

Partnership Development Policy

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RISDA-Bangladesh

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Table of Contents

1. Policy Statement.....	1
2. Objective of Partnership Policy	1
3. Partnership principles	1
4. Types of Partnership	2
5. Scope of Partnership.....	2
6. Management of Partnership	3

1. Policy Statement

RISDA-Bangladesh (“the Organization”) understands partnership as a working relationship based on shared objectives, rewards and risks. This Partnership Policy defines why and how the Organization works in partnership with other organizations, which implies a joint conception of programs and projects, a shared commitment to contributing resources and mutual accountability.

This document provides the guiding principles, general framework and relevant tools which illustrate the key features of our partnering process. As such, it does not include detailed operational procedures, since every partnership occurs within specific circumstances and is highly context-specific.

2. Objective of Partnership Policy

The partnership Policy of the Organization aims to actively participate in and promote partnerships and alliances at local, national and international levels with organizations with which it has shared aims and values. The Organization always promotes partnership with like-minded individuals, groups or institutions that willingly work together for the fulfilment of the agreed objectives or purposes. The relationship is based on shared values, principles, responsibilities, resources, decision making and a long-term commitment. In this partnership, there is a culture of negotiation, influencing and being influenced. The partnership of the Organization is a mechanism of working jointly in collaboration with others with specific responsibilities and accountability to maximize the impact of interventions.

3. Partnership principles

We realize that to achieve more results the Organization needs to partner with organizations, networks, institutions and groups with whom we share our passion and interest. Partners with whom we can design, act, learn and work better together. The Organization always expects to collaborate with other organizations in order to contribute to lasting social changes. The partnership principles are underpinning:

- a) **Mutual respect and listening:** Partnership building is an evolving process. To build trust, partners need to treat each other consistently with respect, appreciate each other’s differences and challenge each other where collaboration may be inequitable. Partners should agree together on how all major decisions should be taken, as well as implement and report their work together. They should understand each other’s points of view.
- b) **Knowing yourself and your partner:** Before entering the partnership, both parties should get to know each other as well as possible. Partners must always maintain a good understanding of each other’s purpose, values, strategies, objectives and key staff – and the work they do.
- c) **Clearly defined objectives for your relationship and non-negotiable:** The partnership should have a clear purpose that all partners agree on and understand. Partners must agree on what they want to achieve by working together, on the roles that they play in the partnership and on some basic rules for working together.
- d) **Sharing responsibility and risk:** Partnerships require partners to be mutually accountable for achieving mutual goals and for their actions and behaviors. Each partner should commit to carrying out specific activities and ways of working. These are often best spelled out in written agreements but may also be established through other mechanisms, depending on the purpose of the partnership. Partners should also share the risks arising from the work they do together to achieve their mutual goals, rather than expecting any one partner to bear most of the risks. “Do no harm” principles should be applied when assessing risks.

- e) **Learning from each other and striving for mutual growth:** Partners should take the opportunity to actively learn from each other and to strive for continuous improvement of their efforts and in their relationship. Partners should understand each other's different skills and competencies and how these can contribute to achieving partnership goals.
- f) **Good judgment:** The staff of the Organization should use good judgment in how they apply these principles and guidance. We should make sure that our procedures and approaches are adapted to the size and skills of each partner. They should also be appropriate for the operating context, the scope of the partnership, and the level of risk.

4. Types of Partnership

Types of Partnership may be categorized as follows:

4.1. Strategic Partner: A Strategic Partner is an organization with which the Organization establishes a formal collaboration agreement with the aim of achieving common strategic objectives in the medium to long term. The relationship is formalized through a multi-annual Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement and may involve diverse forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.)

4.2. Project/Program/Activity/Initiative Partner: A Program/Project/Activity/Initiative Partner is an organization with which the Organization establishes a formal, more short-term agreement, with the aim of achieving specific common objectives through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.).

5. Scope of Partnership

There are various types of organizations with which the Organization may build partnerships. These organizations are categorized as follows:

Community-Based Organisations (CBOs): It includes local groups of girls, boys, youths, women or men (formal or informal). CBOs are responsible for volunteer work while implementing projects and programs, the Organization will provide capacity building and resource support. The Organization supports CBOs to influence others and to hold duty bearers to account and provides protection and resources.

Local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): They are central to a community and to society's capacity to address social issues. They will work as co-implementers or organizations may implement on behalf of RISDA. There is a focus a view on building a stronger civil society in the country. We consider doing this in collaboration with other partners the organization may have. The Organization provides financial resources, partners provide local knowledge, human resources, and expertise. The Organization develops a strategic partnership with other local NGOs for resource mobilization and joint implementation.

Government institutions at central and local levels: Government institutions are implementing different projects with the support of NGOs at central and local levels. The organization seeks strategic and project partnerships with government institutions. The Organization also implements projects of government institutions.

Corporates/private sector institutions for shared value and influencing partnership: It includes national and multi-national companies, small and medium enterprises, and business associations. The Organization recognizes that business entities may and should play an important role in the promotion and protection of Human Rights. As such, we entertain the prospect of collaborating with corporate sponsors who comply with the mission and vision of the Organization.

International NGO: Generally the **International NGOs** work in Bangladesh as Fund Managers. They mobilize resources from all around the world. They are working with local and national NGOs for implementing projects and build the capacity of the local NGOs. We have always scope of strategic and project partnership with INGOs.

Global, bilateral and multilateral institutions: We focus to increase our reach or provide resources that the Organization doesn't have e.g. UNICEF provides infrastructure, the Organization provides training for teachers. We work together to address marginalized issues. We have always scope of strategic and project partnerships with global, bilateral and multilateral institutions.

Coalitions/networks/alliances: Groups of organizations that are formed to achieve a common goal. Their purpose is often to improve advocacy, mutual learning, and information exchange among member organizations. They may have different levels of legal formalities, such as governing bodies, missions, legal registrations, membership requirements, etc. One example would be networks of child-centered organizations.

Consortium: Groups of organizations formed to achieve a specific, common one-time goal. For example, it may be formed in order to access grants. It may have different levels of legal formalities, such as governing bodies, missions, legal registrations, membership requirements, etc.

6. Management of Partnership

This section describes the different steps of the partnership management cycle of the Organization.

Step 1: Define the area of interest and map stakeholders

The Organization defines the initial scope and preferred intervention areas by identifying geographic, thematic and strategic priorities of the organization and mapping stakeholders. The availability of funding sources, such as existing or future grant opportunities, or potential sponsorship base, is also taken into consideration.

Step 2: Identify and approach possible partners

In this step, the Organization assesses the viability of specific partnerships through a contextual analysis (areas of interest and stakeholder mapping). The following questions are explored:

- What are the most important criteria for selecting partners, with respect to the specific program/project/activity/initiative?
- Does the funding source/donor come with specific conditions attached (for example, specific grant or sponsorship requirements) which may have a bearing on our choice of partners?
- Is there any capacity or other gap? What technical skill set must the partner have in order to fulfill its responsibilities?
- Do we have existing partners that fit the selection criteria?

In selecting potential partners, it is important to engage in dialogue with them through joint meetings and project-site visits. The following are key questions that should be addressed in these discussions:

- Do we share a common vision for achieving positive and lasting changes in the lives of underprivileged people?
- Are our values, principles and work methodologies compatible?
- Would partnership enhance our respective organizational goals and give added value to our work?
- Would partnership create positive opportunities for future organizational development?
- Can our mutual expectations for partnership be realistically met?

Step 3: Define scope and objectives jointly

In this step, we define the principles and ground rules for partnership. The following are key questions that should be addressed in this regard:

- What is the purpose and what are the objectives and success indicators of the partnership?
- What are the deliverables and expected results?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each party?
- What would be the decision-making process?
- What are the key milestones during the partnership?
- What type of engagement is there from other stakeholders?
- What type of monitoring and periodic evaluation will there be of the program/ project/ activity/initiative?

Step 4: Formalize partnership

Once both parties have accepted the program/project/activity/initiative proposal, the partnership will be formalized through the signing of an agreement. In the case of a Strategic Partner, a framework agreement will be signed prior to signing a specific program/ project/ activity/initiative agreement.

Step 5: Plan joint implementation and capacity building

This step marks the beginning of the program/project/activity/initiative implementation. Potential capacity or other gaps should be reviewed (technical and financial, human resources, political influence, etc.) and a capacity development plan should be designed and implemented jointly.

Step 6: Implement periodic monitoring and evaluation

Program/project/activity/initiative implementation should be accompanied by periodic monitoring and evaluation (both technical and financial) with the aim of guaranteeing accountability and mutual learning. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism may take different forms, such as a joint monitoring committee, project-site visits, formulation of technical reports and training sessions. The following are key questions to be addressed during this step:

- Are we on the right track in terms of achieving the desired impact?
- Are we on the rights track with respect to what was set out in the agreement?
- How well are we doing in terms of executing the proposal? Are any adjustments needed?
- Are we adhering to the agreed principles for the partnership?
- What can we do to make our partnership even stronger and more effective?

The agreement may be terminated according to the particular terms established in the agreement signed by both parties, for instance in the case of a breach of the contractual terms and conditions.

Step 7: Conduct final evaluation and reflect mutual learning for defining the following steps

The final evaluation should help us determine the following actions to take with respect to the partnership:

- **Closing:** involves implementing exit strategies.
- **Continuing:** involves continuance of the program/project/activity/initiative, after improving it based on acquired learning.
- **Scaling up:** involves expanding or reproducing the program/project/activity/ initiative, while improving it based on acquired learning.

The following are key questions to be addressed during this step:

- To what extent have the expected long-term objectives been achieved and what explains this level of achievement?
- To what extent have the parties lived up to their assigned roles and responsibilities in the partnership?
- Has the partnership been significant in improving the lives of children and has it added value to each organization and its respective work?
- Have both parties adhered to the agreed partnership principles and effectively tackled the challenges/obstacles encountered along the way?
- What have we learned and how can we apply this learning?
- Is it desirable to continue the partnership? If so, how can we make the partnership stronger and more effective?