

## **COALITIONS: A PRACTICE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Without partnerships it would be impossible for social service organisations to take up the challenge of making a policy shift from fragmented, specialist services to developmental, integrated services. In the opening address at the International Council for Social Welfare Conference, the Minister of Social Development, Dr Skweyiya, emphasised that governments and organisations of civil society need to respond in a more co-ordinated and strategic manner to the widespread human poverty and decline of financial resources in many developing countries (Skweyiya, 2000:2).

At the foundation of partnership lies the reality of scarce and diminishing resources. Matube (2000b:1) supports the opinion that sustainable development can take place and be facilitated only in the context of resource mobilisation. According to the Business in Community Report, sustainable development means adopting an integrated approach and striking a balance between environmental, social and economic considerations (Matube, 2000b:8). According to this author there are various principles applicable to effective resource mobilisation for sustainable development of which partnerships are one example.

Although partnerships, networks and co-ordinated efforts in the Financial Policy for Developmental Social Welfare Services (hereafter Financial Policy, 1999) are encouraged for funding purposes, there are no clear guidelines as to how partnerships could be established and maintained. What is clear, however, is that each sector should contribute in areas where it has demonstrated itself to be advantaged.

In the Economic and Social Council Report (1997:17) the United Nations clarified these contributions as follows:

- Government continues to wield major responsibility for the wellbeing of society and for setting national development goals;
- organisations of civil society offer an opportunity for people to participate and to channel their efforts in an organised manner; and
- the private sector should be encouraged to recognise that its responsibilities for achieving a society for all go beyond activities motivated solely by profit. In addition its more active involvement in efforts to reduce vulnerability should be sought, particularly regarding the provision of technical assistance; training; mentoring; information technology; credit assistance and market information to assist micro-businesses.

In view of the lack of guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of partnerships, this paper is a response to the United Nations request to encourage the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate partnerships between government, the private sector and organisations of civil society (Economic and Social Council Report, 1997:17).

A continuum for the development of partnerships on various levels is presented and discussed in terms of a practice framework for sustainable development. It will be argued that partnerships between government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a sector cannot be regarded in the same way as partnerships within the NGO sector. The point of departure for this argument is based on the following suggestion from the United Nations: "Although partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society can yield positive results, caution should be exercised, since the power relations within and among the different sectors are unequal. All partnerships must value equality, transparency and attainment of a common goal" (Economic and Social Council Report, 1997:17).

The paper provides guidelines as to how a partnership between government and the NGO sector from an equal partner perspective can be built. An evolving partnership in practice, namely Consortium 2000, will be utilised as a case study to substantiate and explain the views in the discussion. As a point of departure, the concept "partnership" will be defined. Without a clear understanding of what a partnership entails and who the respective partners are, no meaningful partnerships for sustainable development can be established or maintained.

## 2. PARTNERSHIPS

Swanepoel and De Beer (1996:28) refer to a "stakeholder" or "role-player" in poverty alleviation as a person or an institution that performs a certain task. According to these authors, stakeholders may be classified into four main groups or sectors: public sector, private sector, non-governmental organisation sector and popular or community-based sector.

The public sector is represented by central and provincial government departments such as welfare; parastatals (semi-government organisations) that address specific sectors of development, such as housing and employment creation; and public sector enterprises that provide services like telecommunication, electricity or water.

The private sector consists of commerce and industry, factories, shops, banks and services like dry cleaning and motor repairs. The informal sector also falls within the private sector. While privately-owned enterprises in this sector are usually small, they are not regulated by laws and are poorly developed.

The non-governmental sector consists of organisations that are in no way dependent on or responsible to either the public or private sectors. NGOs are private, self-governing, voluntary organisations operating, not for commercial purposes, but in the public interest, for the promotion of social welfare and development, religion, charity, education and research. NGOs are heterogeneous and include a wide range of organisations, such as community-based organisations (CBOs) and mass-based organisations (MBOs). Examples of the latter would be civics, women's movements, church groups, youth organisations, service organisations and private foundations. The community-based sector can thus also be classified under the NGO sector. NGOs are based either in the formal welfare sector (that is, government-subsidised welfare organisations and religious organisations delivering welfare services, some of which are government-subsidised), or in what is popularly referred to as the informal welfare sector (organisations which are currently not government-subsidised). Swanepoel and De Beer (1996:28), however, emphasise that the community at large is the most important stakeholder in poverty alleviation, while Salamon (1995:59) concurs that the non-profit sector's real roots lie at the local community level.

However, the fact that the above-mentioned role players are stakeholders in poverty eradication does not automatically make them partners in a partnership. Building partnerships is a process that develops on the continuum from a lower level of collaboration to a higher level of intensity. In

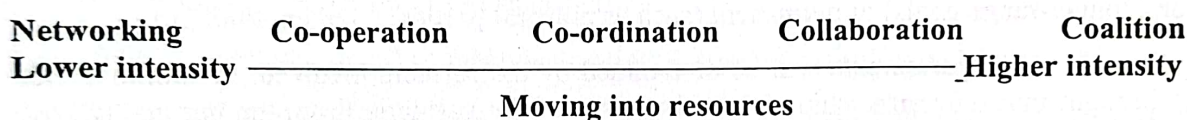
understanding this continuum, the success or failure of perceived "collaborations" or "partnerships" becomes clear.

### 3. FROM NETWORKS TO COALITIONS

The process of partnerships starts with networking, which represents the lower level of intensity of the continuum, and progresses to coalitions or alliances, which reflect the highest level of partnership intensity. Each of these levels has a role to play in the development of partnerships for sustainable development. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion of the continuum will be applied mainly to partnerships between government and NGOs and also partnerships amongst NGOs.

The following continuum for partnership development indicates that the higher the levels of intensity, the more resources are shared by the partners.

**FIGURE 1**  
**CONTINUUM OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**



*Networks* consist of individuals or organisations that share information, ideas, resources or services to accomplish individual or group goals (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). Networks are often an early step in building the capacity to develop and maintain more formal efforts such as coalitions or partnerships (CDA, 2000:9). For Swanepoel and De Beer (1996:22) networking means getting to know the organisations in the communities and to establish contact and maintain a process of sharing information and ideas. Through networking, it is believed, many of the problems arising from unco-ordinated action could be prevented.

*Co-operation* occurs where individuals or organisations associate to accomplish a common goal (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). It is concerned with exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit (CDA, 2000:12). Co-operation is therefore short term and informal. Although information is shared, individual authority is retained, resources are kept separate and no or minimal risk is involved (CDA, 2000:7).

*Co-ordination* means exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit and common purpose (CDA, 2000:12). Co-ordination applies where individuals or organisations work together to accomplish a common goal (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). If the goal is to avoid duplication of services, share resources or perhaps co-ordinate a joint effort, more structure may be necessary (CDA, 2000:9). More formal relationships apply and the focus is on long-term interaction. This requires some planning and division of roles. Individual authority remains, although with increased risk and sharing of resources (CDA, 2000:7).

*Collaboration* is the process whereby individuals or organisations share resources and responsibilities jointly in order to plan, implement and evaluate programmes for achieving common goals (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). Collaboration is more durable where the shift is from a separate organisation to a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. It requires comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels, with greater risk and

contribution of resources and reputation. Resources are pooled and results and rewards are shared (CDA, 2000:7). Exchanging of information, altering activities and sharing resources are aimed at enhancing the partners' capacity for mutual benefit and common purpose.

A *coalition* means that individuals or organisations work together in a common effort for a common purpose to make more effective and efficient use of resources. It is an alliance (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). The coalition is essentially a mechanism for increasing the power or leverage of groups or individuals. The object is to get more out of the coalition than is put into it (Smith & Bell, 1992:32). The point of departure is that "...situations, although difficult or impossible for the individual to overcome alone, can be dealt with simply and rapidly by acquiring the right allies". The demand for coalitions not only within an organisational context but also, according to the Harwood Group (1993:1), within community coalitions (where people and organisations work together) seems to grow continuously.

According to the *Social Work Dictionary* (1988:26), a coalition refers to "an alliance of various factions or ideological groups in a society brought together to achieve a goal". Alliances can be formed among influential groups or among less powerful groups in order to increase their influence. Coalitions may be ad hoc (organised to address a specific goal or single issue and expected to disband when it is achieved), semi-permanent (more formally organised around broader and longer-range goals) or permanent (such as political parties) (Barker, 1988:26).

The respective levels of partnership will be determined by the partners involved. In addition, the resources brought into the partnership dictate the status of the partners. From the perspective of poverty eradication and social development, there is no need for debate on the relevance of the partnership between government and NGOs. Salamon (1995:12) concurs: "Co-operation between government and the non-profit sector makes a great deal of sense both conceptually and practically. These two massive sets of institutions share many of the same basic objectives and have strengths and weaknesses that are mirror images of each other". To determine the level of partnership between government and NGOs on the above-mentioned continuum, the respective roles and status of government and NGOs respectively must first be clarified.

Regarding the public sector in general, Matube (2000a:3) draws attention to the government weakness that affects sustainable development. This conclusion was derived from the report from the Human Rights Commission, which requested the government to report on what action they have taken and with what results "to protect and fulfil the disadvantaged group's socio-economic rights". The report revealed that the government lacks the commitment, skills and capacity to deliver sustainable development leading to poverty eradication. This report correlates with the wide media coverage of unspent poverty alleviation funds in government, but in particular in the welfare sector. This is a matter of great concern, since NGO infrastructure is already in place to utilise available money for social service delivery.

The role of government as partner in development is enabling and facilitating, as is clearly indicated by the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:44): "An enabling environment will be created, including legislative and tax reform to access financial resources and to maximise the contribution of each of the parties. Government will mobilize additional development sponsorship for societal welfare programmes". Potentially, Government is in a position to generate a more reliable stream of resources,

set priorities on the basis of a democratic political process instead of the wishes of the wealthy, offset part of the paternalism of the charitable system by making access to care a right instead of a privilege, and improve the quality of care by instituting quality control standards (Salamon, 1995:49).

Regarding the not-for-profit or non-governmental sector the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:30) provides clear direction. Organisations in civil society will be responsible for direct service delivery, advocacy, information systems, accountability and participation and there will be co-operation in operational research. Organisations in civil society are particularly well placed to

- innovate and pioneer new services and programmes, which, if successful, could be replicated on a wider scale;
- identify local needs;
- respond speedily, appropriately and flexibly to local needs;
- promote grass-roots participation in decision-making and direct service delivery;
- represent their particular constituencies in structures such as policy-making and co-ordinating programmes, at all levels of government to ensure that interventions are appropriate;
- mobilise communities to take action to meet their needs;
- co-ordinate action at the local level;
- take advantage of economies of scale and
- monitor strategies aimed at achieving equity (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997:30).

In addition, voluntary organisations are in a better position than government to personalise the provision of services, operate on a smaller scale, adjust care to the need of clients rather than to the structure of government agencies and permit a degree of competition among service providers (Salamon, 1995:49). NGOs furthermore have a greater capacity to avoid fragmented approaches and concentrate on a fuller range of needs than families or individuals to treat the family. They also have greater access to private charitable resources and volunteer labour (Salamon, 1995:110).

However, "...to say that a strong theoretical rationale exists for government-non-profit co-operation is not, of course, to say that this co-operation has worked out in practice the way the theory would suggest. To the contrary, a relationship as complex as this one is likely to encounter immense strains and difficulties, especially given somewhat different perspectives of the two sides" (Salamon, 1995:49). The discussion of the practice example of the evolving partnership between the government and Consortium 2000 will illustrate this complexity.

For non-profit organisations the strain can be attributed to the tension between their service role and their advocacy role, on the one hand, and between their role as deliverers of government-funded services and their role as critics of government and private policies, on the other hand (Salamon, 1995:111). The main source of the strain and complexity in the partnership between government and NGOs is finance. In terms of funding, government officials have to exercise management supervision, ensuring a degree of accountability, and encouraging co-ordination when decision-making authority is widely dispersed and vested in institutions with their own independent sources of authority and support (Salamon, 1995:103).

On the other hand, within the existing pattern of government support three concerns prevail for non-profit organisations. First, the loss of autonomy or independence, second, vendorism, and, third, bureaucratisation or over-professionalisation, with a resulting loss of the flexibility and local control that are considered the sector's greatest strengths (Salamon, 1995:103).

Salamon (1995:105) argues that the notion that the non-profit sector as independent can be misleading. Financially, the sector is almost inevitably dependent – if not on government, then on

private sources. This, however, does not mean that their strengths do not outweigh this weakness and that they should not be respected as an equal partner. Regarding vendorism, pressure can emanate from private funders, in the absence of government support, to alter agency purposes. These funders frequently have their own priorities and concerns that may or may not accord with the priorities of voluntary agencies (Salamon, 1995:106). Regarding an undesirable degree of bureaucratisation and professionalisation in the recipient agency, research done by Salamon (1995:136) could not support the notion that professionalisation is associated with loss of interest in the poor.

The above concerns need to be contextualised in the reality of diminishing resources. The Ohio Center for Action and Coalition Development (1992:62) concurs: "Nonprofit groups today are facing more complex problems than ever before, and it often seems that resources are decreasing". Although finance is not the only resource needed to run social services, "...the importance of money to service organizations is obvious" (Ohio Center for Action and Coalition Development, 1992:62).

Welfare funding in South Africa has always been based on a subsidy system in which government is considered to be a funder and not a purchaser of services (Financing Policy, 1999:8). Inherent in this funding system was fragmentation, duplication of services (resulting in inefficiencies), a lack of resource capacity and physical infrastructure and weak inter-sectoral communication and collaboration. There is no doubt that a new dispensation and policy was urgently required to address this inefficient policy.

The Financial Policy (1999:4) is seen by government to be a key component of a developmental social services framework and is consequently regarded as one of the most important policy instruments for the fundamental transformation of both service delivery and its financing. The aim of the financing policy is "to rationalise welfare funding, to target beneficiaries and distribute benefits equitably, to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively, and thereby to correct injustices and imbalances brought about by the present skewed allocation of resources". This policy is linked to government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and has a period of five years to phase I, starting from 1 April 1999 with references to all the new applications for funding (Financial Policy 1999).

Although it takes time to phase in a new system, the new financing policy does not change the status of the government as partner when it comes to finances. During the past year, non-profit organisations have struggled for survival. NGOs are experiencing serious financial constraints and subsequent loss of manpower (that in some instances has resulted in closure of the organisation). All these result from the present government welfare funding policy, delay in paying out lottery money and curtailing of private funding resources. Although the state lottery is supposed to release money for social welfare, it is not yet contributing to this owing to a lack of distribution, monitoring and evaluation structures. The little money that was recently released as a once-off interim emergency payment could hardly make a difference to the demanding work of non-profit organisations. At the same time, civil society contributes less to direct welfare services and programmes, since it is assumed that the lottery tickets bought by the public will be their contribution to welfare. In addition, the state lottery also closed down such reputable income sources as scratch cards, which contributed millions of rands to welfare in the past. Ithuba Trust, an indigenous funder set up by South Africa to serve South African conditions, is a typical example, losing R20 million in annual income to the state lottery (Matube 2000a:3). It is acknowledged that government is certainly not solely responsible for financing of social services, but has the responsibility to "...mobilize additional development sponsorship for societal welfare programmes" (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997:44).

Government has certain legitimate expectations of non-profit organisations because of their financial accountability role. This accountability, however, may never be exercised from a dictatorial, controlling position. At the least it includes requirements for basic financial accountability in the expenditure of public funds and adherence to the purposes for which the funds are authorised. Beyond this, however, it is necessary to find a balance that protects the legitimate public interest in accountability without undermining the characteristics that make non-profit organisations effective partners of government (Salamon, 1995:113).

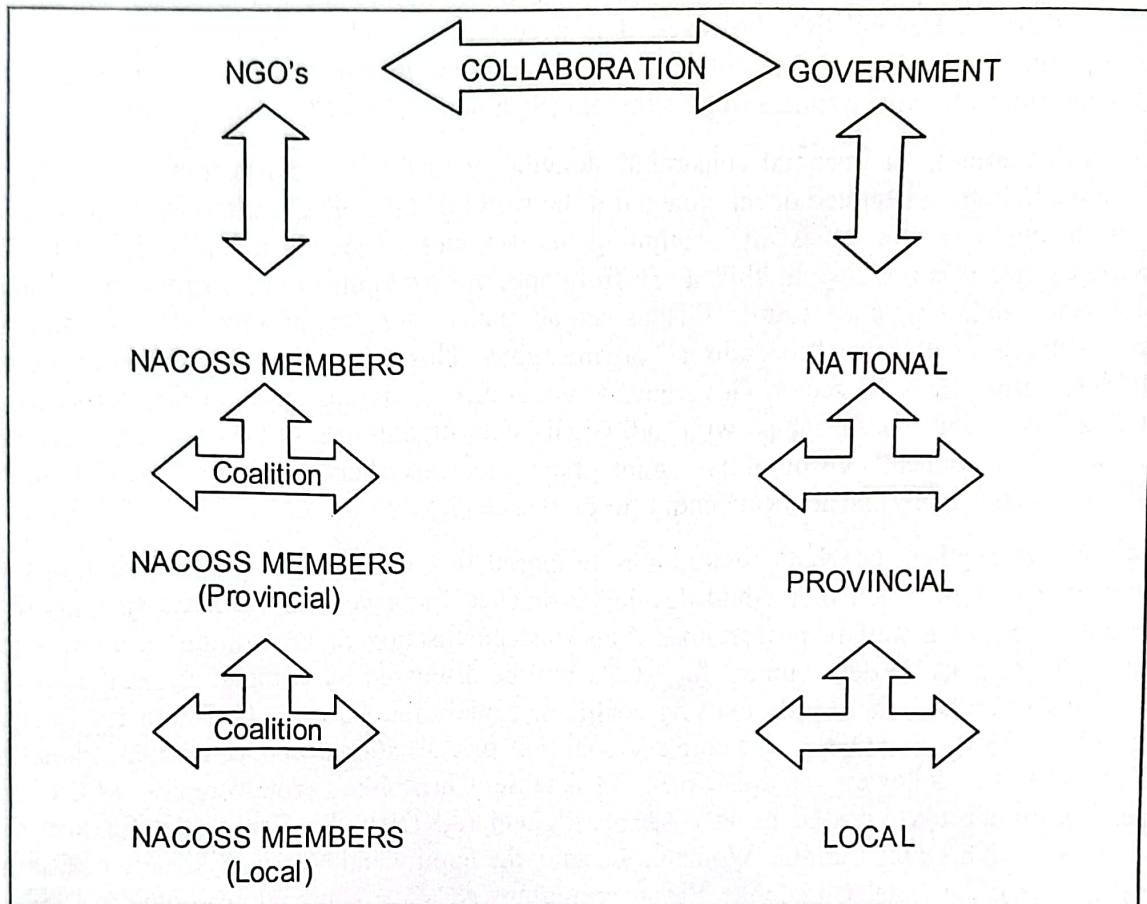
It is within this context of financial constraints, together with the demand to transform welfare services into a holistic, integrated developmental framework, that the NGO welfare sector in South Africa is facing a major crisis in continuing its services. The Financing Policy (1999) acknowledges that it is not easy to shift away from special development areas to integrated and holistic service delivery, and regards this as an alternative for organisations that create an integrated structure with other "specialised" organisations. This emphasises the development of partnerships within the NGO sector. Government cannot effectively engage the NGO sector as a partner if it has to build partnerships with individual NGO organisations. This will not only be contrary to the government's vision of having integrated specialised services, but will also weaken the NGO sector as a lobby and advocate entity for civil society.

To unite and strengthen the NGO sector, it is proposed that non-profit organisations build a coalition by means of which they could develop a practice framework to facilitate sustainable, holistic and integrative welfare programmes. The conceptualisation of a coalition as a practice framework for sustainable development for NGOs will be discussed by comparing the theory of building a coalition with an already existing coalition, namely the National Coalition for Social Services (NACOSS). NACOSS is a voluntary coalition of 20 national and provincial councils which includes the following organisations: Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging (ACVV); Algemene Kommissie vir die Diens van Barmhartigheid (AKDB); the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA); the Catholic Women's League; the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA); the Natal Christelike Vrouevereniging (NCVV); National Institute for Crime and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO); Ondersteuningsraad; Oranje Vroue Vereniging (OVV); the Salvation Army; the South African Council for the Aged; the South African Federation for Mental Health; the South African National Council for Alcohol and Drug abuse (SANCA); the South African National Council for the Blind; the South African National Council for Child and family Care; South African National Epilepsy League (SANEL), the National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCCPPD); Deaf Association for South Africa (DEAFSA); the Red Cross and Die Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF).

The majority of social welfare services in South Africa are provided by the more than 3500 community-based organisations that are branches or affiliates of NACOSS members. These services range from prevention, early intervention, statutory work and a continuum of care and development, and embrace all ages and conditions affecting women, older persons, the youth, children, families, drug abuse, disability, crime, HIV/AIDS, poverty and job creation.

In comparing the theory of building a coalition with NACOSS as an existing coalition, it will become evident in the following discussion that a distinctly different partnership is required within the NGO sector as opposed to a partnership between NGOs and government. In terms of the continuum of partnerships, the partnerships within the NGO sector should develop on the level of a coalition while the partnership between government and the NGO sector should exist on a level of collaboration. In terms of Consortium 2000 as an evolving coalition, the partnerships within the NGO sector and between the NGO sector and government can be illustrated as follows:

**FIGURE 2**  
**PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CONSORTIUM 2000 AND GOVERNMENT**



This illustration makes it clear how partnerships evolve on various organisational levels. Each national member has affiliates on the provincial and local level. Partnerships need to develop horizontally with other national NGOs and at the same time vertically with the respective affiliates. A successful partnership on the horizontal level, however, does not necessarily imply that the particular organisation has a well-established partnership with affiliates. In some cases there might even be disaffiliation. What is illustrated here is the complexity of the development and establishment of partnerships. To make an impact on sustainable development, national NGO partnerships need to become strong provincial, but even stronger local partnerships. In the same context government needs to clarify its partnership on the national, provincial and local levels. For the purposes of this paper, the partnership between the respective NGO levels and government should always be of a collaborative nature.

#### 4. BUILDING COALITIONS

Building coalitions can be regarded as a process consisting of various phases including bringing people together, formulation of a vision, setting goals, enhancing trust, determining the members, structuring and recruitment, support and maintaining the coalition and evaluation.

## 5. BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

According to Smith & Bell (1992:32), a coalition should be structured to involve all key players; choose a realistic strategy; establish a shared vision; agree to disagree in the process; make promises that can be kept; build ownership at all levels; institutionalise change and publicise success.

Coalitions come about because of a common problem and goal. Partners should begin by analysing the problem and asking what is to be achieved, who can help (or hurt) these efforts, what are the rewards for becoming part of a coalition and what action is needed to meet the objective (Smith & Bell, 1992:32). However, it takes a person (or small group of persons) to provide the impetus to bring a group together and start things moving. The initiating organisation will experience success in effecting collaboration if it can demonstrate the credibility of the employees and their commitment to collaborative efforts. Those who form the coalition must develop a loyalty to the core group that is strong enough to cope with competing pressures from which the respective organisations from which they come (Smith & Bell, 1992:32).

NACOSS, within the framework of the Financing Policy (1999), explored over a period of two years how it could contribute meaningfully to developmental services as a body corporate to create a synergy that cannot be achieved individually by the limited NGOs dealing with the vast needs in specific provinces. Planning in this regard resulted in a partnership plan, which was called Consortium 2000. A consortium can be defined as "temporary co-operation of several powers or large interests to effect some common purpose" (*Oxford Dictionary*, 1964:260). Within the continuum of partnership, a partnership as a consortium would be placed between co-ordination and collaboration since it does not entail forming a new structure. Since NACOSS is already a coalition, it is proposed that they call their partnership "Coalition 2000".

The Consortium 2000 plan is an initiative to contribute to the transformation of the welfare system in South Africa and develop a practice framework to implement policies such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the Financial Policy (1999) in a joint grassroots service programme for unserved communities. This initiative in itself is a great achievement for national welfare organisations. National Councils in South Africa have been severely criticised for not delivering at grassroots level, which has resulted in the questioning of the relevance of national councils or even in the disaffiliation of provincial or local service deliverers. This criticism, however, should be seen in the context of the need of formal welfare to provide space for NGOs. Currently, the Ministry of Social Development regards the formal welfare sectors as important role-players in executing the ten-point plan from a capacity-building point of view. The Consortium 2000 plan can therefore be viewed as a major step ahead for national welfare councils in building capacity on both a provincial and local level to render social welfare services.

## 6. A VISION SHOULD BE CONFIRMED

From a government-funding perspective, the respective categories of service delivery that will be financed in terms of the Financial Policy should be taken into account, namely direct services, policy, management, co-ordination and monitoring of services (support services) and capacity building, research and advocacy services (building an enabling environment). However, in whatever the category a coalition wishes to perform, the ultimate vision of the coalition should include sustainable development (1999:20). The core vision for Consortium 2000 is capacity building of unserved communities towards adequate service provision. to "...mobilise for a caring society with an anti-poverty focus".

## 7. GOAL SETTING

Failure to establish mutual goals and objectives is a major reason that collaborations fail. Coalitions rest on the principle that each person has something to offer. To achieve goals coalitions should plan how they want to meet them (Bell, Smith & King, 1992:1), and they should be set down in writing, since written goals are a commitment. The general goal of a coalition is the outcome of positive change in people and programmes, which is sustainable development. In developing sound goals the coalition provides itself with a road map that will enable it to address the issues of concern.

The overall goal of NACOSS in relation to Consortium 2000 is "to identify indicators of human needs nationally and to co-operate in responding collectively with available resources in meeting these needs". The programme would be piloted in the Northern Province.

## 8. ENHANCE TRUST

The most important role of the facilitator(s) building a coalition is to lay the foundation for the growth of trust as the partnership develops. Openness, informality and sharing ideas help create on-going relationships (Bell & Smith, 1992:37).

NGOs are encouraged to engage in joint ventures to provide services at grassroots level by sharing both manpower and finances. Within NACOSS, however, trust needs to be built on various levels, such as that between national councils, between national and provincial councils and between provincial and local service deliverers, or between national and local service deliverers where no provincial structures exist (cf. Figure 2). In addition NACOSS should build a relationship of trust with government. This is an ongoing process. Trust by grassroots organisations affiliated with national councils will be established only if there is a direct sharing of all applicable resources in an equal and fair manner and if provision is made for strategic leadership in terms of capacity building at the local level. The question, however, is how NGOs who are currently struggling to survive perceive their position regarding sharing their resources, specifically their finances. To take this risk of sharing necessitates building a strong vision and developing trust in partners.

According to King & Beckham (1992:41), forming a partnership requires teamwork, perseverance, co-operation and imagination. In addition, partners must develop a strong feeling of "we-ness," which implies talking in terms of "we" rather than "I". Trust is the most important ingredient in developing a cohesive group. Thus the first crisis facing most partnerships involves members' ability to trust themselves and each other. Trust will reduce the partners' fear of acceptance and support.

## 9. MEMBERS OF A COALITION

As has already been indicated, sustainable development implies resource mobilisation (Matube, 2000b:2). According to The Ohio Center for Action on Coalition Development (1992:62), the key in terms of resources is to look at the total resources, not only money. According to Matube (2000b:1), there may be a variety of resources upon which sustainable development is dependent and which can be grouped into human, physical and financial capital. The suppliers of these resources can in turn be grouped according to the public sector (government as national, provincial and local levels); private for-profit sector (business community at international, national, provincial and local levels) and the private not-for-profit sector (trusts, individuals, groups, section 21 companies, non-governmental organisations, civic organisations, labour movements, churches, professional bodies and training and educational institutions).

Collaboration begins with the selection of resourceful people who have experience in dealing with a particular issue and who understand the common goal relating to the communities with which they are dealing. This necessitates determining all the natural allies – individuals or groups who share the concern and support a similar position. These people should have the authority and power to influence change as well as the energy and enthusiasm for keeping the momentum alive (Smith & Bell 1992:33).

It has also been discussed and indicated in Figure 2 that NACOSS, as a body of national councils, has to constantly build its partnerships with its associations to enable it to serve the communities as effectively and efficiently as possible. This in itself requires strategic planning and implementation on a continuous basis. The relationship between NGOs working on the local level and their National Councils may be measured in terms of the readiness that was expressed to participate in the programme. If national councils do not operate on the level where they build the capacity of local service initiatives, they would not have a partnership with local service providers and therefore could easily be viewed as irrelevant.

To date activities within the consortium include sharing information with consortium members and their affiliates in the identified province(s). The staff employed by the NACOSS members and their affiliates working in Northern Province plan jointly to share their special expertise (in addition to their present responsibilities) in order to extend into the unserved area identified for this pilot programme.

With the launch of the Consortium the initial focus was to build and strengthen partnerships within – in other words, NGOs were building the partnership as a coalition. Subsequent to consultations with government, the delay in response from the Department of Social Development to launch the initiative shifted the focus to building the partnership between government and NACOSS. In terms of the continuum of partnership and the position of government as a partner, Coalition 2000 gave the government a status beyond that of a “collaboration partnership”. The expectation that the next step forward would be from government disturbed the equal status of the partnership. If the work of Consortium 2000 is developed in such a way that the government dictates whether and when it will continue, the partnership plan for the coalition needs to be revisited in terms of their vision and focus. As NGOs they need to continue building their own capacity within to strengthen their position as partner of government. In realising this, Consortium 2000 decided not to delay the programme for alleviating the targeted community’s social development needs any further. They now plan to develop their partnership with government according to the proposed continuum of partnership.

Through the initiative of Consortium 2000, government can purchase the capacity and services of those who render welfare services. Whilst the government can share human resource expertise, it is more from an enabling and facilitating perspective as opposed to one of implementation. The most valuable resource from government is seen to be that of finances, particularly money earmarked for grassroots capacity-building programmes such as those for poverty alleviation and lottery money. Matube (2000a:3) concurs that the NGOs’ economic force, commitment, skills and capacity are a known fact and that what they lack most is money.

## 10. STRUCTURE AND RECRUITMENT

The structure of a coalition may refer to the way in which the collaboration accomplishes its mission. The people who lead, participate in and eventually implement the activities of interagency initiatives affect the growth and development of joint efforts (Smith & Bell, 1992:32).

It is likely that the 20 national/provincial councils representing the membership of NACOSS; the affiliated 3500 NGOs as well as the national/provincial/local offices of Government welfare departments will ultimately represent partnerships. However, it is important to qualify these partnerships in terms of the continuum of partnerships, as has already been discussed. The NGOs' partnership could culminate in a coalition. The partnership with government, as a coalition, should be collaborative. The government as a facilitating and enabling body cannot be a member of an NGO coalition as a facilitating and enabling body. The coalition as a partnership between NGOs has to advocate for the people in need. Matube (2000b:3) concurs that coalitions are strong voices facilitating change in people's circumstances.

As discussed above, in building the coalition of NGOs, it is also important to remember that not all affiliations of national councils are necessarily in an active working partnership with their provincial and/or national councils. This calls for a definite restructuring of national councils to extend their tasks and functions to grassroots implementation through their affiliates. In doing so they should also fully support their associations with both manpower and finance. There should be a definite effort to strengthen partnerships within and, where they already exist, build on them in terms of the vision to take this joint programme into unserved areas.

The private for-profit sector should be an integral part of a joint programme such as Consortium 2000. There are many resources available in the private sector in terms of leadership, strategic programme planning and management. In order to create enthusiasm in the private sector, individuals from such companies should be partners with coalitions. Such partnerships, however, require clarification. If only finance is involved, a partnership might be on a different footing than when a partner provides more concrete resources such as management or leadership skills.

In order to involve the corporate world, existing programmes of consortium members can be utilised to market the relevance and success of local programmes and to indicate how these efforts can grow in a joint effort of pooling resources and services. Inherent to partnerships as a coalition is developing, testing and adapting programmes. One example is that of a people empowerment programme running on an ongoing basis to establish a baseline for programmes developed and designed for the needs of various target groups. Well-developed and evaluated programmes, financially supported by government and/or private funders, because they have proved to be effective, are needed to ensure sustainable development. There should be criteria for financing programmes that have been proved through impact assessment to be effective. This would guard against an annual repetition of putting together piecemeal programme proposals. Programmes for target groups such as children, women and the physically disabled could be standardised and adapted annually as needs change.

Regarding recruitment, the first thing to ascertain when working with another agency is what this agency is and does. Building upon existing efforts saves time and resources, and creates strong working relationships (Smith & Bell, 1992:33). This should be seen as important and should feature high on government's priority list to avoid reinvention and rather to utilise and build on the existing capacities of the NGO sector. Coalitions should be culturally diverse, which strengthens the coalition. Diverse coalitions will also be more successful because of support from the community they represent (Smith, Miller, Archer & Hague, 1992:60). Communities should be represented as partners in coalitions, since they are the most important stakeholders in such partnerships. In assessing the needs for a programme in unserved areas, the communities were also involved. According to the Harwood Group (1993:1) the demand for community coalitions, where people and organisations work together, seems to grow continuously. However, government, community and volunteer representation will bring cultural and gender diversity to the NGO-government partnership.

## 10.1 Support for the coalition

Formally organised coalitions have a governing board to establish policy and generate funding. Once the board has been established, it is a common practice to form committees to oversee the projects of the coalition. Once agencies have decided to work together, they should decide on whether their coalition will be primarily co-operative or collaborative in nature (Smith & Bell, 1992:33).

The social and political climate in a neighbourhood or community is the first factor likely to influence an interagency initiative. Involving key decision-makers gives credibility to the project. In order to gain sufficient political power to bring about change, coalitions need three vital weapons: information, numbers of people and widespread co-ordinated activity. Coalitions need information about what is or ought to be proposed, the implications of the proposal and the alternatives and forces on both sides of the issue (Smith & Bell 1992:32). This requires the active involvement of community leaders as well as the corporate business.

When a new programme is to be launched or the public is to be mobilised to action on a community need, an effective, comprehensive public relations plan must be developed. This generates greater support for and involvement in programmes and activities addressing the need. A new programme must be recognised and perceived as an asset to the community (Brahms & Griffiths, 1992:55). Consortium 2000 will have to develop a marketing plan based on the type of partnership with each partner involved, especially in terms of sharing or bringing resources into the coalition. Attempts to raise funds from the business world yielded two sponsorships that will facilitate the launch of the programme.

Progress in partnership building within the Consortium 2000 coalition includes a commitment by NACOSS members to work together as well as the expression of a genuine interest in moving beyond their own fields of expertise in order to serve unserved areas. In addition, they reflect flexibility in having had to diverge from the initial planning for the content of the programme as well as its financing. There has also been co-operation in drafting the service plan and in approaching the government for support. Although the partners in Consortium 2000 view their "openness to be led by the Government and their positive response to their suggestions" as progress, the parameters for this response should be very clear in terms of the partnership boundaries. The focus on accepting guidance from government should remain within the boundaries of a joint agreement on the areas of facilitation and enabling and should not result in being dictated to in order to qualify for financial support.

Government's willingness to provide information on the real needs in each area, guided by the poverty maps, is evidence of its role as facilitator and enabler. In addition, the national government attempted to speak to provincial personnel to ensure that the relevant people were informed and were motivated to buy into the plan. This included the head of department's financial sections, senior managers and regional managers. In return, the provincial departments expressed their receptivity and keenness, as well as the wish to co-operate in planning together. Consensus was reached that financial incentives and the provision of infrastructure support are imperative and must be developed. In addition, the planning for Consortium 2000 is known at every level of the Department and Ministry of Social Development and, recently, copies of correspondence have been forwarded to the parliamentary PORTFOLIO committee for welfare/social development.

Currently, all the partners of Consortium 2000, including government, have negotiated with the grassroots service renderers to prepare them for joint workshops, with the aim of furthering planning of the strategy for a joint programme to unserved areas. A meeting between NACOSS

and its affiliates in Northern Province has been scheduled. This will continue despite the fact that no further response has been received from the national department. In return, the provincial departmental representatives state that they are awaiting further direction from their national department. NACOSS, however, is determined to continue with the launch of the programme.

## 11. MAINTAINING THE COALITION

Essential to the maintenance of a coalition is sustaining the momentum. If successful coalitions are to be forged, working relationships have to develop between each member of the coalition and the various organisations must put the plans into practice. It is necessary for any collaborative effort to be as open as possible, to involve the broadest circle of agencies and organisations and to encourage collaboration around a common issue (Brahms & Griffiths, 1992:55). However, coalitions are a double-edged sword, with both advantages and disadvantages. Both should be weighed before a collaborative effort is embarked on. If the costs outweigh the benefits, collaboration should not take place (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26).

Effective coalitions seem to have a combination of elements that contribute to their success. Elements for success include common goals, communication, a belief that each member is important to the coalition, the opportunity to participate, ownership, delegation, efficient, effective meetings, process and shared or situational leadership (Bell & Smith, 1992:39). For Jackson & Maddy (1992:26) advantages include the most effective and efficient delivery of programmes, professional development, improved communication, elimination of duplication, increased use of programmes, improved public image, better needs assessment, consistency of information and increased availability of resources. These advantages could be regarded as components of and requirements for sustainable development.

Thirty interviews with civic leaders from across America's smaller cities identified twelve elements that contributed to their success. These elements could be clustered around three central ideas, according to the Harwood Group (1993:5). There is a need for *continuity*: A core group is required that keeps the process moving ahead, provides it with a sense of history and stability, and serves as the anchor for lasting networks for change. There is a need for *flexibility*: There should be a readiness to adapt to change and circumstance, to avoid rigid bureaucratic structures, and to set, then reset, expectations that make sense in these changing times. According to Smith & Bell (1992:34), flexibility is the essential condition of a successful collaboration. Goals should be challenged routinely, making goal reassessment an ongoing necessity. The most effective collaborations appear to be strengthened, not defeated, by disappointments and challenges. There is a need to look *outward (openness)*: Actively seeking new members with fresh perspectives, joining forces with existing and emerging organisations, and coming to understand the concerns of the entire community, recognising and tapping the full capacities of the community.

Coalitions, however, also have disadvantages. Some of these are turf protection and mistrust, slow decision making, limited resources, resources diverted from priority issues, assumed positions contrary to policy and a decreased level of co-operation among collaborators during a crisis (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:27). Turf protection and mistrust are complex issues that must be overcome. If collaborators do not trust their partners, they will not be open and receptive to new ideas. There will be no willingness to share resources and burdens (Jackson & Maddy, 1992:26). One obstacle is competition amongst partners for scarce resources instead of pooling them so that the combined effort becomes more effective.

The fact of government implies bureaucracy and, as priorities change with the socio-political situation, Consortium 2000 cannot regard government as a partner on a coalition level, but rather

on the level of collaboration. The sustainability of Consortium 2000 will be dependent on government for support and funding. The partnership exists because of the vision that partners can jointly reach out to integrate social services for communities and people in need. This is the vision that will drive the process and motivate the partially successful attempt made by Consortium 2000 to access money from the private sector. NGOs that are members of Consortium 2000 are accountable to the community and, as advocates for the community, cannot allow bureaucracy to impede the process and withhold services from people who urgently need them at grassroots level.

To maintain active partnerships as a united NGOs sector (Consortium 2000) with an influential partner such as government, there has to be constant reviewing of the existing partnership and how it could be maintained and developed. Partnerships should therefore constantly be built and developed within the NGOs themselves, amongst NGOs and between NGOs (Consortium 2000) and Government.

## 12. EVALUATION

Clark (1992:69) is of the opinion that evaluating and monitoring collaborative efforts are essential tasks in order to be successful in co-ordinating programmes. Evaluation efforts become more manageable when approached from two different view points. These include (1) evaluation of the collaboration process and (2) measuring the impact of programmes for targeted audiences (Clark, 1992:69).

In terms of the collaboration process of a coalition, potential areas of evaluation could include quality (training, continuity, involvement); comprehensiveness (people and organisations involved; increase in numbers; types of data bases and sharing of information); access and equity (equal access to collaboration efforts); information and advocacy (member organisations promoting each other's efforts, workshops, how the group serves as an advocate for issues in the community); cost effectiveness (duplication of services reduced; how the group has been able to access more funds); general questions (what worked well, major problems; unanticipated outcomes because of working together) (Clark, 1992:69).

Regarding the measurement of the impact of programmes for targeted audiences, there is still a considerable limitation in practice. The Financial Policy (1999) document refers to the development of norms and standards and the Developmental Quality Assurance instrument as two major components of development. However, these are not yet fully developed, which implies difficulty in measuring sustainable development. Matube (2000b:1) indicates in this regard: "The South African grantmakers, together with the Government, are yet to build a concerted and co-ordinated effort to facilitate measurement of impact of their donations on common beneficiaries". This is an area of concern for sustainable development, which can be taken up as a challenge by a coalition.

Quality control to the extent outlined in the Financing Policy (1999) is possible only with added manpower to government structures or if it is delegated to national/provincial councils and funded accordingly. The majority of national councils do have built-in mechanisms to control their quality of service and it would be cost effective to increase these skills in order to build capacity.

## 13. CONCLUSION

Sustainable development has to do with resource mobilisation. In view of diminishing resources for social and developmental services, the importance of partnerships for sustainable development is evident. Partnerships, however, have to be built on various levels. Successful partnerships

require the identification of partners, strengths and weaknesses of each partner determining the level of that partnership.

Although the partnership between government and the NGO sector is very important, it should not be over-emphasised at the expense of developing partnerships within the NGO sector. Government cannot have a partnership with NGOs on the same level that the NGOs have amongst themselves. Government is a purchaser of services, which places it in a different collaborative relation with NGOs. A strong, effective partnership within the NGO sector will ensure an equal partnership with government based on the strengths and weaknesses of the respective partners.

Government should facilitate an enabling environment for integrative social and developmental services, at the same time accounting for the distribution of finances in terms of the poor, diversity and equality. If government supports the facilitation, enablement and development of partnerships, they should in principle provide seed money for the investigation and building of such a partnership. These initiatives should be budgeted for and attended to as a priority. Finances, however, should be regarded as a means of achieving sustainable development and not as a power lever to dictate the partnership and NGO process.

In return members of the NGO sector should constantly build their partnerships amongst their own affiliates and within specialist areas in order to develop the capacity to lobby with government as advocates for the communities they serve. Although the partners in Consortium 2000 have progressed in their collaborative efforts, the respective partners should deliberately build and establish their partnership further. In terms of building a coalition, more planning still has to be done in terms of what resources will be shared or located and what risks would be taken to meet the needs of unserved communities. Although government is an important partner from a financial perspective in the development and rendering of integrated, holistic social and developmental services, a marketing plan for other potential funders must be developed. This demands commitment to and trust in one another because individual NGOs have to protect their own ground for survival. Clear consensus is necessary if they are to progress towards full collaboration. For this to happen, time should be allowed for trust building (Brahms & Griffiths, 1992:55).

Coalition 2000 should remind the government of their responsibility to facilitate opportunities for private funding. As a lobbying body the coalition ought to continue to ask government for access to lottery money for grassroots NGOs. For example, a coalition could put pressure on government to utilise indigenous funders such as Ithuba Trust, which has a ten-year clean record and the necessary leadership to distribute lottery money, provided their distribution policies are revised and brought into line with the Financial Policy (Matube, 2000a:5). Although collaboration and resource development are ultimately more important than money, the importance of finance for sustainable development cannot be overlooked. At the same time, government ought to budget for initiatives such as Coalition 2000 in order to establish and maintain partnerships.

For their part, coalitions could build a policy framework that included databases of programmes based on the needs of the communities they serve. They could develop long-term financing policies for these programmes as opposed to an annual recycling of programme financing. Such a practice framework should also include impact measurements founded on well monitored and evaluated principles to develop sustainable programmes. They could facilitate and co-ordinate research in collaboration with academic institutions. The implementation of such a policy framework would impact on policy development and analysis. Integrated programmes could be developed for all the focus groups of service delivery. They could be refined as evaluation was taking place. Programmes would thus be recognised by public and private funders as reputable and would gain support.

Coalitions demand good leadership, strong commitment and understanding of the dimensions of diversity. Ongoing personal learning and mentoring would acquire value, empowering individuals and encouraging others to do so as well. If coalitions take up the challenge for sustainable development, the words of Matube (2000a:5) summarise what it would take from a partnership: "Sustainable development can be both easy and difficult .... Development is about individuals, groups, organisations, families and communities. It refers to attitudes, relationships, partnerships, economics, environment and infrastructure. It refers to commitment, skills, capacity and ideas. It is about time, although timeless. It demands creative stretching of scarce resources and hope. It is a continuous learning process and not for cowards".

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