign up to and achieve compliant status on EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) and that those governments have budget allocation and accountability mechanisms in place that ensure that natural-resource revenues fund post-2015 priorities benefiting the most vulnerable.

With regard to *private* financing, it is important that this is subject to the same principles of aid and development effectiveness as public financing. Given the significant changes that are currently unfolding in development financing, World Vision believes new 'rules of the game' need to be defined for the SDGs as to what now constitutes not only *good* practice in development, but also good practice in *financing* development (see also '(Re-)defining the 'rules of the game" above). Such principles would clarify both priority areas for ODA spending (for example, the universal provision and protection of basic services and rights, social protection floors and/or other areas where the risk profile is not compatible with some private financing models) and also the acceptable parameters of new financing approaches such as blended and leveraged financing (including policy coherence, additionality, assessment of both comparative and specific impact, transparency and accountability, and safeguarding against tied aid).

Finally, given the complexity of this new financing landscape, World Vision recommends that a specific fund be established for the capacity building of LIC governments/institutions, encompassing the fields of public, private, domestic and international finance. This would support targets 17.1 and 17.9 in the proposed SDGs[24] and could include a substantive contribution from international private-finance institutions.

As part of the Typhoon Haiyan Response, Word Vision, the local government, a UN Agency, and a community-based organisation sign a Memorandum of Agreement, Philippines © 2012 Eugene Combo Chris Lete World Vision

5. Cross-sector partnerships and accountability

As described above (see '(Re-)defining the 'rules of the game''), it is suggested that the shared understanding of what constitutes good practice in development is currently in transition. Substantive emphasis is being placed on new modalities of development cooperation, and there is sense that, for some, the development space is starting to feel uncomfortably complex and crowded. At the same time, trust between the very actors of whom these new demands of cooperation are being asked is, in general, very low.

When trust is low, risks and costs are perceived to be higher, reducing the likelihood of collaboration. Lack of trust is, therefore, one of key bottlenecks currently limiting the progress and potential of cross-sector partnerships. Strong accountability mechanisms are needed to provide the short- to medium-term safeguards necessary to bridge this trust gap. More evidence on the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness, of all types of partnerships in delivering development gains is also needed,[25] not only from an accountability perspective, but also to capture the learnings and potential best practices. Another area that needs particular attention, within the broader frame of accountability, is governance.[26] Concerns around governance include fears that the role of the state could be undermined by some types of partnership arrangements.[27] For example: 'Existing partnerships have expanded outside of the purview of intergovernmental oversight, without regular and effective participation by Member States'[28] (referring to UN-business partnerships).

World Vision suggests that if it is to be sufficiently rigorous, the monitoring and accountability framework for the SDGs must include participatory monitoring and accountability measures for partnerships at all levels.[29] Indeed, this is a precondition if the full promise of partnerships is to be realised. Without strong accountability, lack of trust in cross-sector partnerships – including their ability to manage power asymmetry and diverse interests – will continue to be a stumbling block. It is also important to stress, however, that such accountability mechanisms need to be proportionate; if the cost of meeting accountability requirements rises too high – and this could be the case for organisations from any sector – then potentially beneficial collaborations will fail to materialise.

Accountability mechanisms for cross-sector partnerships should recognise three dimensions: the individual accountability of each partner; the external accountability *of* the cross-sector partnership to citizens, donors and other stakeholders; and the internal accountability *within* a cross-sector partnership (that is, between partners).[30]

- The individual accountability *of each partner*: given existing deficits, there is considerable scope for all development actors to improve their accountability. In the first instance governments themselves must meet the highest standards of accountability. Social accountability mechanisms that can equip government and citizens to work constructively together are a critical component for improving performance on essential services[31] (these mechanisms could also be extended to include holding business to account on their promises and performance). For both CSOs[32] and companies,[33] reporting is a key component, and World

Vision recommends that sustainability reporting should be mandatory for companies above a certain market capitalisation.[34] Companies should publish their commitments, actions and safeguards on the key principles of 'Do No Harm.'[35] Governments must also enforce business adherence to universal principles on labour, environment, anticorruption and human rights in, for example, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights[36] and the UN Global Compact's ten principles.[37] The role of government extends well beyond creating a positive 'enabling environment' for business (and cross-sector partnerships), not least to its responsibility to protect human rights.

Social accountability

World Vision is currently supporting more than 411 programs in 42 countries to implement the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) social accountability approach. Using tools taken from social audits such as community score cards and interface meetings, CVA encourages discussion and helps to transform the relationship between government and citizens. Ultimately, these interventions serve to improve public service delivery, track public expenditure and strengthen the accountability relationship.

- The external accountability *of* the cross-sector partnership to citizens, donors and other stakeholders includes tracking and reporting on measurable, time-bound commitments[38] and the impact of, and return on, public resources invested. Similar to the recommendations in the previous section, ideally there should also be established criteria for assessing proposed government investments in cross-sector partnerships, covering, amongst others, policy coherence, likelihood of impact, additionality and opportunity cost.
- The internal accountability *within* a cross-sector partnership, that is, between the partners in the partnership, is potentially a strong complement to external accountability. With clear standards and effective management and reporting mechanisms in place, partners can hold one another to account. CSOs can play a key role in this regard from *within* the partnership by ensuring that citizens, especially the marginalised, are well informed, have voice, and can encourage partnerships to deliver fully on their commitments.[39] Even before the partnership is formed, accountability can be greatly improved by a strong and transparent process for selecting partners. For example, World Vision recommends that all governments have due-diligence procedures in place to assess whether and how to engage with specific companies and CSOs.[40]

Again, strong accountability is key. To be effective, this will need to include an easily accessible grievance mechanism, and World Vision recommends incorporating an ombudsman function for this purpose. These grievance mechanisms could be housed within the global and national multi-stakeholder platforms proposed by World Vision in an earlier paper, 'Getting Intentional'. Strong multi-stakeholder platforms at the global and national levels could include mechanisms to integrate social accountability into the monitoring and review of partnership activities, for example, from third-party independent reviews and local citizen-generated data – especially from the most vulnerable. Such platforms should harness the data revolution for an accountability revolution by enabling visualisation and transparent measurement of partnership progress.

Citizen Voice and Action, Meeting of the Ashadeep Village Development Committee, India ©2014 World Vision

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper has reviewed, in brief, some of the common confusions and concerns that have arisen in the post-2015 debate around the role of cross-sector partnerships and business. With a view to facilitating progress in the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations, it has also offered a succession of reflections on how these concerns could be mitigated.

In conclusion, it is suggested that addressing the following three issues is particularly critical to advancing the debate on cross-sector partnerships and, in turn, to ensuring that the SDGs incorporate the goals/targets and the implementation architecture necessary to release the full potential of partnering:

1. **The need to develop a new, common agreement of what now constitutes good practice in development and development financing in the context of new models of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnering.** To address this, World Vision recommends the following:
   - that agreement and commitment are secured – including from non-governmental actors – to an updated set of principles defining what constitutes good practice in development in the context of the SDGs and new development models
   - that the common agreement includes principles defining what constitutes good practice in development *financing*
     - including ensuring that *private* financing is subject to the same principles of aid and development effectiveness as public financing
     - including clarity on both priority areas for ODA spending and acceptable parameters of new financing approaches (such as blended and leveraged financing)
   - that this work – of designing, supporting and ensuring accountability for all actors on these new principles of good practice for the SDGs – form part of the remit of whatever monitoring and accountability architecture is created for the delivery of the SDGs
   - that these new principles be incorporated into existing commitment frameworks for non-governmental actors
   - that governments (with donor support) create national-level multi-stakeholder platforms that, amongst others, embody these new principles for good practice in development.

2. **The urgent need for capacity building to ensure that all actors are fit both to partner and to hold one another to account.** To address this, World Vision recommends the following:
   - that Target 17.9 in the SDGs (as currently proposed) on capacity building incorporates the capacities needed to enable effective cross-sector partnering

- that a specific fund (including a substantive contribution from international private finance institutions) be established for the capacity building of LIC governments/institutions in the fields of public, private, domestic and international finance (in support of targets 17.1 and 17.9 in the proposed SDGs)
- that in Fragile States, companies invest as members of cross-sector partnerships in building the capacity of government/public institutions and domestic business sectors.

3. **The imperative to acknowledge and address the lack of trust between stakeholders in order to facilitate progress on cross-sector partnerships – and on the broader aim of development cooperation.** To address this, in addition to the recommendations above, which also help to undergird trust, World Vision recommends the following:

- that those responsible for SDG multi-stakeholder processes ensure the following:
  - transparency regarding who is consulted and on what basis accreditation is awarded
  - provision for those with least resources to ensure that they can engage on an equal footing with other stakeholders
  - a mechanism to ensure appropriate action when breaches occur
- that the monitoring and accountability framework for the SDGs include participatory monitoring and accountability measures for partnerships at all levels
- that CSOs invest in building citizen/community capacity in social accountability methodologies
- that all developed countries recommit to meet both the 0.7 per cent ODA target (by specified dates) and the 0.15–0.20 per cent commitment to LDCs
- that all countries rich in natural resources sign up to and achieve compliant status on EITI and put budget allocation and accountability mechanisms in place that ensure that natural-resource revenues fund post-2015 priorities benefiting the most vulnerable
- that the post-2015 framework include measures to ensure companies make full and proper contributions of tax and that developed countries meet their responsibilities on this issue
- that sustainability reporting be made mandatory for companies above a certain market capitalisation

Endnotes

[1] World Vision International (2014), 'Getting Intentional: Cross-Sector Partnerships, Business and the Post-2015 Development Agenda', Post-2015 Agenda Policy Paper. <http://www.wvi.org/united-nations-and-global-engagement/publication/getting-intentional-cross-sector-partnerships-0>; and World Vision International (2014), 'Reaching the Unreached: Cross-Sector Partnerships, Business and the Post-2015 Development Agenda', Post-2015 Agenda Policy Paper. < http://www.wvi.org/united-nations-and-global-engagement/publication/reaching-unreached-cross-sector-partnerships>

[2] The OECD define the private sector as comprising 'private corporations, households and non-profit institutions serving households'. <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=2130>. In this paper we primarily use the term *business* to indicate a primary interest in for-profit enterprises.

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[4] See UNGA (2014), *Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals*. <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E>. The two targets specifically related to partnerships are 17.16 and 17.17: '17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.' '17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.'

[5] Prescott and Stibbe suggest that these PPP forms be distinguished by referring to them as 'Regulated PPPs' and 'PPPs for Development'. See D. Prescott and D. T. Stibbe (2014), *Unleashing the Power of Business: A Practical Roadmap to Systematically Engage Business as a Partner in Development*, The Partnering Initiative. <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Fullreport.pdf>

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[7] A new multi-stakeholder initiative, the Partnering Alliance, has this as one of its objectives along with the development of best-practice reference standards for effective collaboration. <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/global-impact/the-partnering-alliance/>

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[9] Unilever (2013), *Private Sector Outreach, A Summary of Unilever's Programme of Private Sector Outreach on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. <http://post2015.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/summary-of-business-outreach.pdf>

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[11] John Humphrey, Stephen Spratt, Jodie Thorpe and Spencer Henson (2014), IDS Working Paper: 'Understanding and Enhancing the Role of Business in International Development: A Conceptual Framework and Agenda for Research'. <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2014/14440.pdf>

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[18] Statement by Brazil and Nicaragua to the 10th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2014). <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8538brazil7.pdf>

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