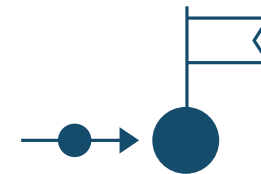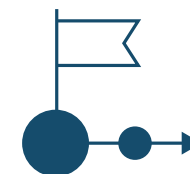MSP Success Factors

Phase 1
Initiation

Phase 2
Design
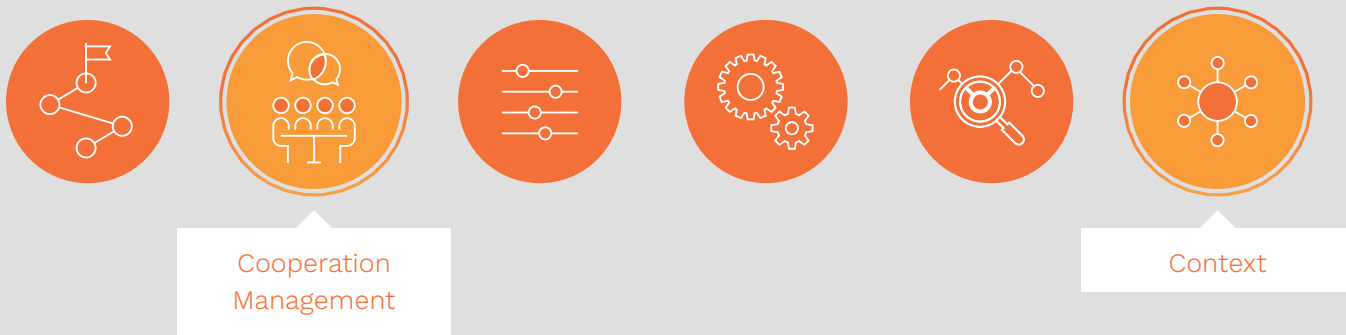
Phase 3
Implementation

Phase 4
Further development
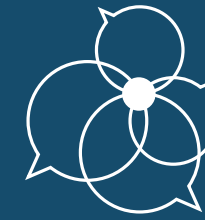
Phase 1: **Initiation**

The aim of the first phase of a (prospective) multi-stakeholder partnership, or MSP, is to develop a clear understanding of the problems and involve the key stakeholders. This includes systematically integrating the relevant decision-makers and, in particular, potential target groups in partner countries. In addition to identifying the challenges in detail and clarifying whether or not the problem can be dealt with effectively through a partnership, the initiators must analyse the context and the views of the relevant stakeholders, and outline the planned approach. The key task in Phase 1 is to get people involved and generate support for the project. In order to ensure that the partnership can function, a core group of key and committed stakeholders should be formed around the initiators to get the partnership up and running. This core group is responsible for creating a space for dialogue and cooperation and for coordinating the engagement process. The first phase is not about developing formal structures. Rather, stakeholders should take plenty of time for informal exchange and building relationships, since this paves the way for the future success of the MSP.

Literature: Brouwer et al. (2015): 26-43; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 29-39; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 15-32; GIZ (2015): 18-19

Success factors

Cooperation Management

Context

= Particularly important in phase 1

Phase 1
Initiation
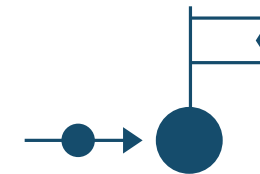
Phase 2
Design

Phase 3
Implementation
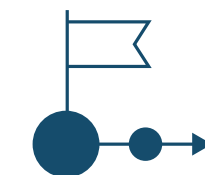
Phase 4
Further development

Phase 2: **Design**

Phase 2 is concerned with designing a common roadmap and identifying initial agreements. Partners agree on common goals, indicators for success and a vision of what the partnership can change. They should also establish and clarify the roles of individual stakeholders, including who should bring what resources to the partnership. This should be set down in writing if possible – e.g. in the form of a memorandum of understanding. The second phase lays the foundations for the involvement of partners and the formal structuring of management, decision-making and communication processes. This creates the conditions necessary for effective implementation in Phase 3.

Literature: Brouwer et al. (2015): 26-43; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 29-39; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 15-32; GIZ (2015): 18-19

Success factors

Common strategy & future planning

Process management

= Particularly important in phase 2
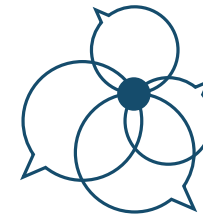
Phase 1
Initiation
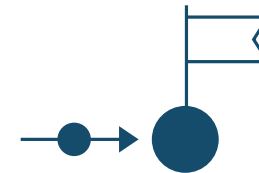
Phase 2
Design

Phase 3
Implementation
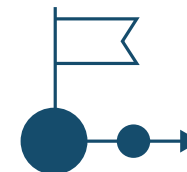
Phase 4
Further development

Phase 3: **Implementation**

In Phase 3, the multi-stakeholder partnership enters implementation. This is where the defined objectives are flexibly implemented based on the agreed roadmap and roles. And it also includes creating space for reflection and learning processes based on an institutionalised monitoring system. If it becomes clear during implementation that conditions have changed, key partners are missing or results chains are not working, stakeholders can revisit the planning process in Phase 1 or 2 described above at any time. For effective implementation, it is vital to establish financing for the MSP, as well as structures for decision-making, management and communication. In addition, stronger public relations and stakeholder management is necessary in order to generate broad general interest in the topic and the commitment of partners. The partnership should therefore budget for extra staff, in particular for a well-equipped secretariat.

Literature: Brouwer et al. (2015): 26-43; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 29-39; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 15-32; GIZ (2015): 18-19
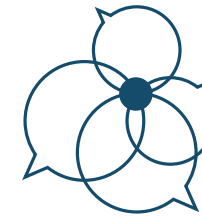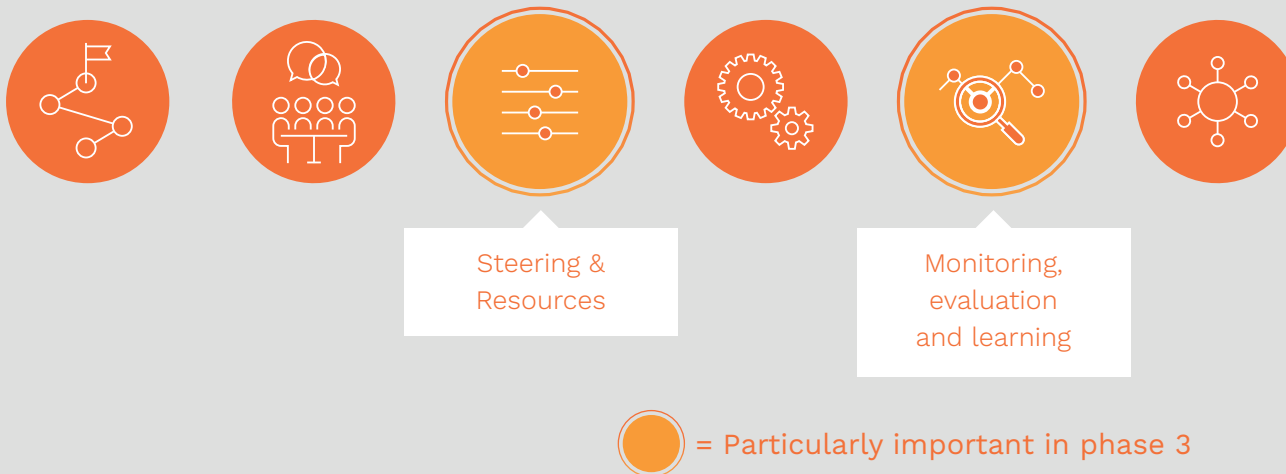
Success factors

Steering & Resources

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

= Particularly important in phase 3
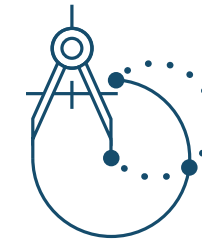
Phase 1
Initiation

Phase 2
Design

Phase 3
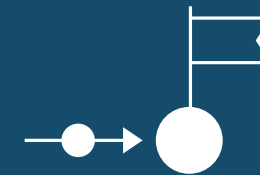**Implementation**

Phase 4
Further development

Phase 4: **Further development**

Phase 4 is about securing the long-term success of the multi-stakeholder partnership and identifying scaling-up potential. Initially, it is important to maintain momentum for the change process through transparent governance and communication. In addition, based on monitoring, evaluation and previous lessons learned, partners should consider how and in what direction the partnership might be developed in future. For example, it might be advantageous to broaden the impact of the partnership – e.g. by internationalising the process. An alternative would be to shift the focus of the MSP to a different set of problems, in order to increase its impact. If the partnership is to sustain its success, it is important for stakeholders to agree what needs to happen for the MSP to continue to carry out its activities. They should also make provision for handing over responsibility to others so as to enable new partners to join and in particular to strengthen local partners and their capacities.

Literature: Brouwer et al. (2015): 26-43; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 29-39; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 15-32; GIZ (2015): 18-19;
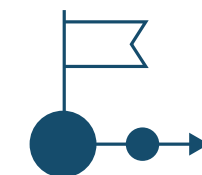
Success factors
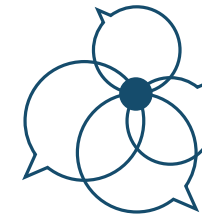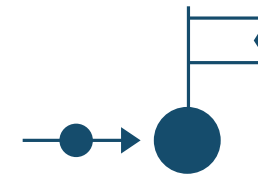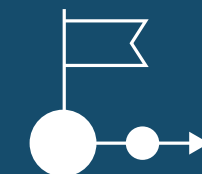

Phase 1
Initiation

Phase 2
Design

Phase 3
Implementation

Phase 4
Further development

Success Factors

Common strategy & future planning

Jointly developing clear objectives

Each stakeholder in a partnership has individual interests and objectives, which may differ from those of other partners. The challenge for a partnership is to agree on a strong common set of objectives. This means achieving a consensus on the mutual benefits of working together. Developing joint objectives and a vision outlining the transformational potential of the partnership requires both commitment and ownership. Agreement on results chains and milestones creates a solid framework for action and gives partners and third parties assurance regarding the common approach. Only by clearly defining strategic objectives are partners able to assess the investments that are needed in institutional capacity development and to critically reflect on these.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; BMZ (2014): 57; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 33; Drost & Pfisterer (2013): 10, 11; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 7; GDI (2015): 21 & 23, 23; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 18, 25; Tennyson (2011): 8, 27, 28

Common leadership and responsibility

The concept of leadership in multi-stakeholder partnerships is fundamentally different from that of individual organisations. Where decision-making in organisations is hierarchical, in multi-stakeholder partnerships decisions are reached through processes of negotiation. MSP leadership is defined as the willingness of partners to take responsibility for the joint project, share any risks and invest the necessary resources. So particularly in the initial phase, committed individuals are needed who can form a kind of 'core group' which drives the partnership forward and takes responsibility for its success.

Literature: GDI (2015): 22, 23; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 44; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 3; Tennyson (2011): 20

High-level support

The success of multi-stakeholder partnerships depends not only on the commitment of partner organisations, but can also be greatly influenced by external stakeholders. In the political context, in particular, public support through influential individuals can make an important contribution to the achievement of partnership objectives. High-level support helps to maintain political momentum for an issue and to mobilise both public and private resources. It is therefore important for stakeholders in a partnership to identify institutions for which their topic may be of importance and how to involve these in order to increase the partnership's effectiveness. In addition to external advocates, high-level support from within participating institutions is also essential. Without support from management levels within the partner organisations, the MSP will not be able to sustain its success.

Literature: Brouwer, et al. (2015): 30; GDI (2015): 22; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 44; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 17; Tennyson (2011): 20

Success Factors

Cooperation management

Involving relevant partners

Involving stakeholders from different areas of society in multi-stakeholder partnerships is not an end in itself, but should be about producing effective solutions to complex challenges. The aim of forming a multi-stakeholder partnership is not necessarily to involve as many stakeholders as possible, but more importantly to reach those partners who contribute to achieving the partnership's objectives. It is therefore crucial to begin by identifying the resources and knowledge required to realise these goals and the groups directly affected by the issue. Once the relevant stakeholders have come to the table, multi-stakeholder partnerships have enormous potential to bring about change by combining the core competencies of various sectors of society. On the other hand, the credibility of a MSP can suffer if key stakeholders are not involved.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 44-45; Tennyson (2011): 11

Respectful communication

The way partnerships function is often decided at the personal level. Only when people are able to work together constructively can formal relations between organisations be established. A key resource in partnerships is therefore the trust between those involved. Although this resource is not a precondition for initiating a partnership, it has a considerable impact on the long-term success or otherwise of the partnership. While trust can be developed through mutual respect and by dealing with each other on equal terms, it is quickly lost if there is no constructive and respectful culture of discussion. Since each stakeholder entering a partnership is aware of the common benefits of the partnership, it should be in the interests of all stakeholders to remain open to the views and approaches of the partners.

Literature: Brouwer, et al. (2015): 33; Drost & Pfisterer (2013): 8; GDI (2015): 35; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 45; PRC (2015): 52; Tennyson (2011): 11, 23-26

Establishing a common 'language'

Partnerships involving organisations from the same societal groups are often already complicated. So in multi-stakeholder partnerships the challenges facing the cooperation system are even greater. Partners in a MSP often come to the table not only with different sets of aims and problems, but also with a different organisational framework, identities, operating logic, terminology, etc. It is important to recognise and discuss these differences in culture and language in order to arrive at a common vision and shared understanding of the problem to be solved.

Literature: GDI (2015): 23; Tennyson (2011): 23-26

Success Factors

Steering & Resources

Neutral project secretariat

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are generally complex cooperation systems which call for a great deal of coordination and process management. Steering a MSP therefore requires a well-equipped secretariat –from the operational phase at the latest – with at least one person responsible solely for coordination and process management. While the size and functions of the secretariat may vary depending on the partnership, it is essential that this operates neutrally. Only then can internal and external credibility be established.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 35; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 7; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 45; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 24; Tennyson (2011): 26-27

Inclusive and transparent decision-making and steering structures

Cooperation on equal terms among all partners is a key part of multi-stakeholder partnerships. In practice, this means establishing structures that guarantee access to all decision-making processes for all stakeholders.

In order for steering in a MSP to function through processes of negotiation, these must take place on equal terms. All partners must therefore have at their disposal the relevant information for decision-making. This approach towards inclusive and transparent governance ensures legitimacy, trust, effectiveness and impact.

Literature: BMZ (2014): 57; Drost & Pfisterer (2013): 11; GDI (2015): 36; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 45; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 17

Sustainable resource mobilisation

Although multi-stakeholder partnerships offer enormous potential to address complex challenges, they may involve significant use of resources –in terms of time and human and financial resources. The volume and type of resources required by a multi-stakeholder partnership depends to a large extent on its objectives and scope. At the same time, many of the success factors listed here – such as steering, management and monitoring – can be calculated as cost items. Frequent checks should be carried out to ensure that

the available budget is sufficient to cover the activities and ambitions of the partnership. Ideally, the funding for a partnership should not come primarily from just one source as this can lead to over-dependence and power imbalances. In each case, any expectations that go hand in hand with financial support must be made transparent from the outset. Consideration should be given not only to the finance required, but also to the time and human resources needed. The organisations involved should look at whether or not their operational capacity matches the demands of their respective roles within the partnership. The provision of resources is important as a means of establishing trust, mutual respect and peer-to-peer cooperation; it also creates stability and continuity.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; BMZ (2014): 57; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 34; GDI (2015): 29; OECD (2015): 36; Tennyson (2011): 13

Success Factors

Process management

Implementation and results orientation

Consultation processes are always implementation-oriented and aimed at generating measurable results as a contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The focus on solutions is just as important as monitoring results. A clear focus on implementation and results contributes directly to the success of a partnership. Only when there is clear evidence of a direct relationship between resources spent and intended results, is it possible to ensure the long-term commitment of stakeholders to the partnership.

Literature: BMZ (2014): 57; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 44-46; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 25; Tennyson (2011): 27

Clear roles

An ideal multi-stakeholder partnership involves all stakeholders necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Each partner brings specific and relevant contributions. In order to guarantee effectiveness and identify asymmetric power structures, the partner's contributions and commitments must be clearly defined. At the same time, each organisation should take on the role which best suits its skills and capacities. In this way, skills are put to good effect. Joint identification of roles and commitments is an element of the steering structure and should be recognised as such in a written agreement – be that a contract or a memorandum of understanding (MoU). The clearer and more binding the approach, the easier it is for each party to demand accountability.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 33-34; Drost & Pfisterer (2013): 8; OECD (2015): 36; Pfisterer, et al. (2014): 8, 29; Tennyson (2011): 17

Transparent communications strategy

Continuous and cost-saving communication channels between process managers and partners on the one hand, and between individual partners on the other, have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the partnership. A key focus should be placed on transparency. For the full strength of a multi-stakeholder partnership can only be leveraged if there is a transparent exchange of information between all stakeholders involved. Transparent communication also enables all stakeholders to make informed decisions and meet as equal partners. Open communication helps to ensure that unequal power structures within the partnership can be resolved.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 33; Drost & Pfisterer (2013): 11; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 8; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 46; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 17, 24; Tennyson (2011): 26

Success Factors
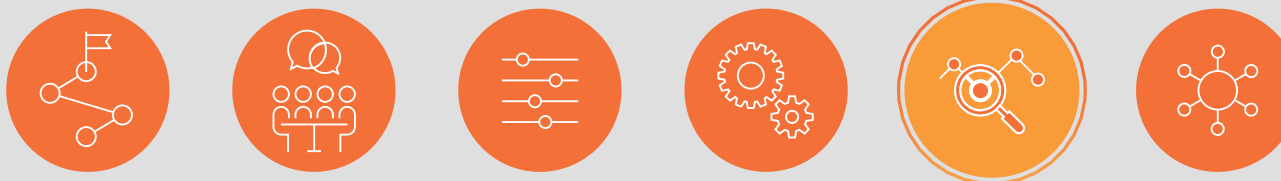
Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Process and results monitoring

Continuous monitoring of both results and processes within the partnership is essential in order to ensure progress, facilitate learning processes and thus guarantee the success of the partnership. Good results monitoring enables the MSP to rapidly identify new circumstances and challenges and adapt its strategy and approach accordingly. It shows how the work of the partnership makes an effective contribution to achieving defined milestones and in so doing ensures the partnership remains on track. At the same time, it is important to check whether the partnership itself functions correctly and observes established cooperation, communication and steering processes. Monitoring requirements vary according to the type of partnership.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; BMZ (2014): 57; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 38-39; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 7-8; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 47-51; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 25; Tennyson (2011): 26-27

Evaluation and reporting

Just as with continuous monitoring, evaluation is necessary to check that the partnership is oriented to results, and to facilitate learning. Reporting on results is important for internal stakeholders, external donors and the wider public. Open and transparent handling of outcomes is central to the partnership's legitimacy. At the same time, it is useful to tailor available information to the relevant target group. Whereas external donors prefer a formal report, for the general public it may be appropriate to provide an account with a more personal touch. Finally, evaluation and reporting ensure that the outcomes of a partnership are visible and therefore generate backing and support.

Literature: Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 47-51; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 25; Tennyson (2011): 27, 37

Learning processes and capacity development

Even more important than keeping track of progress and results through monitoring and evaluation is making this knowledge available and using it to inform learning processes. In addition, learning must be institutionalised as part of the monitoring process. The objective should be to convert both successes and failures into opportunities through participatory learning processes. In the context of changing conditions and challenges it is also essential to continuously identify capacities that are lacking – both at individual and organisational level – and to address these through capacity development measures. This increases the partnership's effectiveness and reduces problems that may arise as a result of unequal distribution of resources.

Literature: Brouwer, et al. (2015): 35; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 46; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 25; Tennyson (2011): 31

Success Factors
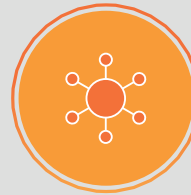
## Context

Global context

The social and political context is of key relevance for a MSP. If a MSP is to position itself appropriately, it is important to conduct a context analysis and to evaluate the activities of other stakeholders in the same field. Beginning with the planning phase, partnerships should align their strategy with this analysis in order to prevent duplication, competition and fragmentation among initiatives in the same sector. With the correct balance of global strategy and local implementation, a MSP can reduce the complexity of solutions to global challenges and at the same time enhance its specific contribution.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Brouwer, et al. (2015): 30; FSG & Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016): 8; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 46; OECD (2015): 36; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 29

Meta-governance

In order to ensure that different initiatives complement one another and make a contribution to society at an aggregated level, meta-structures are needed at both national and international level to provide a common framework. The central framework for multi-stakeholder partnerships is Agenda 2030. Every initiative to develop a MSP should be assessed in advance for its contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, it is useful for stakeholders to look to meta-platforms for a mutual exchange of ideas. The exchange between various multi-stakeholder partnerships promotes mutual learning and also increases the chances of achieving sector- and system-transforming results.

Literature: Beisheim & Simon (2016): 6; Künkel, et. al. (2016b): 46; Pattberg & Widerberg (2014): 28
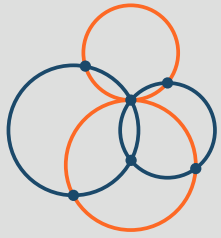
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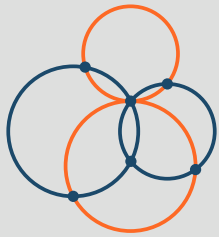
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