



Sahakarya

Working Hand in Hand with the Children of Nepal

A Report on Evaluating Plan Nepal Partnerships

July 2006

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Executive Summary

Objectives of the study

Plan Nepal initiated an analysis of its partnerships in Nepal that aimed to assess the existing premises of the relationship of Plan with its partners and suggest measures to transform and improve them on the basis of shared objectives, commitment, resources, and risks.

The study, conducted between May 15 and June 15, 2006, systematically planned

- a. To identify and analyse the salient features of the partnership between Plan and its partnering organizations in terms of their shared visions, goals, resources, operating systems, risks and commitment
- b. To document the experiences of Plan Nepal in promoting and managing the partnership both in terms of process and outcome.
- c. To assess the effectiveness of the partnership in achieving the shared goals and objectives
- d. To identify what Plan Nepal and its partners have learned with regards to challenges and opportunities in promoting effective partnership, particularly in the present situation of conflict
- e. To recommend practical measures to improve the present partnership relation leading to sustainable community-led development process.
- f. To analyze children's, women's and disadvantaged peoples participation in present partnership, and,
- g. To analyze the importance and scope of partnership in sustainable community development.

Approach and Methods

To meet these different needs while addressing the terms of reference, the report card method was adopted. At a workshop in May 2006, the structure of the report card was presented to key Plan staff. This was accepted, and the consultant team facilitated the identification of the key pillars of partnership.

The Report Card

The report card asks respondents to rate the quality of their partnerships on the pillars of mutuality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Each of these pillars have been characterized by 10 parameters that define the pillar, explore its reach beyond work dimensions alone, and attempt to track the influence of the parameters on the institutional environment that surrounds the partner. Five

parameters from each pillar were selected to evaluate the work of CBOs as partners, while all ten were used with regard to NGO partners.

The report card method offers the following advantages:

- scoring is an easily understood method, and ranking comes naturally to most persons
- the score is arrived at through participatory discussion and some degrees of common ownership of the analysis is generated in the process
- the score itself provides a platform for discussion on ways by which it could be improved, and if facilitated well, could extend to an exploration of strategies to improve the score

Questionnaire: From the master format of the report card, a questionnaire was drawn up for NGOs and CBOs separately. All partners of Plan were covered by this questionnaire, which offered clear guidelines on how to respond to the questions asked and parameters tracked. More than a hundred NGOs and about 120 CBOs were reached through this questionnaire. There was a 95% return on questionnaires that were sent out, which indicates a high degree of interest in the issue among partners.

Field visits were made to district teams of Plan at Biratnagar, Makwanpur, Birgunj and Nepalgunj. Each field visit of three days covered meetings with sets of NGO partners (usually at one of the partners' offices) and some community organizations and discussions with government officials at the district (typically the LDO, DEO and DPHO, although other officers were also present at some meetings). The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with NGO and CBO partners were structured within two-hour time frames.

National-level meetings: At the national level, the consultant team met selected partners of Plan and had free-flowing discussions with them. The team also met some government officers at Ministries who work in close collaboration with Plan. In order to broaden perspectives, a number of INGOs were met.

The analytical framework

To standardize and consolidate these different streams of ideas, the following steps were taken:

- Development of **report cards** for each district - this involved weighting the scores obtained from different sources for each parameter, and consolidating them to arrive at one summary score for each parameter and pillar

- For a better visual understanding of the information gathered, and of the role of scores in understanding partnerships, **crosshair diagrams** were developed for each pillar for each district.
- Report cards and crosshair diagrams were used to collect ideas under a **modified 7-S model**. The factors of structure, systems, strategies, staff and styles, and synergies were used as headings to group action elements identified during the discussions and to weave a set of conclusions and recommendations to the study.

Key Findings

Pillar analysis

Mutuality is epicenter of partnership process that fosters reciprocal relationship between two or more independent organizations. Having reciprocal relations implies that the elements of an equal power are present. The partnership evaluation process attempted to examine the mutuality as one of the four pillars which is factored into ten following parameters.

- Governing body's knowledge of Plan' support and other support to NGO
- Degree of commonality of vision and mission
- Governing body's knowledge of declared vision and mission of NGO and links with Plan mission and PU objectives
- Degree of participatory decision making about Plan Programmes
- Mutually agreed phase-in/out with Plan and other partners
- Extent of resource sharing with Plan
- Sharing of information about Plan and local partners
- Level of trust and confidence within teams about Plan's motives and ambitions
- Commitment to long term support from Plan
- Commitment to transparency about project support utilisation and internal working

This pillar attracted a weighted score of 5.4. In the light of popular criticism of INGOs being less mutual in partnership process, this score is considered very high. Critical examination of the scores of each parameter suggests that Plan could consider improving in following areas to increase the score in this pillar.

- Support partners in developing and internalizing vision and mission. In fact this could be an extension of, already initiated process of POCAP in Morang and Sunsari district, to other districts.

- Develop sets of processes for mutual agreement on phase-in and phase-out indicators,
- Raise awareness & understanding of NGO and more specifically of CBOs on their extent of resource sharing
- Both partnering organizations Plan and NGO/CBO should consider making deliberate attempt to ensure clean image to change popular perception of NGOs and INGO's lack of transparency.

Effectiveness is an umbrella term that refers to the extent to which the deliverables and expected impact of a Programme design have been successfully achieved. Among the pillars of partnership used in this study, effectiveness provides the substantive operational platform for the effective expression of the other pillars. If a Programme is not fundamentally effective, then the other factors reviewed here become irrelevant. For this study, the factor of effectiveness has been defined by the following parameters:

- Knowledge of selection criteria and process for selection of partners
- Degree of achievement of Plan Programme outputs
- Degree of achievement of Plan Programme outcomes and achievement
- Knowledge and internalization of CCCDA
- Extent of involvement of children at different stage of Programme cycle
- Extent of collaboration with VDC/DDC on Programmes for children
- Reach to target groups - Dalits, women, marginalized, indigenous communities
- Evidence of contribution to peace building process
- Extent of party political involvement of members of partner organization
- Effect of political intervention in Programme implementation

While this pillar has attracted the highest score of 6.0 among all the pillars tracked in this study, the scores hide a few disturbing facts:

- poor transparency on the part of Plan with regard to selection processes
- a general failure of partner teams to move beyond outputs to outcomes and impacts
- the strong output emphasis leads to a weak process understanding of child centred Programme development and its implementation (token involvement of children is one expression)
- the emphasis on target achievement also contributes to poor quality of measures for social inclusion
- weak networking with other stakeholders, especially government, indicates an over-dependence on Plan resources, and a failure among partners to extend their spheres of influence and action outside of project frames

In general, fairly high effectiveness scores have been attained because of robust Plan monitoring systems, but these have come at the cost of depth and sustainability of achievement (and also mutuality) through the involvement of key stakeholders in the field.

Efficiency Efficient partnerships not only deliver on results agreed in the project design but also do so with regard for the quality of resource use. This is possible when partners have internal mechanisms that can back project delivery and track manpower, finances, quality control and schedules. Further, efficient partners also seek to optimize resource use through coalition building with like-minded agencies. Efficiency is also expressed in the degrees of credibility and visibility attained by partners in the community. The relationship between partners and Plan teams and alignment of values across them through personal relationships can lead to more efficient project management. For this study, the pillar of efficiency has been defined by the following parameters:

- Evidence of the existence and use of a human resources plan, an articulated strategy for manpower management
- Existence and use of financial management systems backed by a manual and specialist personnel, with a good fund utilization record
- Time management - completion of targets in time
- Quality of achievement of meeting targets
- Degree of success in building alliances through membership of networks (thematic, solidarity) and links with government
- Alignment of Plan activity with larger child development efforts at the district level
- Perception of the community towards the partner organizations and teams
- Degree of credibility of Plan and partner
- Degree of visibility of Plan and partner at community level
- Attitude and behaviour of Plan and partner staff towards each other

In summary, an analysis of the scores for this pillar provides the following insights:

- Project partners - whether NGOs or CBOs- tend to invest minimally in internal systems and structures, and this reflects elsewhere in low scores for sustainability. Plan's focus on output achievement has not been matched by a commitment to partners' institutional development.
- However, even the selective adoption of Plan procedures supports quality achievement and timely delivery of promised outputs. This promotes the credibility of partners and Plan with communities, and their visibility too.

- Even so, the volume of Plan's support tends to discourage partners from building bridges with other stakeholders, especially the government, or to look for leveraging opportunities.
- An important factor that could affect efficiency is the inherently unequal relationship that governs contacts between Plan staff and partner teams. The perception of partner staff as subordinates cannot be healthy for the development of true and sustainable partnerships.

To consolidate this process of community investment, Plan will have to support CBOs to replace, over time, the work that NGOs currently do. For this, assistance with institutionalization is critical to sustain morale and to carve spaces for them within the network of agencies that work for social change in the district. Community patience with CBOs may wear out in the future, given the fresh opportunities expected to open to them with the restoration of peace. Manpower available to CBOs on a voluntary basis could dry out as people from communities link up with larger markets and use their time in more profitable ways. Most CBOs who partner Plan have been promoted by Plan for the purpose of delivering a PO. Not all of them necessarily represent the intended right holders or beneficiary groups. Over time, a strategy to progressively include and involve directly those members of the community who need support in the decision-making and management of the CBO, must express itself.

Sustainability pillar aims to examine the conditions that ensure "self-propelling" of the process or approach at the community level on withdrawal of external support. In other words, it could be defined as institutionalization of the process or approach at the community level, which is clearly linked with the institution building of different partner organizations also. Institutionalization of partner ensures a strong driving force to steer the process, which is expected to be an effective and efficient mechanism that ensures continuation of the Programme in long run. Hence, this pillar is examined from two different dimensions of sustainability - Programmes and institutions. The pillar is divided into ten following parameters in consistent to other pillars.

- Participation of community representatives in governing body
- Succession policy and second line leadership
- Established systems for HR and financial management
- Capacity to manage funds over time
- Clear fund raising strategy with proposal development skills
- Quality of work with government
- Contribution to and integration with District Development Plans
- Quality of links with other district and national agencies
- Withdrawal/phase-out strategy

This pillar attracted a weighted score of 3.7, which is much lower than the scores obtained on the other pillars. Considering popular criticisms of NGOs not being sustainable and are unable to self propel the Programme being implemented in partnership process, the score still could be considered very high. Upon critical examination of each parameter, the score suggests that both NGO/CBO and Plan could consider improving in following areas to increase the score in this pillar and make the process more sustainable.

- It will be worth attempting to integrate & institutionalize Plan's systems within partner organizations, which will help partners to be more effective with full ownership over the system.
- Both Plan and NGO/CBO could consider making deliberate attempts to align with government work and ensure quality.
- Plan could make use of the existing networks of the big national NGOs having partnership relationships with Plan and foster horizontal partnership among partners at local level. In fact Plan has already initiated this process with a few partners and is expected to continue with others as well.
- Plan should consider revisiting existing capacity building and institutional development support to NGO/CBO, not limiting it the project and Plan requirement.

A district wise overview of the pillars

Summary Partnership Report Card					
	Mutuality	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Avg
Morang	4.8	6.9	6.6	3.8	5.5
Sunsari	4.8	6.9	6.6	3.9	5.5
Makwanpur	5.8	6.8	6.3	4.5	5.9
Bara	5.3	5.5	5.8	4.1	5.2
Rautahat	5.5	5.5	5.6	4.0	5.2
Banke	5.6	6.0	6.1	3.6	5.1
Average	4.6	6.2	6.1	3.9	5.2

Overall, Plan Nepal scores 5.2 on the partnership report card. Of the pillars, Plan's systems focus ensures a high degree of compliance and elicits the relatively high scores for effectiveness and efficiency. However, it is clear that these good scores are obtained at some cost to mutuality of relationships with partners, and count for little when considered from the point of view of sustainability. The scores for sustainability need to be looked at closely as they demonstrate a strong focus on project management with an output focus with weak emphasis on outcomes and overall impact.

Platforms for Action

An analysis of the findings along the organizational factors of structures, systems, strategies, staff and style, and synergies throws up the following starting points for action in the short (eight months) and long (beyond eight months)-terms.

Organisational factor	Short term actions	Long term actions
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing a single locus of control for partnerships in Plan through the appointment of a Partnership Manager -Review and redesign of contracts to locate the work of partners within the respective CPOs and CSP -Develop a perspective of community organization that includes federation of community organizations according to region, work affiliation and issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partnership Manager assumes responsibility for all partnership related functions currently under the purview of technical coordinators and PU Managers -Federation of community organizations according to the perspective and strategy developed
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -develop OD module to aid partners in holistic vision development -seek to soften weight of Plan systems by finding middle ground between requirements of Plan FOB and CPME, and existing systems of partners, develop agreed middle way -initiate action to develop formal feedback and sharing systems beyond CPME and FOB to develop shared understanding and improve transparency -review selection process for transparency of action and common understanding of selection criteria and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -implement OD module for vision development of partners -field test and implement middle path with regard to FOB and CPME, generate learning within partners about use of these for knowledge creation -develop formal fora for sharing at district and national levels for increased learning and common understanding -Partnership Manager to take responsibility for transparency of selection processes and criteria, and to apply uniform standards
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -review capacity building processes to reinforce knowledge of principles and practice of child centredness -formalise strategy for federation of community organizations (in continuation of perspective discussed under "structures" above) -Plan initiates steps to open its systems to public audit, sets example to community of international donors in Nepal -initiate steps to adopt and institutionalize AIN's Code of practice to make commitments transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -conscious screening of all capacity building inputs to include knowledge of child centredness and child rights programming -implement strategy for federation of community organizations with the assistance of NGO and government partners -Systematic annual public audits of Plan's systems and performance in Nepal with documentation including code of practice discussions in the scope of public audits so as to include partners within the audits
Staff and Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -HR Manager to develop module for leadership development and succession policy in partners -HR Manager and Capacity Building Manager to develop module on attitudinal reorientation of Plan staff to dissolve donor-subordinate consciousness -review HR systems available at partners, and develop support to assist partners in developing comprehensive HR management systems -external review of training systems and strategy to develop a learning focus at all levels, with appropriate knowledge creation as the basis for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -implement module on leadership development with groups of partners, on pilot basis initially -implement module on attitudinal reorientation of Plan staff through initial meetings at district level -implement HR systems development for partners -apply learning from review of training systems to lay foundation for a learning organization through knowledge recognition, consolidation and application at all levels
Synergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -review potentials for creating solidarity groups (issue based) and child rights groups among partners and community groups -explore potentials with other donors for joint action for policy influence, identifying specialist areas (eg ECD) -external review of all Plan activity for real degrees of social inclusion of the weak and marginalized -explore potentials to address structural causes of poverty through Plan projects, and in conjunction with other donors' efforts -review current links with government, and explore potentials for more meaningful collaboration beyond fund provision, to innovation and creative exchange of resources -initiate dialogue with like minded stakeholders to improve child rights awareness -initiate dialogue with existing partner network on child poverty issues, with a view to identify potential for special and joint action -review of learning systems to initiate systematic sharing of information and knowledge from Plan's work with all partners and other donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -organise solidarity groups and child rights groups, facilitate initial meetings, share documentation -develop, with other donors, action plans for policy influence and shaping in selected areas -sharing findings of review of social inclusion in Plan work with partners, identification of steps to be taken, and agreement of common action plan with monitoring of efforts -initiate policy debate within donor circles and with partners to improve common understanding of structural causes of poverty, and identify first steps to address these -improve working with government so as to reinforce Plan presence in government circles, alignment with policy and planning cycles of government -joint action with donors and coalitions of partners on child rights awareness and child poverty related issues -implement first steps to share information and knowledge from Plan and partner experiences in selected areas through specialized for and publications

This table provides a quick overview of the roadmap in the near and distant future for Plan Nepal to build upon its present partnership and activity base and evolve more meaningful relationships within Nepal's polity and institutional structures. The success of its execution and the realization of results from this platform for action will depend upon the degree of commitment with which Plan leadership and teams in Nepal approach this challenge. While the analysis aimed at improving partnership quality, this set of findings clearly indicate a wider range of benefits for the Plan family in Nepal that could significantly improve Plan's presence in Nepal, and fulfillment of its ambitions in these times of change for the country.

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All partners contacted in the process of this study cooperated with us to enable the development of high quality report card assessment, and contributed to free-flowing discussions. Community organizations were particularly enthusiastic in volunteering time and information to us.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIN:	Association of International NGOs in Nepal
CD:	Country Director
CO:	Country Office
CCDA:	Child Centered Community Development Approach
CSP:	Country Strategy Paper
CBO:	Community Based Organizations
CWIN:	Child Workers In Nepal Concerned Center
CONCERN:	Concern for Children and Environment-Nepal
CVICT:	
CCWB:	Central Child Welfare Board
CMT:	Central Management Team
CPO:	Community Programme Outline
DDC:	District Development Committee
DEO:	District Education Officer
DPHO:	District Public Health Officer
DPDP:	District Periodic Development Plan
DC:	Development Coordinator
ECD:	Early Childhood Development Center
FOB:	Field Operations Book
FGD:	Focused Group Discussion
HRD:	Human Resources Development
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LDO:	Local Development Officer
NFG:	NGO Federation of Nepal
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NC CZOP:	National Coalition of Children as Zone of Peace
PU:	Programme Unit
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
POCAP:	Participatory Organizational Capacity Assessment and Planning
PO:	Programme Office
VDC:	Village Development Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Plan Nepal has worked in Nepal since 1978. Initially, it worked in Kathmandu valley and after 1992, Plan programmes were expanded to other districts also. Currently, Plan Nepal works in Banke, Makwanpur, Rautahat, Bara, Sunsari, and Morang districts through four Programme Units (PUs). However its outreach through governmental and non-governmental partners is extends over 30 districts.

Plan has transformed from its earlier isolationist and direct implementation approach towards working in partnership with different service and advocacy organizations in government and non-governmental sectors and with various community organizations. The transition in this working approach has been induced by the shift in the conventional child-focused hand-out approach to the Child Centered Community Development (CCCD) approach.

The CCCD recognizes the importance of addressing the institutional and structural causes of child poverty, for which Plan relies on working with different stakeholders having proven specialization in relevant fields. 'Partnership and networking' is one of the four cornerstones of CCCD, which provides a framework within which to forge networks and make partnership and alliances between organizations, communities and individuals. Such a partnership is required to bring about synergy of results, which converge at the hands of children, families and communities in the form of realization of their rights and potentials.

Country Strategic Plan (CSP) of Plan Nepal and Partnership Approach

Plan Nepal follows the Strategic Direction of Plan International, which states, 'Plan will participate in and promote partnership and alliances at local, national and international levels with organizations with which it has shared aims and values'. Plan Nepal abides by the working definition provided by the framework on Partnership and Strategic Alliances, which states, 'Partnerships are well defined relationships.... in which vision, risks accountability, resources and influence are shared. Plan will seek relationships, where parties share a common vision and work together as equals¹.

Plan's principles of Empowerment, Sustainability and Cooperation guide partnership development. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and phase-in and phase-out strategies will be built into the programme design to indicate the time frame of partnerships with the community. Plan works to deepen and expand its partnership with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs),

¹ Partnership and Strategic Alliances: A proposal Framework for Plan International, pg. 5

Community Based Organizations (CBOs), affinity groups, the government, and other development players at all levels.

1.1.1. Current Partners of Plan Nepal

Plan Nepal has formal partnership with over 100 NGOs and about 600 (CBOs) in 127 VDCs of six working districts. The partners are distributed across different thematic Programmes of Plan and are working with Plan for varying number of years, - some for around 10 years in the same areas. Some of the NGOs in partnership with Plan are functioning at the national level, and hence are called national level NGOs, for example CWIN and CONCERN and the rest are district level NGOs. While the NGOs are primarily involved in delivery of outputs and services in identified areas, they do also engage in advocacy for institutional and legislative reforms at different levels.

The CBOs in Plan Nepal are non-profit organizations comprising of the members of local communities, formed for the purpose of community development. Most of these CBOs in partnership with Plan Nepal have emerged as Plan prepared itself since late 1990s to work through community organizations rather than directly engaging with the individual children and families. To distinguish CBOs from NGOs, CBOs in Plan are also defined in terms of its location and area of influence. 'In order to be CBO, it must be from among the community, located in the community and working for themselves. Basing ourselves in this criteria, CBOs, broadly, can be taken as those organizations/or institutions which are locally evolved, operating in a micro scale, in terms of areas and activities, specialized in some particular activities of which members are bound with some organic relationship, viz. area, religion, occupation, caste/ethnicity, activities, and so on'². But it should be noted that most often the CBOs are not the organic groups of communities, who have direct stake over the tasks or outputs that the CBOs are supposed to deliver. These CBOs having contracts from Plan to deliver specific outputs are also categorized as service CBOs to distinguish them from the actual community groups.

Besides NGOs and CBOs, Plan Nepal has close cooperation and coordination with local government bodies, line agencies and central Ministries and Departments. Through the cooperation with government bodies, Plan Nepal aligns its Programme goals and strategies with Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and different national plans of actions such as Education for All, National Plan of Action for Children etc. With the recently concluded agreements with Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB) on strengthening its district chapters and instituting juvenile benches, Plan will have nation wide influence in promoting child governance and juvenile justice.

Apart from the partnership involving transfer or sharing of funds, risks and accountabilities for given tasks, Plan has been part of different national and

² Assessment of CBO Capacity, Plan Nepal, 2005

district level networks and alliances with International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs), NGOs and bilateral donors, formed to achieve common goals. These networks and alliances are normally characterized by loose relationship, not bound by any mutually obligatory on-going agreements. *(For complete list of partners visited by the study team please refer the Study Team Itinerary in Annex 11)*

1.1.2. Communities as the Principal Partners of Plan

As has been stated earlier, Plan Nepal has come a long way since its early days when Plan directly implemented its Programmes. Now, Plan works in a more facilitating role and relies on partnership and networking mechanisms to achieve the desired outputs by working with the children and communities. The partnership is based on the premise that the partnering organizations commit to systematically transfer the know-how to the communities who eventually become capable to take the lead in their own development. Plan emphasizes the development of affinity groups of children and other members of communities such as child clubs, cooperatives, school management committees etc, who become sustainable and functioning representative organizations, with capacity for partnering and networking with other support organizations.

1.2. The Study

Though partnership is defined based on the principle of equality and shared goals and resources, the practice is based on contracts, in which the partners agree to implement tasks assigned by Plan, with shared goals or objectives but not necessarily shared resources and risks. To what extent the partners share the vision and commitment with Plan is what the study tries to assess. The relationship is looked upon as 'contractual' rather than 'equal'. Conditions inserted by Plan make relationship more like contracting relationships than partnership. These conditions tend to assign risks to partners and define partner obligations more tightly than Plan's³. On the other hand, relaxed conditions of contracts on the ground of shared vision could give way to loss of accountabilities. Thus, there is need for identifying the middle path that does not compromise the mutual accountabilities, while promoting equal partnership.

Another feature of partnership of Plan is that the donor-recipient attitudes and habits are coexisting with the pro-partnership mindset between Plan and its partners⁴. The partners as well as the communities are not free from the dependency syndrome. There is tendency of partners to hang around in the same communities for an indefinite period, without plans for systematic withdrawal. Nevertheless, it is stated in the CSP that phase-in and phase-out strategies will be built into Programme design, indicating the time frame for Plan's implementing partners to reach a stage where the changes brought about

³ Plan International Partnership with Micro-finance Institutions, September 2000.

⁴ *ibid*

by Plan's Programmes could be sustained by communities and local service organisations'⁵.

1.2.1. Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to assess the existing premises of the relationship of Plan with its partners and suggest measures to transform them into the partnership, which is founded on the shared objectives, commitment, resources, and risks.

Following are the specific purposes:

- h. To identify and analyse the salient features of the partnership between Plan and its partnering organizations in terms of their shared visions, goals, resources, operating systems, risks and commitment
- i. To document the experiences of Plan Nepal in promoting and managing the partnership both in terms of process and outcome.
- j. To assess the effectiveness of the partnership in achieving the shared goals and objectives
- k. To identify what Plan Nepal and its partners have learned with regards to challenges and opportunities in promoting effective partnership, particularly in the present situation of conflict
- l. To recommend practical measures to improve the present partnership relation leading to sustainable community-led development process.
- m. To analyze children's, women's and disadvantaged peoples participation in present partnership
- n. To analyze the importance and scope of partnership in sustainable community development

1.2.2. Outputs

The study achieved the following:

- In-depth analysis of the partnership of Plan: the nature of relationship, mutual commitment, relevance and effectiveness in achieving the shared goals.
- Recommended measures to improve the partnership, including the stages of its development, within the framework of CCCD and Plan's framework of partnership and alliances
- Changes required in the management culture and practices in Plan, especially the operational and human resource systems, to promote the partnership aligned with these recommended measures

⁵ CSP2

1.2.3. The Study team

The study team comprised of:

Mr. R. Suresh, Consultant, Bangalore, India

With over 25 years of experience in the development sector at all levels, including a term with Plan International, Mr. Suresh has proven skills in strategic planning, training and organization development, and in promoting learning organizations. His technical background is in natural resource management and livelihoods development. He consults with a wide variety of Indian and international agencies.

Mr. Basudev Neupane, Consultant, Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Neupane is an experienced trainer and facilitator who has been active in the Nepal NGO sector for over two decades, contributing significantly towards institutional building efforts. His experiences with national and international agencies in solidarity development, volunteerism and towards energizing citizen responses to development issues provided the local context and foundation for this study.

They were supported from Plan Nepal by

1. Mr. Uddhav Rai, CPME Coordinator
2. Mr. Chandi Chapagain, Training Coordinator

Ms. Asha Aryal provided research and documentation assistance in the field, as did Mr. Bed Sapkota in Kathmandu with regard to questionnaire analysis.

Mr. Subhakar Baidya, PSM of Plan Nepal supported the team in an overview role.

1.2.4. Time and Work Frames

Phase 1 May 15-25, 2006

- Review of project documents
- Study design and tool development
- Sharing with Plan team and CMT
- Design finalization and approval
- Development of field investigation tools and questionnaires

Phase 2 May 30-June 30, 2006

- Field visits to PUs
- Meetings with field teams
- Focus group discussions with selected partners
- Questionnaire application and return

Phase 3 July 1-15, 2006

- Analysis of field and questionnaire data, consolidation into report cards

- Presentation of preliminary findings to Plan team for feedback
- Preparation of final report
- Dissemination workshop with selected stakeholders

2. METHOD AND PROCESS

The challenges before the study team included:

- Using methods and tools that would be easily understood and used without excessive facilitation
- A reasonable coverage of Plan's stakeholders in Nepal through direct feedback
- Obtaining an overview of similar efforts by other agencies in the past that could inform and enrich this study
- Designing feedback loops at each stage of the study for validation and common ownership of findings

2.1. The Report Card

To meet these different needs while addressing the terms of reference, the report card method was adopted. At a workshop in May 2006, the structure of the report card was presented to key Plan staff. This was accepted, and the consultant team facilitated the identification of the key pillars of partnership. Further, each pillar was defined these in terms of indicators that could be tracked through feedback from partners and stakeholders.

The report card asks respondents to rate the quality of their partnerships on the pillars of mutuality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Each of these pillars have been characterized by 10 parameters (see Pillar Analysis section) that define the pillar, explore its reach beyond work dimensions alone, and attempt to track the influence of the parameters on the institutional environment that surrounds the partner. Report cards are increasingly being used as means to harvest qualitative information that can be quantified to some degree. This unique mix of information from a report card needs to be mined with sensitivity so that realistic conclusions are drawn, and so that the inferences made can be implemented within existing work and strategic frames.

Five parameters from each pillar were selected to evaluate the work of CBOs as partners, while all ten were used with regard to NGO partners. *(Please refer CBO Questionnaire in Annex 5 for detailed questionnaire used for the study)* This was because of the lack of sophistication of systems and strategies in most organizations at the community level, and their inability to respond to those questions. The full report card that has been developed and used, with details of probe questions and kinds of outputs expected at each interview, has been appended.

The report card method offers the following advantages:

- scoring is an easily understood method, and ranking comes naturally to most persons
- the score is arrived at through participatory discussion and some degrees of common ownership of the analysis is generated in the process

- the score itself provides a platform for discussion on ways by which it could be improved, and if facilitated well, could extend to an exploration of strategies to improve the score

2.2. Questionnaire

From the master format of the report card, a questionnaire was drawn up for NGOs and CBOs separately (*Please refer CBO Questionnaire in Annex 4 and NGO Questionnaire in Annex 5 for detail*) All partners of Plan were covered by this questionnaire, which offered clear guidelines on how to respond to the questions asked and parameters tracked. More than a hundred NGOs and about 120 CBOs were reached through this questionnaire. There was a 95% return on questionnaires that were sent out, which indicates a high degree of interest in the issue among partners.

2.3. Field visits

Field visits were made to district teams of Plan at Biratnagar, Makwanpur, Birgunj and Nepalgunj. Each field visit of three days covered meetings with sets of NGO partners (usually at one of the partners' offices) and some community organizations and discussions with government officials at the district (typically the LDO, DEO and DPHO, although other officers were also present at some meetings). The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with NGO and CBO partners were structured within two-hour time frames. They explored all the parameters in the report card through free flowing discussions. Partners were also asked to rate the parameters again after the discussion with the consultant team. (*Please refer Annex 1 for detailed FGD information on CBO and Annex 2 for detailed FGD information on NGO*)

The interactions with government officials were structured loosely upon the report card framework. They offered comments and suggestions on working with Plan, but were not assessed or rated. All discussions were captured through field notes. No Plan staff was present at any of the meetings with partners.

In the fieldwork, Plan teams were met at the beginning of the visit to orient them on the dimensions of the partnership evaluation. At the end of the visit, Plan teams were also asked to assess the quality of partnership with all stakeholders and to rank them along the pillars. A formal debriefing session with Plan teams and other stakeholders in the districts, where report card findings for the area and emerging issues were discussed, concluded the field visits. (*Please refer Annex 11 for detailed itinerary of the Study Team*)

2.4. National-level meetings

At the national level, the consultant team met selected partners of Plan and had free-flowing discussions with them. The team also met some government officers at Ministries who work in close collaboration with Plan. In order to broaden

perspectives, a number of INGOs were met. At these meetings, the discussion centred around the quality of their partnerships in Nepal, and any conceptual or practical advances that had been made in the course of making partnerships viable. Meetings with INGOs and government partners were not rated on the report card. *(Please refer Annex 11 A for detailed list of organizations and contributors)*

2.5. The analytical framework

Information was obtained from the following sources:

- Questionnaire responses from NGO and CBO partners
- Plan team assessments during field visits
- Consultant team assessments during field visits (scoring and field notes)
- NGO and CBO scoring during FGD and field notes
- Interactions with government officers at the national and district levels
- Discussions with some INGOs at Kathmandu
- Discussions with Plan Kathmandu team on different occasions

To standardize and consolidate these different streams of ideas, the following steps were taken:

- Development of **report cards** for each district – this involved weighting the scores obtained from different sources for each parameter, and consolidating them to arrive at one summary score for each parameter and pillar. *(Please refer Annex 6 for detailed NGO Score Card and Annex 7 for detailed CBO Score Card. Comparative scores of NGO and CBO by age of partnership is available in Annex 8 for NGO and Annex 9 for CBO).* Each score by NGO and CBO have been substantiated by qualitative justification. This information have been captured, analyzed and used in many sections of the report. *(for detailed analysis of qualitative information please refer Annex 10)*
- For a better visual understanding of the information gathered, and of the role of scores in understanding partnerships, **crosshair diagrams** were developed for each pillar for each district, as well as a consolidated crosshair diagram for all the partnerships of Plan Nepal. Crosshair diagrams, which are spider diagrams adapted for four variables, plotted the scores for efficiency and effectiveness along an internal axis (the x-axis) and the scores for mutuality and sustainability along an external axis (the y-axis). The plots were linked to provide a visual representation of the extent and quality of partnership at district and national levels.
- Report cards and crosshair diagrams were used to collect ideas under a **modified 7-S model**. The factors of structure, systems, strategies, staff and styles, and synergies were used as headings to group action elements identified during the discussions and to weave a set of conclusions and recommendations to the study.

2.7. Experiences with the process and analytical frame

The report card method was well received by most partners, who used the experience as an opportunity to unburden their opinions and views with freedom. However, the questionnaire responses were less reliable. The guideline frame offered to partners (in Nepali) did not adequately detail the scoring process, and gross responses were often obtained to some parameters. Weak explanation of some parameters in the questionnaire also led to misunderstanding and wrong scoring.

The consolidation of scores was a subject of much debate within the study team given the varying quality of scores returned. On the basis of degree of quality of scores from different sources, the team assigned weights to each source of information: consultant team – 35%, Plan team-25%, partner (NGO or CBO)-25%, questionnaire scores-15%. Arguably, this offered space for each stakeholder's assessment of the parameters.

Most of the qualitative information on partnership could be accommodated within the report card framework. Other issues raised during FGD were recorded in field notes. While the quality of partnership was not assessed through scores, a fair idea was obtained through discussions. However, some stakeholders would have liked government work to be assessed through report cards as well.

2.8. Plan's support to the evaluation process

Plan teams in Kathmandu and in the districts were extremely supportive of the partnership evaluation process, making necessary arrangements at all stages, and helping with data gathering and logistic planning. They scrupulously kept out of discussions with all partners and offered the consultant team ample space to conduct free discussions. At the national level, consolidated information on partnerships was generated by Plan from system information to support the analysis.

3. OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS IN NEPAL

3.0 This section attempts to capture some issues and concerns, related to partnership brought forward during the discussion with key actors involved in partnership process (*please refer Annex 11A for detailed list of contributors*). These issues have been considered as context setter for the entire study process. Since the study was limited to assessing partnership process of Plan Nepal it does not aim to capture the entire partnership process of the development sector in Nepal. However, the contribution made by the key actors on partnership process has generated substantial amount of ideas and issues for consideration in the study.

3.1 Context

Development paradigms transform rapidly from year to year, to more appropriately address the changing global scenario and national context. The shift from welfare approach to rights based development approach in early nineties was a major factor for change agents to opt for partnership as a key development strategy aimed primarily at strengthening local institutions so that the development process could be self-propelled. As this global shift in approach was being translated into action at various levels, Nepal experienced a successful popular movement in restoring democracy that assured avenues for people to get organized as their rights. Accordingly, Nepali NGOs also came together, launching a movement with a strong and credible voice against direct Programme implementation by the INGOs at the community level, which was later supported morally by the government. This was an opportunity for international agencies working in Nepal to align with global trends and respond positively to the NGO demand. As a result most development agencies made necessary modifications in their country strategies to include partnership as one of the key operational strategies for development process. And the partnership concept evolved over the period of time and currently INGOs, bilateral and multilateral donors are also working in partnership with local institutions like NGOs, CBOs, governmental line agencies and in some cases even the private sector as well.

In Nepal, the partnership mode of development initiatives has contributed significantly to the gradual social change process and also addresses the structural causes of poverty, which is the most essential factor of overall national development. Most importantly, this approach was instrumental in strengthening local institutions, as a number of people's organizations are now strong enough to protect rights and interest of people in different sectors. Though most donors claim to be working in partnership mode, the entire process is yet to comply with all key elements of partnership such as mutuality and sustainability. Usually in an ideal partnership model the partnering agencies usually loose individual decision-making power and control over resource & benefit sharing. But the current trend of partnership in Nepal is yet to share the decision making power specifically at policy front and Programme design; funding agencies have retained this power.

However, at the implementation phase, mutual participation in decision-making process is ensured to the fullest extent. Many key practitioners, who strongly promote the concept, also emphasise this.

3.2 Need

In the present Nepali socio-political context it is not always easy to deliver services while safeguarding rights and interests of people. This may be due to lack of clarity in forthcoming political situation as well as a lack of rights based orientation among key actors including government personnel. It is not possible for a single organization independently to achieve development goals. Hence, partnership that promotes interdependence and mutuality is the best modality even in the difficult situation in Nepal. Accordingly, there is no alternative to partnerships for the following reasons.

- It generates synergy from expertise of individual organizations. It is not possible for all development agencies to be equipped with all the necessary skills and expertise to deliver Programme. Partnership process has also helped in recognizing indigenous knowledge, as it is easy to reach local communities easily. An enhanced mutual learning process results.
- Partnership also empowers not only the community but also the partnering agencies as they became more powerful collectively with enhanced bargaining power compared to single organizations. Issues for advocacy are generated from local concerns, and fashioned into platforms using the support of the national and/or funding agency.
- It helps in sharing roles, responsibilities and resources for mutual benefit.
- The partnership ensures local ownership on the part of people who are the subjects of development interventions due to the increased opportunities for participatory decision-making process at local level.
- True partnership processes recognize the competence and capability of individuals and groups at the community level as they value local knowledge and competence.
- The process has demonstrated clearly the cost benefit and efficiency of the Programme implementation as it has demonstrated in a majority of cases that is less expensive to work with NGOs than through direct implementation considering the number of staff and benefits that majority of INGO staff gets.
- In the transition period and vacuum created due to major political change, people's lives have been devastated and social relationships damaged to a great extent. At this stage, people need more support than ever before and partnership is the best model to deliver services at the community level. From this point of view, the major gain would be that of greater outreach through indigenous organizations. In this situation, many organizations including Plan Nepal, engaged in

program implementation through partnership approach have prepared themselves to work with local NGOs, CBOs and other traditional institutions.

3.3. Types

Different kinds of partnership models are being practiced in Nepal and it is still premature to assess the effectiveness of any one particular model. However, each model has its own distinctiveness. Types of partners could be divided into three categories. The first category features partners in procedural differences in selection. There are organizations who categorize partners in the way they are selected for example selected by bidding process or by open call for proposal etc. In another category, partners are distinguished by difference in organizational nature. For examples the NGO, CBO government or private sector are some of the nature of the organizations. The third category is differentiated in terms of Programme implementation methods and approaches. The examples of this type of partners include direct implementer or intermediary.

Usually potential partners are NGO, CBOs, networks of NGOs & CBOs, governmental line agencies and, occasionally, the private sector. However, some donors consider individuals as potential partners also. Some donors have entered into partnership with trade unions, community user's group, cooperatives, faith-based organizations, student's group and even political parties to address some particular issues. Community user's group and community based cooperatives could be the best potential partners as they are locally based & locally owned, have regular income source, fairly inclusive of all excluded groups and more importantly people have their stake in the process.

Following examples of the partnership model is expected to be useful in capturing the strengths that will help in steering and nurturing the partnership process.

- Partners selected from bidding process on the basis of their expertise, competence and experience. This model allows capturing expertise and competence but it will limit the selection of community and district level organizations that may not have competence and expertise but have passion, confidence and community mobilization capability. This model is very much useful in building capacity of local institutions and should be limited to medium term partnerships. In the long run the local organizations would have been institutionalized. This model is also confined to address the Programme and need of the donor agencies only and will not allow opportunity to address the local need. Plan Nepal is the classic example that works with the partner selected from bidding process.
- Partners selected on the basis of proposal submission. This model is very useful in addressing the community need as the proposal is usually developed in full consultation with the community. Lutheran, Action Aid

and Care Nepal works with the partners selected on the basis of proposal submission.

- Organizations formed by the INGO staff: Some INGOs in an attempt to downsize their operation have reduced the number of staff who collectively started as an NGO and embarked on partnership agreement with the same INGO. This category of partners is more experienced and competent due to their long association with the INGOs, and can attract more donors limiting opportunities to the local organizations to compete with stronger competitors. This type might also have less voluntary spirit as they have experienced more facilities and perks offered by donor organizations. Action Aid Nepal is working with at least three NGO partner formed by their own staff.
- Organizations formed by the project staff: On completion of project period, the staffs are encouraged to form an NGO to continue the activities in partnership with the same donor and also other donor. From the sustainability point of view this approach seems to be very good to self propel and perpetuate the activities. But as in earlier type of partnership, it also does not allow starting an NGO. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) of Nepal has been working with some NGOs formed by LWF project staff.

3.4. Process

Partnering process begins with the selection of partner organizations. Every organization has its own process, developed to meet the organizational needs and expectations. Following are some major steps for consideration to follow in selection of the partners.

- Though organizational diagnosis is usually first step in selection of partners. The diagnosis is usually aimed at assessing the governance, effectiveness, leadership style, sectoral experiences etc.
- Some donors prefer inviting potential partner organizations in some Programmes to fully understand the nature, attitude and behavior of the personnel. If found suitable then these potential partners are offered small grants to implement small Programmes such as organizing training, workshop or any other Programme of their competence. This step is to assess the management capability, transparency and more importantly to understand and recognize the fullest potential. Upon successful completion of this short Programme, a longer term partnership agreement is signed, which lasts longer than five years with possibilities of extending for even longer period. This process is found to be very successful to nurture the effective partnership that ensures all key elements like mutuality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

It is obvious that the selection of partner is followed by the programme implementation. Most of the donors are found to be confused about the continuation of the partner relationship on completion of the Programmes, as

most partnership process is heavily guided by the funding relationship only. But some donors are found to be proactive in continuing relationship with its funding partners in the form of solidarity groups. Action Aid Nepal has continued working together with their partners beyond funding relationship in solidarity groups and Action Aid has also considered engaging these organizations as partner in bidding large scale Programmes.

3.5. Policy/Condition

Ideally, the partnership policy and conditions should be developed mutually between partnering organizations. However most donor organizations have developed their partnership policies and conditions. Some of the elements of the partnership policy includes following aspects.

- **Duration of partnership:** There is no fixed rule for the length of partnership. Experiences of many organizations have suggested that longer term partnership commitment with annual financial agreement was found to be very effective and efficient. This is also expected to ensure certain elements of mutuality and sustainability as the phase-in and phase-out indicators are agreed in the beginning. This provision is also found to be effective as it ensures opportunity to assess output at the middle of the partnership and impact at the end of Programme. This condition also ensures longer-term commitment of the staff/members, helps to building community trust and confidence.
- **Resource Sharing:** It is important to have stake of both partnering organizations for mutuality. The partnership condition must include provision of mutual resource sharing. However, the resource may not only be financial. NGOs/CBOs needs to be made aware that the opportunity cost of time, experience, expertise, knowledge and wisdom of board members are also part of resources that they can easily share to implement the Programme. A more comprehensive consideration and common understanding of cost sharing based upon the totality of contributions to a programme from all partners (voluntarism, time, knowledge, overheads, invisibles, etc), not all of which can be monetised or expressed in funding terms, is important for a better mutual understanding of partnership. Donors bring in important fuel for a programme in terms of funds that directly support programme implementation. Partners offer vital local knowledge, experience and commitment to make development processes work at the grassroots. These need to be weighed appropriately when resource sharing is calculated.
- **Institutional Support:** Most donors have made a provision of institutional support to ensure institutionalization of the organizations. The amount of support ranges from 5% to 18% of the total Programme cost.
- **Code of practice:** Probably, this is the most important condition of the partnership process. Mutually agreed code of practice between partnering

organizations must include the issues like good governance, transparency, equality, attitude, behavior, mutual respect and strong bondage between partnering organizations.

3.6. Outcome

The experiences of key actors promoting and practicing partnership has experienced that the process has achieved following major outcomes:

- promoting and strengthening people's organizations, CBOs at community level, and federation of CBOs at district level.
- development agencies have started recognizing NGO competence and indigenous knowledge and the importance of local capacity building to replace outsider's engagement in development process.
- great success especially in the area of essential service delivery even in the difficult situation of armed conflict.
- partnerships in general have been very effective in achievement of output and impact, as planned in the project design
- promoting mutual learning and sharing experience is key in partnership which subsequently support in translating learning into action as main component of knowledge management.
-

There are organizations that value direct implementation because the process restricts and contains financial leakage at various levels, organizations have direct access to people, which provides an avenue for direct consultation with people and for quality control. But many others strongly feel that direct implementation has its own limitations:

- it is not cost effective and incurs additional cost to cover additional staff salary
- does not promote local fund raising, and subsidizes the true spirit of volunteerism which is embedded in cultural practices of community.
- the process has a risk of destroying traditional social institutions and social relationship.
- does not allow local capacity building process.

3.7. Challenges

As discussed earlier, partnership process is full of potential but it is not free from challenges. Experiences of practitioners has suggested following challenges that needs to be addressed in the process:

- **Weak Tracking System:** Most organizations are fully committed towards monitoring and evaluation of Programmes, its output and impact. Very few organizations, however, have a provision for strong partnership tracking system to assess its effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and mutuality.
- **Loose Relationship with People:** As the partnership modality involves intermediary organizations in the Programme implementation process, many partnering agencies have a strong feeling that they are increasingly losing direct contact with people who are subject to the development initiatives. A strong strategy is found to be lacking among the partnering organizations, to strike the balance between partnership process and increased access to the people.
- **Costly Initiatives:** Though not subscribed by a majority of organizations, some feel that the partnership process incurs additional cost in the form of institutional development expenses and intermediary staff expense, compared to direct implementation. Due to the high cost, INGOs could lose interest in partnership models.
- **Not Mutual in True Sense:** Though claimed, most partnership relationship is not found to be mutual in reality though claims are made strongly. In practice, Nepali partners are hardly involved in major decision making processes and Programme design.
- **Increased Anti NGO Sentiment:** The community is increasingly viewing NGO work in more negative way. This has been fuelled by the nature of their work as intermediaries, bad governance, lack of transparency among NGOs, and the engagement of mostly outside personnel. Because of these, an increased tendency of anti NGO sentiment is now visible at the community, which could impede partnership with NGOs. NGOs are expected to recognize, realize and respond to this situation for sustained partnership in development process.
- **Weak Negotiation Skill:** Communities lack negotiation skill and tend to accept anything they get.
- **Lack of Clarity of Roles:** Identifying or synchronising the key roles for the NGO partners and programem partners such as user groups, CBOs and community organizations is still lacking and this could cause confusion in promoting partnership in general.

3.8. Supporting Factors

A number of supporting factors are emerging to nurture and strengthen the partnership process. Here are some examples:

- Government Policy: Social Welfare Council has made a mandatory provision for INGOs to work only in partnership with Nepali organizations, which certainly is a supporting factor to promote partnership approach.
- Association of INGOs: AIN is proactively developing number of guidelines including partnership and capacity building, to its member organizations that is expected to further promote and strengthen partnerships based on trust and mutuality.
- NGO Federation: The largest network of Nepali NGOs is an umbrella organization that helps safeguarding rights and interest of its members. The network could be instrumental in supporting partnership process by monitoring code of conduct, good governance and transparency.

These concepts are idealized and reality differs in many ways. Following are a few realities often seen on ground that impedes partnership development:

- Money Power: In the development field, funding agencies often go into partnership with local NGOs or government agencies. But due to power of money among the funding agencies the NGOs or GOs feel less powerful and often the funding agencies tend to dominate the other "partner". This contradicts the concept of partnership on equal footing.
- Attitude: Usually, the policy of the funding agencies is to work on principles of partnership. But as a part of human nature, attitude of staff may be dominating the "receiving" end of the partnership. It is clear that this concept of "donor" and "recipient" relation cannot be helpful to fostering true partnership in long run.
- As result of this "donor-recipient" attitude, a "sir or madam" culture has evolved among the local NGOs, which impedes the partnership approach.
- Transparency: In the philosophy of mutuality, it is expected that all partnering agencies are transparent. But in reality one partner often blames the other of not being transparent. The funding agency (INGOs etc) can terminate partnership on the grounds of not being transparent. But other party usually does not have that power.

True spirit of partnership is probably the only answer in contributing towards sustainable development, as the local partners could continue the initiative taken jointly under partnership. Following are some suggestions to further nurture and strengthen the philosophy and principles of partnership:

- Clear partnership guidelines should be developed and should be made transparent to all potential organizations interested to go into partnership. This should include
- The clear steps to reach partnership with timeline. The step could start with identifying potential partners that matches with organizational value and vision, then move forward with a one time grant to the short term partnership and then finally into long term partnership.

- process of defining roles, responsibility, decision making process, monitoring process and outcome sharing process with each partnering agency.
- indicators of phasing out the funding but continuing the relationship as a part of network
- Agencies interested to work under partnership philosophy should follow all philosophy of partnership and should not "pretend" to be working in partnership without following the principles. If they cannot follow the principles then they can clearly declare that they are not interested to work in partnership.
- NGOs interested to go into partnership should demonstrate their management capacity, clear value and vision. (Usually, the values and vision developed by NGOs are not to internalize but only to show to the funding agencies to fulfill their requirements)
- NGOs should ensure themselves to be out of party politics but fully involved in people's politics. NGOs should stop serving interests of political parties and should serve people's interests.
- Funding agencies must be transparent in partnership development process and must take sufficient time and step to understand each other before going into partnership agreement.
- Funding agencies should spare some time in developing capacity. They should also attempt in changing attitude of their staff towards other end of the partner.
- Partnership should never be seen as a long-term process. But the end of partnership could be the beginning of alliance building process.

4. PILLAR ANALYSIS OF PLAN PARTNERSHIPS

4.1. Mutuality

4.1.5. Defining the Pillar

Mutuality is epicenter of partnership process that fosters reciprocal relationship between two or more independent organizations. Having reciprocal relations implies that the elements of an equal power are present. Thus, any discussions of partnership must include a consideration of where the power is found, in what form and how it is utilized. Mutual relationship is the overarching terminology that covers the issue of working styles attitudes, power sharing and trust building.

The partnership evaluation process attempted to examine the mutuality as one of the four pillars which is factored into ten following parameters.

- Governing body's knowledge of Plan' support and other support to NGO
- Degree of commonality of vision and mission
- Governing body's knowledge of declared vision and mission of NGO and links with Plan mission and PU objectives
- Degree of participatory decision making about Plan Programmes
- Mutually agreed phase-in/out with Plan and other partners
- Extent of resource sharing with Plan
- Sharing of information about Plan and local partners
- Level of trust and confidence within teams about Plan's motives and ambitions
- Commitment to long term support from Plan
- Commitment to transparency about project support utilisation and internal working

4.1.6. Scorecard analysis

Table I Summary of scores on Mutuality Parameters

All scores on 0-10 scale

ASSESSMENT BY → ----- PARAMETER ↓	Partners' self score through questionnaire		Consultant team		Weighted score for parameter
	CBO	NGO	CBO	NGO	
Member's knowledge of PLAN's and other support to NGO	6.3	9.7			8.0
Degree of commonality of vision and mission between Plan and partner organization		7.4		6.0	6.4

Degree of Community Participation	8.8		7	6.0	7.2
Governing body's knowledge of declared vision and mission of NGO, and links with Plan mission and PU objectives		8.6			8.6
Degree of participatory decision making about Plan Programmes	6.3	9.1	6	6.0	7.0
Mutually agreed phase-in/out with Plan and other partners		8.0		2.5	4.4
Extent of resource sharing with Plan	4.9	5.5	8	5.3	6.8
Sharing of information about Plan and local partners		9.2	5.0	5.0	6.8
Level of trust within teams about Plan's motives and ambitions	9.0	9.0	3.0	3.0	5.1
Level of trust within teams about Plan's motives and ambitions		4.7	2.0	2.0	3.0
Commitment to transparency about project support utilisation and internal working		8.2		3.8	5.1
Average weighted score for parameters					5.4
Plan team score for pillar during field visits					4.8
Partner score for pillar in focus group discussions					5.9
Pillar score					5.4

Governing body's knowledge of Plan' support and other support to organization

- Most governing body members of Plan partner organizations in all six districts are aware of Plan's support as responded in the questionnaire.
- Most members are aware of other support beyond Plan if they have

These indicate a high level of transparency and adherence to democratic norms and practice within the organization about external support. This factor is a prerequisite to fostering mutual relationship among the members which is so

essential in nurturing partnership with the external organizations. This is also expected to develop common strategic appeal towards funding agencies.

Degree of commonality of vision and mission

- Both NGO and CBO respondents felt that there is a commonality of vision and mission with Plan in the questionnaire response. However, the focus group discussion results suggest the vision and mission of all organizations usually does not tally with Plan. But, there is some degree of congruence with regard to goal setting and achievement.

It is evident that there is a clear gap in understanding vision and mission of both partnering organizations. Existing partner selection process does not have provision of critical examination of vision and mission. Hence, Plan needs a thorough organizational assessment before entering into partnership to ensure commonality of vision overlap and long term interest of the organization in child centered programming, especially because many local NGOs are still in the early stages of their formation and establishment.

Governing body's knowledge of declared vision and mission of NGO and links with Plan mission and PU objectives

- The governing body of most NGOs has knowledge of its own mission but their understanding on missing link to Plan's vision and mission is not equally strong. Plan's vision is child centered, but partners' visions tend to be more holistic, with some hidden space for mention of children. The members also seem to be lacking knowledge of its link with Plan's vision, mission and work approach.
- As most CBOs were promoted by Plan to deliver services at the community level it was difficult to find clearly defined long term vision and mission except in some CBOs which are now registered. These registered CBOs have defined vision and mission to meet the legal requirement for registered and most members are yet to internalize it. In a self-scoring provision in the questionnaire, both NGO and CBO respondents have scored very high which could not be true in all cases as many CBOs even do not have declared vision and mission.

Usually, the NGOs used to have their objectives and activities defined in the constitution, which is prerequisite for legal registration. Gradually, this situation has changed and most big NGOs have their clear strategy paper with defined vision and mission. However, for many of these organizations vision and mission are only showpiece for the donors. But still among local level NGOs and CBOs it is difficult to find the clearly defined vision and mission that is clearly internalized by the members.

It seems that Plan has been proactive to initiate preliminary POCAP exercise to define and internalize organizational vision and mission among NGO has been completed in Susari/Morang. It is about to be started in Dang district. The capacity assessment tool for the CBO is almost ready for periodic assessment, which is expected to assess clarity of vision and mission among CBOs.

Degree of participatory decision making about Plan Programmes

- Most partners claim their participation in the decision making about Pan Programme and have scored very high (average 7.7) in response to questionnaire. But after thorough interaction during the focused group discussion among both NGO and CBO respondents in all districts strongly felt that Plan influences at the design stage, and partners also get involved in other parts of the project cycle, especially implementation. NGO and CBOs during the focus group discussion, have realized that their self score on the parameter was too high.
- The CDO is prepared usually at the instance of Plan, and to meet Plan requirements. Consequent changes to the original request and its expression as a PO takes many steps and involves different actors
- Within NGOs the key actors and leadership have an important role in determining the shape of Plan activities; and this is claimed to be participatory decision making.
- Usually, the proposal submitted by the national level NGOs is discussed at various levels before approval. However, even the national NGO partner feels that there is a strong Plan influence at the design stage of the Programme.

Both partnering organizations have an illusion that they are making participatory decisions about the Plan Programmes. But the reality is that participation of NGO and CBO members in decision making about the Plan Programmes is limited to cosmetic involvement, as the partner does not have opportunity to get on board during the design phase. However, in theory the planning and budgeting are based on the proposals submitted by NGO/CBO.

Mutually agreed phase-in/out with Plan and other partners

- It was rated very high in the self score (8.0) by both NGOs and CBOs but the focus group discussion does not suggests the same result (only 2.5) as most of the respondents in FGD has a clear understanding of when the phase-out is expected to happen when the contract ends.
- Partners working together for last ten years also do not have a clear understanding of the situation when Plan support for the Programme should be phased out or whether it should be phased out at all.
- At some stage, Plan has asked NGOs to develop long term strategy for phase out and sustainability in Bara and Rautahat. NGOs have developed

a phase out strategy but it was never discussed afterwards. Most partners have planned for, and declared, a long term intervention but Plan works only on annual cycles.

It is clear that Plan has a long term vision but does not have clearly defined phase out strategy of their on-going Programme at the partner level. At this situation, it is not clear if this is a one year phase-in and phase-out or phase out on achievement of long term vision only, which could be really unrealistic. Lack of phase out strategy at the partner level might create a sense of uncertainty and also it is difficult to assess the effect and impact of the Programme implementation.

Extent of resource sharing with Plan

- Strong contribution of professional inputs, time and technical resources in social mobilisation, design and implementation at NGO level (Plan:NGO = 80:20)
- Since Plan offers little management and institutional support to CBOs they have to make voluntary contributions at all stages of the project cycle to ensure Programme success (50:50, or even more from the community side). The heavy dependence upon the time and interest of volunteers in CBOs can pose a threat to Programme achievement in the medium term. In the rapidly changing economic milieu of Nepal, volunteers may find gainful employment elsewhere and not be available to service Plan Programme needs.
- In awareness generation Programmes, there is no financial resource sharing, and Plan bears all the costs, except for time

NGO and CBO respondents scored 5.5 and 4.5 respectively in the questionnaire, whereas in the focus group discussion they realized that the resource-sharing ratio is 80:20 in case of NGO and almost 50:50 in case of CBO. This clearly indicates that realization and understanding of their contribution have so far been undermined. After thorough discussion and facilitation in the focus group discussion, they realized that they were undermining their contribution, which in fact is higher if it is not calculated only in terms of financial value. This clearly indicates that the partnership process is still being examined in terms of funding support only and is guided by a philosophy of a "donor – recipient" relationship.

More interestingly, CBOs are making more contribution in term of voluntary time and opportunity cost. On the other hand, CBO members are severely suffering from an inferiority complex on the ground that they have to depend totally on Plan to deliver services at the community level. It is very important for Plan to educate CBO members to understand the value of their contribution at the same time their contribution should be respectfully recognized.

Sharing of information about Plan and local partners

- There is a great feeling among the NGO and CBO that the sharing of information is "one way traffic". It is clear that routine sharing of information related to the project administration, content and progress at NGO, CBO and community level is not sufficient as Plan is not always forthcoming about all information concerning a project.
- Both NGOs and CBOs respondents have scored very high (9) in self scoring questionnaire but realized that the extent of information sharing is not optimal and scored low during the focused group discussion as they realized the many information beyond routine matters are not available.

Information flow is usually top-down, fora for sharing of community views are not enough, in spite of all Plan staff claiming bottom up processes at all stages. Community people do not have enough opportunity to express their feelings beyond project and Programme related information. Plan should realize the importance of human express and its power to make positive change, as Plan's relationship with the community is expected to be beyond limited project work.

Level of trust and confidence within teams about Plan's motives and ambitions

- Sharing Plan's intention related to length of partnership, its volume and types of intervention among partners is limited as most partners, especially the CBOs do not have clear understanding on these issue. Some CBOs even do not know the type of project intervention they will be making in the coming year.
- Some partners, especially CBOs, sometimes work on different projects from year to year
- Faith, more than trust, drives the partnership, because NGOs and CBOs have a great hope that Plan will continue working in their community but they only have a vague idea that it would work to develop the community and are not very sure how long will they continue and what Plan is expecting to achieve.

Plan should make deliberate attempt to articulate their vision and intention of their work with particular partners, which will help partners to augment their level of confidence and trust. This is also expected to project "rights based" image of Plan, which is understood otherwise as age old image of service delivery.

Commitment to long-term support from Plan

- Both NGO and CBO have clear understanding that the support is administered on an annual renewal basis. Accordingly, both NGO and

CBO respondents scored very low (4.7) in self-scoring questionnaire which lowered further to 2.2 during the focused group discussion.

- At national level some partners have their own understanding of longer term commitments on the basis of proposal submitted, even so agreements are renewed annually

Since contracts are renewed annually, there is insecurity among partners about tenure of the Programme. Plan staff in most field areas discourages discussion of long term commitment.

Partners at all level strongly feel that there should be longer term commitment of at least three years and the financial contract still be renewed annually. Longer term commitment is expected to ensure correct assessment of effect and impact of the intervention.

Commitment to transparency about project support utilisation and internal working

- Programme and project level transparency is very good. Partners are mandated to make public audit annually at the community so that people are empowered to self assess the programme output, effect and impact. Transparency is demanded of the partner, but Plan is not equally transparent, except about routine matters
- Information about field Programme targets and support is well known, but not about finances and allocations
- Partners in some areas are not informed about bank transfers and amounts

Both partnering organizations Plan and NGO/CBO claim to be very transparent but still there is an on-going criticism of not being transparent, which in fact has damaged the image of the entire sector. While claiming of being transparent community perception should also be considered and deliberate attempt should be made to ensure clean image at the all level. Public audit at the community level is prerequisite, for partners, on completion of any Plan supported activities. This provision has definitely helped to improve the image. New provision of public audit by Plan country office at the central level would also further help Plan and its partner to improve the image.

4.1.7. District-wise break-up of scores for Mutuality

Table II District-wise break-up

MUTUALITY									
Assessment By →	Self Scoring through questionnaire			Consultant Team Assessment			NGO/CBO Score during FDG		
	District	CBO	NGO	AVG	CBO	NGO	AVG	CBO	NGO
Morang	7.3	8.0	7.6	5.1	4.2	4.7	5.0	6.0	5.5
Sunsari	7.1	8.2	7.6	5.1	4.4	4.8	5.0	6.0	5.5
Makwanpur	6.6	8.1	7.4	4.8	4.1	4.5	6.4	5.1	5.8
Bara	7.0	8.2	7.6	4.6	4.1	4.4	5.5	6.8	6.2
Rautahat	7.4	8.0	7.7	4.6	4.1	4.4	7.0	6.2	6.6
Banke	7.1	7.5	7.3	5.0	4.1	4.6	6.2	5.5	5.9
Average score			7.5			4.5			5.9
Score for the Pillar 5.4									

4.1.8. Addressing gaps, improving partnership

Plan entered into partnership mode of Programme implementation in Nepal about a decade ago and has made significant change and ensured greater mutuality in relationship and power sharing. Plan started this process with firm conviction to be more proactive and progressive in fostering the partnership process and to make it more mutual. Plan has made significant changes in attitude, process and more importantly the working style at the community to ensure mutuality and equal power sharing, compared to what it used to have a decade ago. As a learning organization, Plan is committed to make further progressive change in the process to fulfill the existing gaps. Despite conscious efforts and some significant changes, in reality at the ground level, Plan's relationship with the local institutions is still that of a "donor-recipient" one. It is understandable that it will take some time but a good beginning in the right direction has been made, and it is the time now to bridge the gaps. This situation prevails not only in Plan but in all INGOs and other donors who are working in "partnership" with local organizations.

This pillar attracted a weighted score of 5.4. In the light of popular criticism of INGOs being less mutual in partnership process, this score is considered very high. Critical examination of the scores of each parameter suggests that Plan could consider improving in following areas to increase the score in this pillar.

- Support partners in developing and internalizing vision and mission. In fact this could be an extension of, already initiated process of POCAP in Morang and Sunsari district, to other districts.
- Develop set of process for mutual agreement on phase-in and phase-out indicators,

- Raise awareness & understanding of NGO and more specifically of CBOs on their extent of resources sharing
- Both partnering organizations Plan and NGO/CBO should consider making deliberate attempt to ensure clean image to change popular perception of NGOs and INGO's lack of transparency.

4.2. Effectiveness

4.2.1. Defining the pillar

Effectiveness is an umbrella term that refers to the extent to which the deliverables and expected impact of a Programme design have been successfully achieved. The expression of this factor lies not only in the enumeration of outputs and outcomes. The influences of other supportive and inhibitory parameters on effectiveness (such as quality of links with the local government agencies, reach to specific disadvantaged and underprivileged groups, contribution to peace building, etc) need to be tracked to provide a comprehensive overview of the factor.

Among the pillars of partnership used in this study, effectiveness provides the substantive operational platform for the effective expression of the other pillars. If a Programme is not fundamentally effective, then the other factors reviewed here become irrelevant. Partnership for the effectiveness of a Programme implies the synergistic working of different stakeholders towards a common goal. This further implies the alignment of working systems, compromising on specific targets in order that the overarching goal is reached, and the leveling of individual- and organization-specific characters in pursuit of that goal.

From the perspective of partnerships, this factor has been reviewed for the specific contribution of each parameter towards the synergy that it generates across teams and partners working towards a common goal. Plan's CPOs define the broad contours of Programme action which are further refined through POs. Effective Programme action from Plan's point of view is dependent upon the deliverables from coalitions of partners working on a single PO within the context of a Programme Unit's specific geographic and socio-economic profile. Plan's monitoring and tracking of output achievement is perhaps among the most complex and consistent of all donor agencies in the world. Therefore effectiveness assessment is less nebulous and dependent upon impressions than the other factors of partnership reviewed here.

For this study, the factor of effectiveness has been defined by the following parameters:

- Knowledge of selection criteria and process for selection of partners
- Degree of achievement of Plan Programme outputs
- Degree of achievement of Plan Programme outcomes and achievement

- Knowledge and internalization of CCCDA
- Extent of involvement of children at different stage of Programme cycle
- Extent of collaboration with VDC/DDC on Programmes for children
- Reach to target groups – Dalits, women, marginalized, indigenous communities
- Evidence of contribution to peace building process
- Extent of party political involvement of members of partner organization
- Effect of political intervention in Programme implementation

Partnership effectiveness, even while viewed as a summation of the above, is still hinged upon the correct interpretation and application of child-centred Programming at community level. To this end, the selection of partners is the first stage, where alignment of partner ambitions, its rootedness in the community, and its competence for the task is reviewed. The expression of outputs as a result of good programme design must also involve children as partners in all stages of the Programme cycle, while aligning with government at the local and national level. Environmental dimensions of effectiveness relate to the ability of partners to neutralize unhealthy political interest in Programme expression as well as contribute to nation rebuilding after the recent conflict situation in many of the rural areas that Plan works in.

4.2.5. Scorecard analysis

Table III Scorecard Analysis for Effectiveness Pillar

ASSESSMENT BY → ----- PARAMETER ↓	Partners' self score through questionnaire		Consultant team		Weighted score for parameter
	CBO	NGO	CBO	NGO	
Knowledge of selection criteria	-	8.6	-	7.0	7.2
Degree of output achievement	6.5	7.4	8.5	7.0	7.8
Degree of outcome/impact achievement	6.2	6.8	5.0	7.0	6.1
Knowledge and internalization of CCCDA	-	6.4	1.0	1.0	2.6
Attitude and behavior towards PLAN and vice versa	8.1		-		2.4
Extent of involvement of children	7.4	5.3	4.0	4.0	4.7
Extent of collaboration with local government	-	4.9	1.8	4.3	2.9
Reach to target groups	8.7	8.2	7.1	4.1	6.0
Evidence of contribution peace building process	-	8.4	-	1.0	3.6
Extent of party political involvement	-	6.9	-	8.3	7.5
Extent of political intervention in Programme implementation	-	3.8			
Average weighted score for parameters					5.4
Plan team score for pillar during field visits					6.4
Partner score for pillar in focus group discussions					6.8
Pillar score					6.0

Knowledge of selection criteria

- Potential NGO partners who bid for projects know of the selection criteria for projects. The relatively high scores of 8.6 and 7.0 for this parameter back this conclusion. However most partners are unaware of the actual processes of selection. Many partners believe that selection for Plan activity is truly based on experience and expertise. However close

- personal or professional links with the technical personnel in Plan are also cited as important criteria by which one team is preferred over another.
- Plan teams admit to the pre-selection of partners in spite of the formal selection criteria because of known competencies or previous acquaintance.
 - At the national level, NGO partners are often handpicked on the basis of reputation and expertise, as also reach to field areas in districts where Plan works. District level NGOs who have not been selected often are not clear about the reasons why they have been excluded.
 - In districts, there is also considerable discomfort with the selection of NGOs based in Kathmandu. Most of these selected NGOs bring in staff to the district from the capital. This is viewed as not contributing to local capacity building.
 - As most CBOs are promoted, positioned and developed by Plan, this criterion does not apply to them.

Transparency in partner selection is a value statement on honesty and sincerity of purpose, and real commitment to goal achievement through professional means. While Plan's systems are rigorous, openness of process and deeper consideration of the availability of local teams for implementation of projects would considerably improve the quality of its partnerships.

Degree of output achievement

- High scores (above 6.4) across NGOs and CBOs indicate a degree of satisfaction that project outputs have been met.
- It is generally agreed that much is achieved by way of targets within Plan projects. This is ensured because Plan's physical and financial monitoring systems are rigorous and sensitive to systematic achievement of results.
- Systematic achievement however is no guarantee of continued partnership, according to partner feedback.

The high degree of output achievement considerably strengthens partner credibility with communities and increases their chances of being selected for partnership by Plan in the future for the same or other activities.

Degree of outcome and impact achievement

- Scores on this parameter are significantly less than those for output achievement. A 15% drop in scores when compared to output achievements indicate an occupation with project targets in preference to consideration of outcomes and impact of project activity.
- Most partner NGOs declare that the annual renewal of agreements is a block to the consideration of long term impact, shifting the focus to annual output achievement

- At CBO level, there is high expectation of the positive impact of interventions that have already begun well. But since most CBOs are not focused on one sector or activity, and are often offered unrelated activity from year to year, resulting in an inconsistent corpus of work to review, it is difficult to assess the quality of their work and impact.

Persistence with partners is a key factor in enhancing the achievement of outcomes and impacts beyond target and result attainment. Insecurity in partnerships discourages the development of the larger field perspective and holistic appraisal of Programmes. At CBO level, the poor investment by Plan in supporting the development of their own perspectives of change, and the frequent changes in portfolios and mandates for action from year to year result in a collage of activity that does not help in capacity building, scenario development or impact achievement. Partnership synergies fail to bloom under these circumstances.

Knowledge and internalization of CCCDA

- Even if partners self-score on the high side, the consultant team through its probes felt that a score of 1.0 for NGOs and CBOs reflected the real situation, with partners unable to move beyond the jargon and terminology to characterize the approach. Very few respondents were able to suggest Programme elements that take forward the approach into an action frame.
- Most NGO and CBO partners demonstrated a very weak conceptual and practical understanding of child centred Programming, in spite of exposure to many training events
- However, most partners have scored high on the questionnaire surveys. This could be due to a poor understanding of what CCCDA actually means and implies in the field. The vocabulary of CCCDA is known among partners to a limited extent and often expressed in poetic terms ("child centredness means keeping children close to our hearts"). However, the practice of child centredness beyond involving children in project activity is weak, as is the use of the child rights framework. Yet, partners insist, with vehemence, that they do know what CCCDA is all about.

As child centred Programming constitutes the conceptual matrix and backdrop to all of Plan's work, its poor transmission to partners means that Plan has invested little in educating its coalition towards internalizing the real implications of CCCDA. The further conclusion is that Plan uses its partners only to deliver its field targets caring little to take them along on a journey of conceptual advance and refreshed thinking about child rights and a rights-based approach to development action. This approach could be termed opportunistic and exploitative. The poor scores reflect the weak investment in the enrichment of partner vision as well as a reluctance to enhance partner capacities.

Extent of involvement of children in decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

- The scores on this parameter again reflect the weak understanding of the child centred approach, and the poor translation of the approach into action. The consultant team feels that children's participation is a new and sensitive concept in the prevalent socio-economic context and will need special promotion among partners for its full expression as a practical measure.
- Children are rarely involved in decision-making. They are sometimes involved in other parts of project cycle.
- Children's groups have a token and even ritualistic presence in the planning and design of Programmes. Very often, children come to meetings to represent their parents' agendas, which are not necessarily child centered ones.
- There is a legal barrier to children functioning on governing bodies of registered CBOs.

More than the weak understanding of the potentials for children's participation in different parts of the Programme cycle, most Plan teams and partners also betrayed a poor grasp of the reasons for this. True partnership is strongly founded upon mutual respect for each other's potentials and offering space of their expression. The poor status of scores in this regard point to the patronage as well as misuse of children in token roles to achieve the ends of Plan's systems more than for mutual growth.

Extent of involvement of partners with VDC/DDC on Programmes for children

- The very poor scores given by the consultant team reflect the cursory nature of links across partners at the district level.
- NGOs are part of district level fora for the design of some Programmes, but only attend on invitation, and contribute little at the meetings
- An NGO desk exists at every DDC but has weak links and coordination with NGOs. With Plan support, some NGO desks have been activated to meet Plan's Programme requirements.
- Because of the conflict situation, coordination with the government was difficult for NGOs and Plan.
- CBOs are rarely within the radius of district level activity of this kind, and VDCs are usually not available at the village.

The quality of horizontal partnerships within Plan Programmes at the district level is very poor, with most partners unaware of opportunities to work with government on schemes other than those that Plan works in. In effect, opportunities for channeling support and sharing learning are missed within

partnerships because of this. Plan's support to partners could include elements of local networking and coordination.

Reach to target groups – Dalits, women, marginalized, indigenous communities

- Among NGO partners, the concept of social inclusion is clearly secondary to that of fulfilling the quantitative goals of their contracts. Hence it attracted a relatively low score across the districts.
- Usually, the nature of the project design and its planning determine the degree of involvement of target groups in it. As output focus is high within project design, there is emphasis on achieving targets, and less on social inclusion. The priority clearly is to achieve targets without particular consideration for the weak or excluded in a project area.
- If women are central to the design or execution of a project, then their inclusion is high. Women's projects are common in Plan, as with savings and credit groups, but within these the social inclusion factor needs to be examined more closely.
- CBOs seem to consciously reach out to marginalised groups in a more coherent way. Many CBOs are exclusive to them, again depending upon the nature of the project. However, CBOs seem to be constituted of elites from the community and are not always representative of the diversity of peoples within communities.

The implication for partner development from these findings is that the opportunities to tap a large and significant population group with special demographic characters has been lost. The inclusion of disadvantaged communities therefore provides for coverage, reach and equity. Equally, it allows for the import of key social values and issues of children, women and men from those communities into Plan's core Programming.

Evidence of contribution to peace-building process

- This parameter was not well tracked either through the questionnaire or in the focus group discussions and it is difficult to draw conclusions on it.
- In discussions, partner NGOs have tended to be distant from the larger social and political changes occurring in Nepal in the past few years. Most partners were more comfortable discussing project achievement than locating their efforts in the context of change and transformation. Many of the partner NGOs met were based in the capital and seemed little interested in the peace effort or in conflict resolution.
- CBO members have been active in informal ways, being rooted as they are in the local milieu. While evidence of real contribution to peace building is lacking, it is common knowledge that communities have coped with the conflict situation better than NGO partners have.

- However, at the national level, Plan has actively supported the democracy process through resource and moral support. At district level, several initiatives taken by Plan staff enabled the building of bridges between different sections of society. These have been recognized and appreciated by all stakeholders and citizen groups.

Extent of party political involvement of members

- In almost all districts, most NGO partners claim to have stayed away from local politics.
- While NGOs claim to be not involved in direct political activity, this is contrary to the general knowledge in Nepal that most NGO leadership is aligned with one or another political power

At this early point in Nepal's democratic experience, this parameter has not acquired importance or impact on Plan Programmes or partnerships.

Effect of political intervention in Programme implementation

- Except for Rautahat, all teams reported no political interference in Programme implementation. However, as with the previous parameter, the currently transitional phase that the political process in the country is going through could have contributed to this.

As with the experience in neighboring India and Bangladesh, CBOs and NGOs represent potential vote banks for political interests and political intervention, and are often easy pickings for them. Partnership development needs to be explored with an eye on this dimension.

4.2.6. District-wise break up of scores for Effectiveness

Table IV District-wise break-up for Effectiveness

Assessment by →	Self Scoring through questionnaire			Consultant Team Assessment				NGO/CBO Score during FGD			
	District	CBO	NGO	AVG	CBO	NGO	AVG		CBO	NGO	AVG
Morang	7.9	6.5	7.2	6.2	6.3	6.3	7.0		7.0	7.5	7.3
Sunsari	7.8	6.9	7.3	6.2	6.3	6.3	7.0		7.0	7.5	7.3
Makwanpur	7.0	6.8	6.9	5.4	6.5	6.0	7.0		7.7	6.4	7.1
Bara	7.1	7.5	7.3	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.5		5.5	7.0	6.3
Rautahat	7.6	6.9	7.2	3.8	4.0	3.9	5.4		7.0	5.9	6.5
Banke	6.9	6.0	6.4	4.5	4.7	4.6	7.0		6.2	7.0	6.6
Average scores			6.9			5.3	6.4				6.8
Score for the Pillar 6.0											

Except for Bara and Rautahat districts, most partners rated the parameters for this pillar fairly high. In those districts, significantly, while achievement levels are distinctly lower, the figures for mutuality and sustainability are higher than elsewhere in Plan areas. This score reflects the investment that Plan has made in partner teams and organizations, getting all CBOs to register themselves.

4.2.7. Addressing gaps, improving partnerships

While this pillar has attracted the highest scores among all the pillars tracked in this study, the scores hide a few disturbing facts:

- poor transparency on the part of Plan with regard to selection processes
- a general failure of partner teams to move beyond outputs to outcomes and impacts
- the strong output emphasis leads to a weak process understanding of child centred Programme development and its implementation (token involvement of children is one expression)
- the emphasis on target achievement also contributes to poor quality of measures for social inclusion
- weak networking with other stakeholders, especially government, indicates an over-dependence on Plan resources, and a failure among partners to extend their spheres of influence and action outside of project frames

In general, fairly high effectiveness scores have been attained because of robust Plan monitoring systems, but these have come at the cost of depth and sustainability of achievement (and also mutuality) through the involvement of key stakeholders in the field.

4.3. Efficiency

4.3.1. Defining the pillar

For this study, the pillar of efficiency has been defined by the following parameters:

- Evidence of the existence and use of a human resources plan, an articulated strategy for manpower management
- Existence and use of financial management systems backed by a manual and specialist personnel, with a good fund utilization record
- Time management – completion of targets in time
- Quality of achievement of meeting targets
- Degree of success in building alliances through membership of networks (thematic, solidarity) and links with government
- Alignment of Plan activity with larger child development efforts at the district level
- Perception of the community towards the partner organizations and teams

- Degree of credibility of Plan and partner
- Degree of visibility of Plan and partner at community level
- Attitude and behaviour of Plan and partner staff towards each other

Efficient partnerships not only deliver on results agreed in the project design but also do so with regard for the quality of resource use. This is possible when partners have internal mechanisms that can back project delivery and track manpower, finances, quality control and schedules. Further, efficient partners also seek to optimize resource use through coalition building with like-minded agencies. Efficiency is also expressed in the degrees of credibility and visibility attained by partners in the community. The relationship between partners and Plan teams and alignment of values across them through personal relationships can lead to more efficient project management.

4.3.5. Scorecard analysis

Table V Scorecard Analysis for Efficiency Pillar

ASSESSMENT BY → ----- PARAMETER ↓	Partners' self score through questionnaire		Consultant team		Weighted score for parameter
	CBO	NGO	CBO	NGO	
Human resources, plan	-	8.7	2.0	4.8	5.1
Financial management	5.5	8.7	1.0	3.3	3.4
Time management	7.6	7.8	4.8	4.8	5.6
Target quality	7.4	7.6	7.5	6.6	7.4
Building alliances	-	7.5	1.1	4.5	4.7
Alignment with child Programmes	7.9	6.5	2.0	2.6	4.0
Perception of partners	-	8.7	7.5	6.6	7.3
Credibility	9.7	9.5	4.5	4.1	6.0
Visibility	-	9.1	6.8	6.1	5.9
Attitudes and behavior	-	9.1	6.8	6.1	7.1
Average weighted score for parameters					5.6
Plan team score for pillar during field visits					5.9
Partner score for pillar in focus group discussions					6.5
Pillar score					5.9

Evidence of the existence and use of a human resources plan, an articulated strategy for manpower management

- Most donor partners, including Plan, demand a significant degree of compliance with regard to the human resource requirements necessary to implement or monitor the activities they support. In response to this requirement, some NGO partners have developed these systems. Usually staffing requirements are immediately met; the systems to support them evolve over time, if at all.
- Some NGOs have HR development plans, depending upon donor interest and contributions. Those partners who are based in, and operate from Kathmandu, have better chances of developing HRD plans, with support from donors and specialist resource agencies.
- Those staff of NGOs at district level, who have been on the rolls for a long period seem to have few other options except to remain with the NGO. For them, new project acquisition is the only avenue for continued employment. The resulting insecurity does not contribute to their efficiency in the field, although their long experience helps them to innovate and cope with emerging issues.
- At CBO level, about 50-60% of staff have been trained to meet Plan's requirements. However this training has not always been in the same areas, and CBO staffs are project experts, trained to deliver specific outputs within strict resource frames.

Support to partners on human resource development is a primary cornerstone of active partnership that ensures quality manpower, and more importantly, contributes to the sustainability of Plan's activity base and goal attainment in the medium- and long-term. Much of Plan's capacity building effort focuses on getting partners ready to deliver their Programme elements. However, an extensive auxiliary space surrounds project implementation that spans the broad area of human resource management and people building. This space is not specifically or adequately addressed by Plan.

Existence and use of financial management systems backed by a manual and specialist personnel, with a good fund utilization record

- As with human resource management systems, the partner response has been shaped by the donor's requirement. Plan's financial compliance systems are robust enough and offer frameworks that are clearly explained to partners and which can be adapted usefully to partner needs.
- However, besides responding to Plan's needs, very few partners seem to have internalized the need for formal financial systems. Most partners met respond adequately to Plan reporting systems and schedules but have little inclination to adapt it to the rest of their work.
- Many NGO partners respond to different donors differently and have not initiated work to standardize information collection and data management. More disturbingly, some partners reported not tracking at all those elements of their work that fell outside the purview of any external support,

- or which was done in collaboration with communities on the basis of local fund raising.
- Partnership on financial management with CBOs seems to have been limited to tracking of investments and assistance with rudimentary tracking and single entry systems. There is very little evidence of investment in members of CBOs on this count.
 - Those NGOs that are branches of nationally operating agencies (multi-district, multi-donor) claim to have standardized systems within their organizations. The consultant team did not verify this.
 - Audit reports are prepared annually for all partners, and Plan subjects them to rigorous internal and external audit procedures. Even so, the general consensus is that most non-Plan audit is not systematic and even partial. The consultant team did not verify this.

Transparent and rigorous financial management is the foundation of trust and mutuality in partnership development. On the whole Plan's systems are sound and applicable to the nature of work at the field level. Yet, the learning opportunity that Plan's systems offer seem to have been avoided or missed in the development of partnerships. Training inputs to support systems have been varied and intensive (to NGO partners), yet partners maintain a stance of tolerance rather than trust.

Time management – completion of targets in time

- In Plan work, flow of resources to partners is dependent upon completion of targets and reports. Most partner teams report that they are pressured to meet deadlines.
- As teams comply with Plan requirements, most deadlines are met adequately. However, the pressures arise because, even if new agreements are made at the beginning of the financial year, fund release happens up to three months later. As reporting and consolidation is demanded by Plan from three months to the end of the financial year, that effectively leaves partners with six months of working time to meet physical targets for the year. After discounting for monsoons and festivals, and other unforeseen circumstances, target achievement is less than optimal when viewed from the points of quality and community involvement.
- The delay in fund release also causes stress on teams to meet salaries and staff needs, and loss of staff in this period of insecurity is not unusual. Loss of morale is commonly reported.

Taken together, the three parameters above (financial systems, HR systems and deadline management) are binding factors of an agreement with Plan and to an extent represent the heavy hand of Plan in partnerships. Compliance is the operational principle at work here. Little space is afforded to partners to

contribute towards system adaptation that might make them friendlier to their internal working systems or organizational realities. On these three counts alone, partnership relationships and actions are Plan driven. Since resource drivers are critical to field activity and ultimate credibility in the development sector, the weight of Plan systems is very keenly felt.

Efficiency need not be compromised if Plan and partners worked together on adopting Plan's system values and needs within existing working frames to arrive at mutually satisfactory and sustainable solutions that lightened the burden. The foundation of this is the use of a learning approach that respects partner and Plan sensibilities equally. Plan's internal working systems could also respond more creatively to meet cash flow requirements at all times of the year.

Quality of achievement of meeting targets

- As Plan's monitoring systems are effective and reliable, the quality of outputs achieved is correspondingly good
- For CBO partners, reaching outputs is carefully guided by Plan teams and quality is part of that concern. For NGO partners, teams keen on establishing reputations as efficient deliverers contribute much to quality consciousness.

Quality consciousness among partners is not only bound by standards set by Plan, but also by benchmarks that they set for themselves. The FOB provides the foundation for quality in Plan Programme activity. Read in conjunction with the above parameters, the challenge is to infuse among partners the need to develop quality manuals for themselves.

Degree of success in building alliances through membership of networks

- Our overall assessment of this parameter is based only on membership of partners in networks only, not on quality of their participation or specific contribution to alliances
- Most NGO partners belong to district level federations, although the quality of this network needs to be examined
- The perception of their responsibility as members of networks seems to be largely limited to coordination and meeting arrangements. Joint action through networks is rarely discussed.
- On the horizontal level, there is an almost complete lack of interface between NGOs and CBOs, even among those who work on common Programmes for Plan.

Alliance building across teams with common goals provides the substance of self-improvement as well as the operational basis for synergy across the respective talents and skill sets of different organizational actors, and with communities. The almost complete lack of such coalition building within Plan projects is a disturbing indication that partner teams feel self-sufficient with support from Plan and seek little from others to complete their tasks. While this sensibility is good for Plan's annual achievement, there is some loss with regard to innovation, aggregation of abilities at different levels, and eventually, in system upgradation with regard to impact achievement. If Plan teams could step up the ladder of vision to focus on outcomes in addition to outputs, the value of promoting alliances and coalitions among their partners will become apparent. Partnership for holistic child centred Programming demands a wide range of talents that can rarely be met from one source.

Alignment of Plan activity with larger child development efforts at the district level

- Alignment of any kind with other partners, other networks or with the local government depends upon the nature of the project activity. As most project activity is defined by POs that are exclusive to each other, they demand little interaction with others for output achievement. Where a PO demands such interface, the necessary tasks are coordinated with appropriate agencies.
- The links of specific project activity with the CDO are not clear to field partners. Hence, placing their work in the larger perspective is also not well facilitated from Plan's side.
- On the government side, the Bal Kalyan Samnvaya Samiti attempts in some places with Plan support to coordinate child development efforts. These efforts are sporadic and have not attained the necessary impact as of now. Most partners have little knowledge or familiarity with the potentials of alignment with local government efforts.

Holism in Programming for children is critical to the attainment of higher level goals and overall community development ambitions. The lack of interest of partners in meso-level alignment (at district level) with different resource organizations betrays a faith in Plan's ability to support them to the extent necessary. This breeds dependence while closing off other possibilities. Plan teams could contribute to developing broader horizons among partner coalitions by consciously supporting fund, skill and other resource sharing at micro- and meso-levels by the appropriate definition of POs and project activity.

Perception of the community towards Plan, partner organizations and teams

- NGO are seen to help the community in solving problems, and as service providers. However, there is an increasing tendency among all other stakeholders to view NGOs as mercenaries and opportunistic, working largely for their own institutional causes, and less for the cause of the community.
- CBOs are seen as empowering agents through partnership in project implementation at the community level. CBOs contribute significantly to project management, achievement and sustainability but are neglected in Plan's support for institution building. Yet, Plan offers nothing towards salaries and overheads to CBOs, who are hard-pressed to maintain their commitments to Plan only on a voluntary basis. "Plan forced us to register, but we do not even have the resources to renew our registration"

Community perceptions of Plan are generally positive, given the scale of physical investments at the community level. Plan's other contributions to the community are less known or understood, but its support to children is appreciated. The emerging view of NGOs are middle people in a development game is a disappointing one for them as well as for Plan. NGOs are wanted for their skill sets and capacity to deliver on schedule. They are also remunerated for these as well as for their institutional development. CBO partnership is valued because they directly spring from the very communities that Plan works in, and are trained to deliver according to Plan's needs and priorities. In this process, the community is directly supported in skill development and project management.

Degree of credibility of Plan and partner

- Plan enjoys high credibility within communities, having serviced them for a long period. When Plan implemented Programmes directly, the credibility rested with them. Now that NGO and CBO partners share the implementation, they also share the credit.
- Plan staff have always worked with CBOs even when they directly implemented Programmes
- CBOs have better standing with communities, although it is too early to assess credibility

As mentioned earlier, the sincerity of purpose of NGOs is questioned to a greater extent, as communities resent the fact that CBOs are barely supported to achieve project goals.

Degree of visibility of Plan and partner at community level

- Plan's presence in NGO facilitated projects is average, the partner is better known...in some projects, partners do not even use the Plan logo
- When projects are implemented through CBOs there is higher visibility of both Plan and CBO

- By and large, most Plan projects by CBOs are distinguished by logos and Plan imprints
- “Plan sarkar” (the government of Plan) is a term and concept used by communities that defines quite well the prominence of Plan's presence in communities in VDCs that receive little support from other sources.
- Sponsored children are called Plan children, and this is cause for divisions within communities. Gifts to sponsored children from sometimes create fences between them and other children.

In the shift from direct implementation to a partnership mode, Plan's direct visibility at community level has reduced correspondingly. However, its reputation as a primary investor in community development and social change remains vivid, and much hope is vested in Plan's interventions.

Attitude and behaviour of Plan and partner staff towards each other

- NGO staff are treated with dignity but still presumed as “subordinate” to Plan staff.
- Plan staff wield considerable influence and persuasion at the time of project design with partners. Beyond that point, staff of Plan guide partners with a lighter hand.

Equality in partnerships is difficult to maintain, and the source of power will inevitably be linked to those with access to resources. Even with this inherent imbalance, credit goes to Plan staff who work with open hearts with all partner staff and are respected for that. Much of the respect accorded to Plan staff also derives from the long presence of Plan and their staff in some areas while partners have changed teams from time to time.

4.3.6. District-wise break up of scores for Efficiency

Assessment by → District	Self Scoring through questionnaire			Consultant Team Assessment			Plan team	NGO/CBO Score during FGD		
	CBO	NGO	AVG	CBO	NGO	AVG		CBO	NGO	AVG
Morang	8.2	8.4	8.3	5.5	5.0	5.3	7.0	6.0	6.8	6.4
Sunsari	7.3	8.4	7.9	4.8	5.0	4.9	7.0	6.0	6.8	6.4
Makwanpur	7.7	8.6	8.2	4.3	4.8	4.6	6.0	6.5	5.5	6.0
Bara	7.6	8.6	8.1	5.2	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.5	6.0	5.8
Rautahat	7.4	8.7	8.0	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.8	6.0	7.9	7.0
Banke	7.0	8.6	7.8	4.1	4.8	4.5	5.5	6.0	8.5	7.3
Average scores										
Score for the Pillar										5.9

4.3.7. Addressing gaps, improving partnerships

In summary, this pillar provides the following insights:

- Project partners – whether NGOs or CBOs- tend to invest minimally in internal systems and structures, and this reflects elsewhere in low scores for sustainability. Plan's focus on output achievement has not been matched by a commitment to partners' institutional development. As Plan has strong financial systems and HR processes, it will require little effort on the part of Plan to inculcate a sensitization of the need for these, and to provide the capacity building necessary to incorporate these into their mainstream work.
- However, the selective adoption of Plan procedures supports quality achievement and timely delivery of promised outputs. This promotes the credibility of partners and Plan with communities, and their visibility too.
- Even so, the volume of Plan's support tends to discourage partners from building bridges with other stakeholders, especially the government, or to look for leveraging opportunities.
- An important factor that could affect efficiency is the inherently unequal relationship that governs contacts between Plan staff and partner teams. The perception of partner staff as subordinates cannot be healthy for the development of true and sustainable partnerships.

To consolidate this process of community investment, Plan will have to support CBOs to replace, over time, the work that NGOs currently do. For this, assistance with institutionalization is critical to sustain morale and to carve spaces for them within the network of agencies that work for social change in the district. Community patience with CBOs may wear out in the future, given the fresh opportunities expected to open to them with the restoration of peace.

Manpower available to CBOs on a voluntary basis could dry out as people from communities link up with larger markets and use their time in more profitable ways.

A relevant issue here is that of the membership of Plan's CBO partners. Most CBOs who partner Plan have been promoted by Plan for the purpose of delivering a PO. Not all of them necessarily represent the intended right holders or beneficiary groups. This is because the movers and shakers of social systems are sometimes found outside those strata of the population that require support, and who might on their own initiative not be able to stimulate the forces of change. This is an appropriate starting point and tactic for Plan's work in communities. Yet, over time, the strategy to progressively include and involve directly those members of the community who need support in the decision-making and management of the CBO, must express itself.

4.4. Sustainability

4.4.1. Defining the Pillar

Sustainability generally seems to be a vague term and covers different dimensions of the development process. Undoubtedly, it is an important pillar for the overall partnership approach in Programme implementation modality. This pillar aims to examine the conditions that ensure "self-propelling" of the process or approach at the community level on withdrawal of external support. In other term it could be defined as institutionalization of the process or approach at the community level, which is clearly linked with the institution building of different partner organizations also. Institutionalization of partner ensures a strong driving force to steer the process, which is expected to be an effective and efficient mechanism that ensures continuation of the Programme in long run.

It is critical to discuss about the role of different types of partners, including Plan, in sustaining the Programme at the community level. Currently, Plan and CBOs/NGOs are two major actors at the community level. However, there are some government Programmes, also being supported by Plan, which is delivered at the community level, some times in close coordination with the local partners. Primarily, Plan is clear on its commitment to strengthen the community process in the form of CBO or any other form of community organizations, to ensure sustainability of the Programme. NGOs and other types of partners are expected to help institutionalize the local groups, through various types of capacity building interventions. But the field level reality reveal different scenarios. A clear deviation on the envisioned role of NGO partners are visible in most working areas, NGO partners are at times competing with the community organizations in Programme implementation to ensure their sustained presence in the community.

It is understandable that there is no clearly prescribed guideline or time line to determine when the local process should be self sustained, but Plan also lacks the clear indicators and situation when the community will be ready to take over the process. As a learning organization, Plan should consider gathering experiences of Bhojpur, Bhajang and Salyan, the districts from where Pan has suddenly withdrawn its support for number of reasons.

Hence, this pillar is examined from two different dimensions of sustainability – Programme and institutions. The pillar is divided into ten following parameters in consistent to other pillars.

- Participation of community representatives in governing body
- Succession policy and second line leadership
- Established systems for HR and financial management
- Capacity to manage funds over time
- Clear fund raising strategy with proposal development skills
- Quality of work with government

- Contribution to and integration with District Development Plans
- Quality of links with other district and national agencies
- Withdrawal/phase-out strategy

4.4.4. Scorecard analysis

Table VI I Summary of scores on Sustainability Parameters

All scores on 0-10 scale

ASSESSMENT BY → ----- PARAMETER ↓	Partners' self score through questionnaire		Consultant team		Weighted score for parameter
	CBO	NGO	CBO	NGO	
Participation of community representatives in governing body		5.0	9	0.6	4.9
Staff position: technical, support, animator levels in comparison to Plan activity targets		6.6		3.8	4.6
Succession policy and second line leadership		8.1		3.3	4.7
Established systems for HR and financial management: personal growth, career planning, audit, reporting		8.7		3.3	5.0
Capacity to manage funds over time: projects managed successfully, clarity of financial processes		8.6	3.0	3.3	4.8
Clear fund raising strategy, with proposal development skills		7.0	0	2.0	3.5
Quality of work with government: schemes accessed and implemented, fund channeled	5.7	6.5	1.0	1.6	2.7
Contribution to and integration with DDP	6.9	6.1	1.0	1.3	2.8
Quality of links with other districts and national agencies		6.9	0	1	2.8
Withdrawal/phase-out strategy with community capacity building strategy		7.0	0	0	2.1

Degree of Inclusion of marginalized communities, women, dalits	8.3				2.5
Kind of support that CBOs anticipate need of in the future	7.0				2.1
Convergence of PLAN Programme with Govt objective	5.9				1.8
Average weighted score for parameters					3.8
Plan team score for pillar during field visits					4.1
Partner score for pillar in focus group discussions					4.4
Pillar score					4.0

Participation of community representatives in governing body

- Representation of community in the governing body of any partner organizations is expected to ensure their engagement at the decision making process which ultimately promotes greater ownership over the process. Communities are organically represented in CBO governing body virtue of its nature. But in case of NGOs, it is important to examine it differently in relation to the kinds of NGO partners working at the community level. Category one of NGO partner includes CBOs registered as NGO but still working as CBO according to the understanding and definition of Plan. This category of NGO partners will have no problem in participation of community representatives in their governing body. Second category of NGO partners includes district level NGOs working in various communities within the districts and beyond. Since these NGOs are usually not from the community they will have apprehension to get community representatives on board in the governing body. A third category of NGO partner is defined as national NGO. These categories of NGO partner in Plan are generally having external staff working in the community and there is no chance of engaging community people in the governing body.
- In conformity with the prevailing situation, both NGOs and CBOs scored 5.0, which is by all means moderate. But the considering level of participation of community representatives in case of CBOs the score is low and on realization during focused group discussion the score rose up to 9.0.
- NGO staff are in position to meet Plan activities targets; there are adequate staff with the necessary skills to carry out Plan's work

Representation of community people in the governing body is expected to ensures ownership that ultimately helps in safeguarding community rights and addressing needs. In the existing mechanism, focused support for CBO

institutionalization is the only option that promotes sustained representation of community in decision making process.

Succession policy and second line leadership

- Periodical leadership change in any voluntary organizations is one of the healthy indicators for sustainability. In this parameter, attempts were made to discuss about the succession of mechanism to continue the process that has started with Plan support. Some NGO partners in livelihood, health and education theme have attempted to develop local mechanism in the form of community groups like agriculture groups, development of local paramedical groups and ECD management committee to sustain the process. But its institutional base and management capacity as of now is very weak to propel the current Programme. Locally promoted cooperatives in some districts are the best example of people's organizations with local ownership, local management and local mobilization of fund. The cooperatives also still lack capacity to self-manage and mobilize the locally generated fund.
- Most CBOs lack clear vision of succession and long term continuation of the activities at the community level as they are seen as a mechanism for immediate delivery of services.

In general, entire partnership process lacks clarity on succession policy. The activities implemented in partnership are based on one-year cycle that limits avenue to consider succession policy.

Established systems for HR and financial management

- Most large and established NGOs at national and district level have developed and mobilised personnel, financial & other systems and procedures But most locally based new NGO are yet to develop such systems. However, effective implementation of systems and procedures is yet to be assessed.
- Except very few large and influential NGO partners, others do not have a single institutional governing system. Partners usually develop systems and procedures to meet donor requirement and end up having different financial, reporting and other administrative policies & systems for different donors.
- CBOs are far behind in developing personnel and financial systems and procedures. Plan's requirement of single entry accounting and simple reporting format are met.

Capacity to manage funds over time

- NGO capacity to manage funds over time largely depends on nature of the project that is being implemented.

- At district level, NGOs supported by multiple donors respond to distinct reporting requirements separately.

Clear fund raising strategy with proposal development skills

- Even the big national level NGO partners expressed their inability to continue the Programmes and activities being implemented with Plan support due to lack of funding sources. However in the questionnaire response the NGOs self scored 8.0 on this parameter, which was clear evidence of lack of understanding on fund raising strategy. Clearly, perennial source of fund is key factor for the sustainability of organizations or any other process. Onus lies on both partnering organizations for sustained Programme implementation in long run. There is no clear evidence of mutual dialogue to develop fund raising strategies for sustainability.
- Partner's understanding of the fund raising strategies is limited to deduction of some percentage from staff salary and remuneration, rental from the use of available facilities and minimal membership fee that is charged annually. Most of these funding sources are directly linked with external funding. Some partners however own physical infrastructure such as building land etc, which certainly helps in the organizational sustainability.
- At CBO level there is no clear evidence of fund raising attempts or strategies except poorly mobilized ECD management fund created at the community level.

This situation represents the national NGO scenario where majority of NGO are heavily dependent on donor fund for their operation and Programme implementation.

The state policy also discourages NGO to raise fund as the prevailing society registration act has made a provision of automatic transfer of property and fund to Government of Nepal in case of insolvency of the association due to failure in functioning in accordance to its constitution or any other causes.

Quality of work with government

- Though the quality of work with the government is found to be very poor, both NGOs and CBOs partner scored 5.0. This is clear evidence that the partners are confused between coordination and quality of work. IN some districts coordination seems to be very good. But quality of work in terms of joint Programme implementation, ensuring regularity of Programme on completion of Plan support is not up to standard.
- Very little evidence of work alignment with government schemes or funds at local level

- Plan has made a deliberate attempt at coordination with the government, but the government's perception of Plan is that of a donor who tells them about their plans, but does not involve in the planning stage.

Plan has made untiring efforts to coordinate and align with the government and link it at local level and some results are also visible. But general perception of government is not so positive towards Plan. This could be the result of on going crisis of confidence between NGO and government.

Contribution to and integration with District Development Plans

- Token presence at some DDC meetings with no active contribution
- Plan informs and attends annual meetings for district plans, but the government has no clear commitment to include Plan Programmes in the district periodic plan.
- Some District Development Committees are positive and proactive to coordinate with Plan activities. Plan has also supported in developing District Periodic Development Plan.

Quality of links with other district and national agencies

- If the partners are branches of national level organizations, they have good link with national agencies. But most local NGOs and CBOs have poor link with other district agencies. Most CBOs have attempted to link with local Village Development Committee and NGOs attempts to link with DDC. Some big partner NGOs have link with other donor at district and national level.
- Majority of local NGOs and most CBOs have funding links only with Plan as a single donors, and they seek Plan support in establishing link with other donors, as they are apprehensive to initiate work in the district where Plan is active. .
- Clear strategy for networking to achieve common goals among partnering organizations are yet to be developed.
- Linkage of partners specifically CBOs seem to be very weak even at the district level, as most of them are heavily dependent with Plan only. They lack exposure and negotiation skill. In this situation, the self score of 6.9 on questionnaire response is very high which was again much lowered during focused group discussion which correspond to 1.0 only.

Withdrawal/phase-out strategy

- Most partners have not begun to think of a withdrawal strategy, would like to continue as long as the funds are available

- Our motive is to understand the sustainability of Plan's Programmes and activities in the long term, which is linked to the sustainability of partner organisations.
- The concept of withdrawal is irrelevant to CBOs.
- As most Programmes are implemented on one-year cycle, there is no phase-out strategy.

4.4.3. District-wise break up of scores for Sustainability

SUSTAINABILITY											
Assessment By →	Self Scoring through questionnaire			Consultant Team Assessment			Plan Team Assessment	NGO/CBO Score			
	CBO	NGO	AVG	CBO	NGO	AVG		CBO	NGO	AVG	
Morang	6.9	7.1	7.0	3.0	2.2	2.6	3.5	4.5	5.0	4.8	
Sunsari	7.5	6.9	7.2	2.4	2.0	2.2	3.5	4.5	5.0	4.8	
Makwanpur	6.8	7.5	7.2	2.6	2.4	2.5	6.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	
Bara	7.0	7.9	7.5	1.8	1.8	1.8	4.6	2.8	5.0	3.9	
Rautahat	7.0	7.4	7.2	1.8	2.1	2.0	3.3	4.0	7.2	5.6	
Banke	5.8	5.9	5.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.5	
Average score			7.0			2.2		4.1		4.4	
									Score for the Pillars 2.5		

4.4.5. Addressing gaps, improving partnership

This pillar attracted a weighted score of 3.7, which is much lower than average. Considering popular criticisms of NGOs not being sustainable and are unable to self propel the Programme being implemented in partnership process, the score still could be considered very high. Critical examination of each parameter, the score suggests that both NGO/CBO and Plan could consider improving in following areas to increase the score in this pillar and make the process more sustainable.

- In the given situation changing Plan's system can not be expected, (but Plan's system does not constrain its collaboration with government, DDC/VDCs and other national and district agencies) it will be worth attempting to integrate & institutionalize the system within partner organization that helps partner to be more effective with full ownership over the system.
- Both Plan and NGO/CBO could consider making deliberate attempt to align with government work and ensure quality.
- Plan could make use of the existing networks of the big national NGO having partnership relationship with Plan and foster horizontal partnership among partner at local level. In fact Plan has already initiated this process with few partners and is expected to continue with others as well.

- Plan should consider revisiting existing capacity building and institutional development support to NGO/CBO, not limiting it the project and Plan requirement.

5. CROSSHAIR ANALYSIS

5.1. Overview

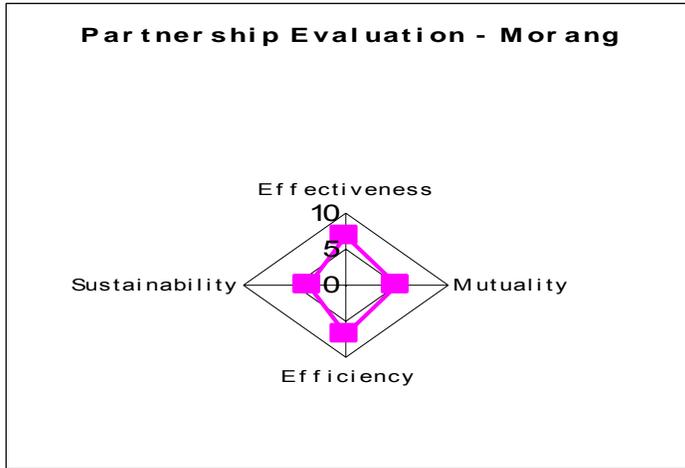
1. Crosshair diagrams are spider diagrams with four variables. The **internal axis** (which is the x-axis) holds the pillars of effectiveness and efficiency, both of which are strongly founded upon Plan's internal systems, structure and strategies.
2. The **external axis** carries the pillars of mutuality and sustainability, both of which are strongly dependent upon external factors for high scores. In effect, this axis represents the degree to which externalities like political atmosphere, policies, partner sensibilities, perceptions of communities, etc affect partnership performance.
3. Taking a broad view, the internal axis clearly runs and dominates Plan Nepal's partnerships through resource allocation, systems development, monitoring and evaluation. Plan's severe financial control and compliance systems result in high effectiveness and efficiency scores.
4. On the other hand, the external axis finds relatively muted expression in all the district crosshairs. This indicates that partner values find less space in Plan's partnerships than would be considered ideal. While the mutuality scores are reasonable, given the weight that resource provision plays in the partnership development process, it is somewhat disturbing to see the low sustainability scores for all districts. This indicates that Plan must balance its investments in Programme design with an equal regard for partner sustainability (financial, institutional, etc) so that Plan's Programme principles can be taken forward even after the withdrawal of Plan's resource support to the area.
5. Promoting sustainability can also be done through:
 - a. Extending the use and knowledge of Plan's monitoring and evaluation, human resource management, and financial control systems to all partner organizations for assimilation and integration into their internal working systems
 - b. Developing secondary level fora for discussion and mutual confidence building through solidarity development

Table IX Overall district-wise comparison of all pillars

Summary Partnership Report Card					
	Mutuality	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Avg
Morang	4.8	6.9	6.6	3.8	5.5
Sunsari	4.8	6.9	6.6	3.9	5.5
Makwanpur	5.8	6.8	6.3	4.5	5.9
Bara	5.3	5.5	5.8	4.1	5.2
Rautahat	5.5	5.5	5.6	4.0	5.2
Banke	5.6	6.0	6.1	3.6	5.1
Average	4.6	6.2	6.1	3.9	5.2

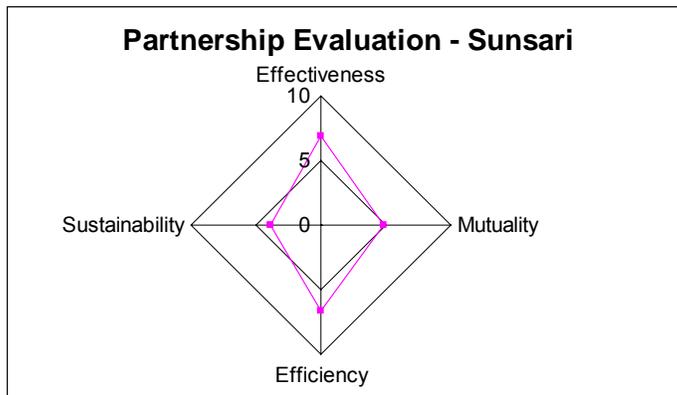
5.2. District-wise notes

5.2.1. Morang/Sunsari



In Morang & Sunsari, Plan is working with NGOs, CBOs and Government as implementing partners. CBOs are seen as people's organizations that deliver services at the community level. There are two different types of NGOs working in Morang and Sunsari – district based NGOs and national NGO. But in any case the NGOs are outsiders to the

community. The NGOs are expected to develop capacity of the CBOs for continuation of the Programme on phase out of Plan support. Plan has made serious attempts to coordinate with the government line agencies. But perception of some government agencies does not seem to be positive. Government claim that they are not involved in the decision making and Plan



does not coordinate at the field level as a result, there are some duplication on Programme implementation.

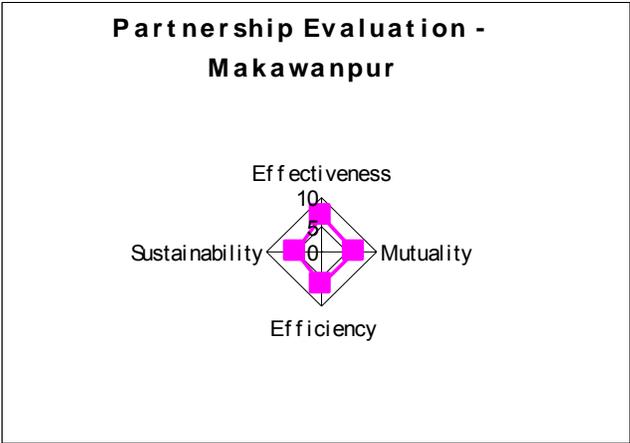
The crosshair diagram of Morang and Sunsari district suggests that the partnership process is highly effective and efficient where as it is less mutual and

sustainable.

Morang and Susnsari district has initiated partner's institutionalization process through POCAP method, which helps the organizations in formulating vision, mission, goal, objectives and strategies.

5.2.5. Makawanpur

Across the district a numbers of cooperatives are formed and many of them are already legally registered. Plan is providing managerial and technical

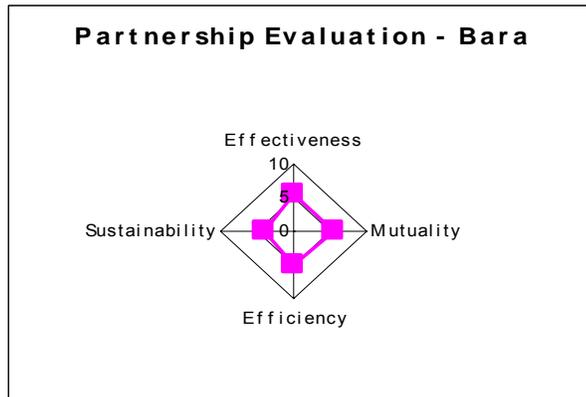


support through a national level expert NGO. The cooperative members are full of enthusiasm, confidence and passion for the sustainability of the institutions. In fact they are people's organizations in the real sense. But at this stage of managerial and technical competence of the cooperatives it is too early to conclude that they will be sustained.

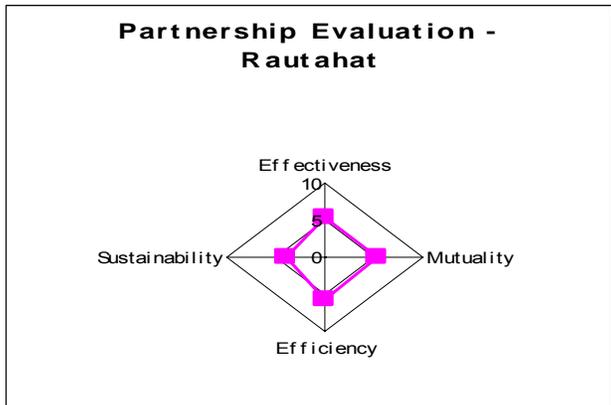
5.2.6. Bara/Rautahat

All CBOs in Bara/Rautahat are registered and legally are NGOs but Plan is still working with them as CBOs. There is a claim that CBOs are forced to get registered but they do not have resources even for annual renewal.

Crosshair diagram of both Bara and Rautahat shows a little higher score in mutuality and sustainability at the cost of lower score on effectiveness and efficiency.



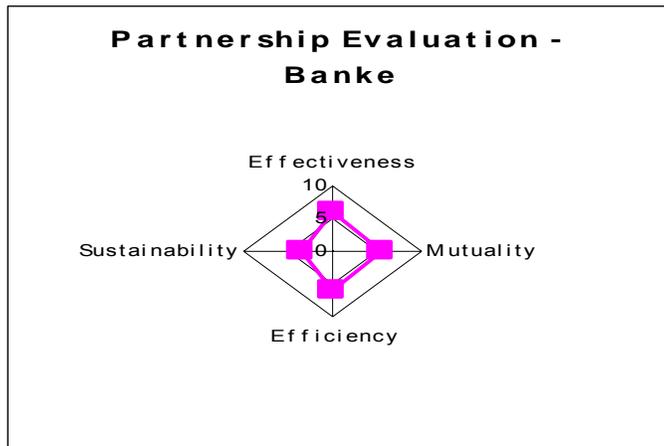
This situation lends to a better balance across the internal and external axes of the partnership. However,



this situation may not meet Plan's needs as system compliance through target achievement and absorption of resources is of paramount interest to Plan.

5.2.7. Banke

The Programme Unit works in three districts. The unit started working in Banke at the initial stage and is continuing its work. In Banke there are mixed type of partnership with CBO, NGO and Government. The Programme unit



has also extended its Programme to adjoining Bardiya and Dang districts. In Banke the unit works with CBOs formed by former Kamaiyas. The CBOs and community members were found to be having strong anti NGO sentiment. Plan's effort in Bardiya in promoting local technical resource persons in the area health, agriculture and

education sector certainly helps sustainability of the Programme in the community. The unit has also extended its work in Dang district with Kamlhari (Tharu Girs) Empowerment, in partnership with one local NGO. Plan is aiming to implement other Programmes also in partnership with the same local NGO partner and has not planned to work with CBOs.

This could be an excellent model to document learning of three different partnership modalities. One is to work with mixed partnership with NGOs and CBOs, next one is to work with CBOs only and third one is to work with one NGO only. These three models could be carefully tracked and document the learning to assess the most effective, efficient, mutual and sustainable model, so that the learning could be translated into actions in other Programme units as well.

6. RETHINKING PARTNERSHIPS IN PLAN NEPAL

This section attempts to consolidate the findings of the analyses presented under the different pillars, and prioritise action for Plan Nepal on improving the quality of partnerships.

6.1. Structures

1. Control of partnerships at the field level is presently distributed across the respective field in-charge. In general, partners report that the work of CBOs is controlled by DCs, while the respective Technical Coordinator monitors NGOs. Partnership with the government is shared by them, as well as with the PU Manager. In effect this parallel tracking and administration of the work of partners can lead to their partial understanding of the work of Plan, depending on the quality of sharing of the work manager with the partner.

Partners in Plan's work in Nepal can be categorized into:

Collaborators: those who work in alliance with Plan to extend services to Plan teams in the field, or to community organizations. They have field teams and skilled manpower. All of them are registered as NGOs

Vendors: those who offer support services to Plan to train collaborator and community organization partners. Most of them operate at the national level and work in many districts alongside Plan teams. They are technically proficient and have in-house capabilities for training. Many have field teams who implement work as collaborators too.

Community organizations: commonly called CBOs, they provide the critical interface with communities and children. Many of them are registered thus blurring the distinction between NGOs and CBOs. Even if community organizations work as hard on delivering outputs to meet Plan PO objectives, they are not supported for institutional costs, or offered capacity building except those inputs necessary to meet those objectives, such as school construction, photography. The most important distinction is that those who are members of community organizations are not remunerated for their services. In our opinion, this discrimination weakens the stability of the community organization.

Investment in all the above types of partners is limited to training for skill development, project implementation and financial compliance. Very little is done towards the vision development of the partner organization, or the alignment of their vision with that of Plan's, and of integrating Plan's principles into their work ethic and belief systems.

► In order to develop a comprehensive overview of partner development, streamline and making partner selection processes transparent, recognizing and

developing their distinctive typologies and characteristics, leveling terms across different partners to reduce disparities in reward and remuneration, and to track each partnership effectively for contribution to children's lives, it is important to have **a single locus of control for partnerships within Plan**. Plan Nepal would be benefited by the presence of a **Partnership Manager** at Kathmandu who works in close collaboration with the HR Manager, and the field teams.

In addition to the above activities, an important additional function of the partnership manager could be to develop auxiliary systems to facilitate, speed up and ensure timely transfer of funds to partners so that field schedules are minimally affected, and project quality is protected.

2. A partnership with Plan Nepal is founded upon a contract with a potential agency. This is the primary structural unit of the partnership. The contract, in turn, has its conceptual roots and operational detail in the respective PO that is drawn up. The PO in turn contributes to the relevant CPO of the Plan Nepal CSP. This design pathway locates the potential partner within a strategic framework that conforms to Plan's guiding principles and strategic directions, and aligns it with the value base of Plan.

The structural strength presented by this scheme is compromised when the POs, which are founded upon sectoral priorities, are broken down into activity lines that are delivered by the partner agency. In this process of contract development, often the parts are detailed at the cost of a vision of the whole. Most partners are unable to connect their contractual obligations with the larger holism of Plan's work, especially with regard to child rights and child centredness.

► This weakness needs to be addressed by an improved sensitization process wherein partner organisations with Plan commonly **design contracts within the contexts of the respective PO and CPO on the basis of a common understanding** of the larger picture. The scope of collaboration needs to expand to include the major stakeholders, and the responsibilities allocated within a contract constitute a core set of activity that all involved can locate within the child rights framework and Plan Nepal's priorities.

3. To cement the real foundations of Plan's partnerships in Nepal, it is necessary to support community organizations in vision development, systems and manpower development, and effective financial and operational tracking systems. In effect, this amounts to institutional support for community organizations. However, the true challenge lies in the consolidation of energies that are emerging at the community level. In the current climate of people's power, it is appropriate that Plan fuels these aspirations so that its mandate of promoting children's rights Programming at the community level is furthered.

► Plan must **support community organizations to federate and register at the regional and district levels** to provide them legitimacy, voice and space in

the district administration and muscle to negotiate with the government and bureaucracy to promote children's views and rights with authority and confidence. These federations will need to be supported with vision development, systems development as well as some degree of linking with like-minded agencies interested in children's welfare and development. Specific project support for issues such as trafficking and child labor could provide an activity base that will help federations to establish their financial and operational locus-standi in the short and medium terms.

6.2. Systems

1. The most important shortcoming of all types of partners seems to be the absence of a long-term vision. Most collaborators work on a project-to-project basis, developing competencies according to the need of different support agencies. This lends to short-term improvisation without adequate consolidation of skills and competencies. Often, a consequence is the loss of skilled manpower upon the cessation of project support. Among community organizations, the practice of Plan in parceling task assignments to community organizations does not lend to comprehensive system and vision development in partners.

► Plan must **contribute to holistic vision development of partners**, and the supporting systems necessary to articulate that vision. In the process, alignment of partner visions with Plan's will allow for better coordination, goal attainment, and sustainability.

2. Partners welcome Plan's systems because they challenge and improve their internal capacities to control and organize themselves and their projects. Two aspects need attention here. First, while Plan systems are incorporated systematically with regard to the project they are supported for, rarely are they adopted wholesale for the entire organization. Second, the formalism and rigidity of Plan systems imply that specialist personnel are needed to sustain them. Beyond project frames, such staff would be difficult to employ and hold within partner organizations.

► Plan's FOB provides all partners with an opportunity to upgrade and refresh their own performances and responses to the challenge of accountability and transparency. Their adoption on a larger scale than that of their project involvement would be facilitated if Plan sought **a middle ground between partners' current systems, if any, and the formal requirements of the FOB and CPME**. It is beyond the mandate of this study to articulate the interfaces possible. However, some initial suggestions could be: more extensive use of participatory tools, softening reporting requirement by adapting formats that partners already have and building upon them, and, expanding the training inputs to partners to include. In these ways, better ownership of emerging systems develops. Capacity building for systems integration must assume an important role in the training calendar.

3. The most serious shortcoming of Plan's systems requirements is that information flow is largely one-way, compliance being demanded by Plan on regular reporting indicators for Programmes as well as finances. However, a return flow of information on consolidation of the information generated and a discussion on mutually agreed change is noticeable by its absence.

► **The constitution of formal feedback systems that offer guidance to partners on their performance, beyond audit comments**, as well as feedback on Plan's larger progress and performance, is critical to the development of mutual confidence on the direction of partnerships. Regular feedback will strengthen Plan's guiding principles of cooperation as well as empowerment. The **transformation of information into knowledge** of use to all stakeholders will require specialist skills in communication.

4. Formal systems and processes for the selection of partners exist. Yet, partners have questioned the transparency of Plan teams in respecting due process, and of biases in partner selection. The renewal of annual contracts without an assured perspective of longer engagement also contributes to the insecurity of partners.

► Educating partners afresh about selection criteria, and involving them in the processes of partner selection will instill confidence in them and provide the foundation for more concerted action. Partner selection needs to be coordinated at NCO through the Partnership Manager (proposed above) for **transparency of selection and uniformity of application of selection criteria**.

► As partners are selected, a **longer term partnership relationship** within the framework of the relevant PO could be agreed upon, within which annual reviews and renewal processes can be located. Appropriate clauses based upon performance delivery and target achievement can become the bases for the review and renewal processes.

6.3. Strategies

In complement to the CPOs in Plan Nepal's CSP, strategies for partnership to support and promote Plan's mission in the country must be codified along the following lines.

1. Partners display very weak levels of understanding and expression of CCCDA and child rights Programming. This demands an urgent revisit of Plan's strategies with regard to the internalization of these principles among partners. This is critical to the alignment of Plan's vision and needs with those of partners.

► A formal **review of the capacity building process to incorporate the principles and practice of child centredness** and practice of child rights

Programming must be done in collaboration with partners so as to improve current practice, monitor all efforts and track them for effectiveness. Training must be viewed as only one element in the sensitization and internalization process. It must be supplemented by other kinds of inputs such as exposures, pilot Programming, joint action and institutionalizing mutual learning systems on this aspect. Plan's capacities to design and sustain this range of activities also needs review, and support from other agencies is recommended.

2. The primary constituency that Plan works with is the children of the poorer communities in Nepal. These children are reached through community organizations that, in effect, constitute the frontline interface between the children and Plan. It is in Plan's interest to strengthen these interfaces so that Plan's objectives are protected and promoted, and more, advanced by communities themselves.

► As a matter of principle, and to confirm commitment to community building processes in the current atmosphere of people's empowerment in Nepal, Plan needs to adopt a **formal strategy of institutionalization of community organizations**. This includes supporting their federation (discussed earlier), systems development, manpower planning, and progressive inclusion in higher-level fora such as district planning meetings and national level events.

3. As much as partners are asked for compliance and transparency, Plan Nepal too needs to reciprocate by contributing to the pool of common knowledge about intentions, strategies, funds flow and duration of commitment.

► In the interests of mutual transparency and learning, **Plan Nepal could also be open to public audits of its entire structure and system**, and collaborations in the field. Regular expression of these elements through publications, and through participation in joint fora with partners will contribute to the promotion of public accountability, and set standards for partners to align with.

4. The guidelines being developed by the Association of International NGOs (AIN) in Nepal offer Plan Nepal with an opportunity to align with other stakeholders in coordinating and promoting a code of practice for themselves and their partners

► Plan Nepal must leverage its position within the network of international agencies in the country by leading the effort to **adopt and institutionalize a code of practice** that makes its commitments, actions and finances transparent to all relevant stakeholders. Such a code of practice could include some or all of the following elements:

- Demonstrated commitment towards promoting child rights
- Avoidance of party politics
- Not including family members in governing bodies

- Adherence and commitment to corruption-free working
- Inclusion of community representatives in governing board
- Inclusion of marginalized communities in decision-making processes
- Ethical issues such as respect to local cultures, incorporation of indigenous knowledge,
- Resisting the acceptance of foreign/external assistance that has conditions tied to it, and if it has negative implications for the child rights framework
- etc

6.4. Staff and Styles

1. In line with the general lack of vision building and organizational development processes in partner organizations, the poor leadership skills and almost total absence of interest in second line development indicate a gaping weakness. The presence of these elements will help to sustain Plan's investments in communities that partners work in by ensuring continuity and people development.

► **Leadership development within partners** and the identification of second line staff with a clear **succession policy** should be part of the portfolio of Plan's HR work in all CPOs. Creatively locating the role of children beyond token appearances at events so as to enable them to play a more organic role in community organizations and their development is a primary challenge that the HR manager must address with the support of specialist external support.

Child clubs are community organizations in their own right and, as has been said earlier for community organizations, should be promoted and federated at VDC, district and national levels. Representation of child clubs in decision making process should be made mandatory by law and institutional set up at all levels. For example, nomination of one or two child club representatives in local bodies (VDC/DDC) could be enforced through amendment in Local Self-governance Act.

2. The perception of partner staff as "subordinate" to Plan team staff derives from the control over financial flow and power in partner selection.

► **Attitudinal reorientation of Plan staff** to promote a sense of equality within teams and with partners is important to develop an atmosphere of improved cordiality. The actions suggested above to improve transparency and improve selection processes will also contribute to the improvement of relationships across all stakeholders in Plan work.

3. Staff development in partner teams beyond skill training for project delivery depends on the existence of formal processes and systems. To this end, Plan can support partners and secondary institutions (federations, etc) in

▶ **HR systems development for partners**, wherein work conditions and terms, formal recruiting and exit processes, performance appraisal, etc can be formalized and affected

▶ Rejuvenate training approaches to move beyond input delivery to process learning, participatory tracking of inputs and mutual feedback systems for learning. This will involve a **review of the training strategy** for Plan Nepal, and the explicit articulation of strategic elements aimed at moving Plan and partners **towards a learning organization**.

6.5. Synergies

Plan Nepal's active contributions to AIN and other fora need to be built upon so that the advantages of joint action are leveraged to advance Plan's vision and mission in Nepal. Plan's close links with the government, especially in the sectors of health and education need to be leveraged for better influence with regard to policy formulation and Programme design for children.

1. Partnerships need to be recognized for their potentials to promote concepts and ideas for change. While funding is an important route by which these ideals are promoted, there are many other ways by which a donor-recipient relationship can be vitalized (?), such as

▶ Formation of **solidarity groups** among partners and with others in Nepal

▶ Creating **child rights groups** among community organizations to provide space and opportunity for expressing local level issues and interests, providing support for documentation and sharing efforts, etc

▶ **Joint action for policy influence** by empowering committees of different partner representatives (government, community organizations, collaborating organizations, etc) to present the case for child rights Programmement and advocacy for different elements of the CSP

2. In an impoverished economy such as Nepal's, Plan's resources can and do make a significant difference to the status of children and their families. However, the Plan teams strict confinement to its CSP elements tends to cloud its commitment to addressing the structural causes of poverty. The symptomatic treatment of only those aspects of social and community living that directly or indirectly affect the lives of children can result in the relative neglect of addressing hard elements of poverty alleviation. Redressing these can provide strong support to the sustainability of Plan's mainstream work. This approach can

also address the serious complaint of poor results with regard to social inclusion among Plan's partners.

► An urgent **review of all Plan partner activity for the degree of social inclusion achieved** is necessary so that partnership effectiveness can be protected with regard to the achievement of Plan's strategic directions. Active steps to promote this dimension include: participatory stocktaking, identification of marginalized and underprivileged groups within communities and development of supplementary action plans to strengthen social inclusion.

► Self-introspection on the degree of inclusiveness of Plan teams and partner teams will throw up important information on how formal systems and processes can result in systematic marginalization.

► **Addressing the structural causes of poverty in a systematic manner** is an effort that Plan and partner teams need to be trained and oriented to. With the support of external resource persons, and using the knowledge already available within community organizations, modules for this orientation can be developed and implemented. Beyond this, transforming these into actionable elements could involve support from other agencies already working in the Nepal environment that have had more experience and success with this.

► A better alignment with government at the local and national levels is necessary for Plan to seriously address the structural causes of poverty. **Improving links with the government and conscious alignment with five-year plans**, and active collaboration with officials in different functions will enrich the background support for Plan's work with other partners. Partnership with government needs to move beyond financial support (medicines, educational hardware, etc) towards process support to government officials, training and sensitization, and empowerment so that child rights Programming can be actualized within government systems. Opportunities to work with other INGOs in Nepal on this must be explored.

3. An enormous wealth of experience and interest, backed by conceptual work exists with regard to child rights promotion in Nepal. Plan could begin a process of dialogue with other INGOs and government agencies in the country to initiate common awareness of child rights in the general population.

► **Joint action with other like-minded stakeholders** for child rights awareness generation assumes priority within the changing political context of the country. Specific action oriented with partners and other INGOs (eg. children's contribution to democratic process and nation building) could lead to improved synergies and mutual respect for each other's ways of working.

4. The most significant synergies must necessarily lie in sharing and generating learning through common action across Plan's activities and with other stakeholders.

► **Systematic sharing of documentation of Plan's efforts** beyond project output tracking, with reflective elements, and fora for consistent sharing of these are important for sharing the vision and its translation into meaningful action. Building in responsibility for reflection and documentation at partner and community level through the project contracts can become an important beginning in promoting learning systems. An exploratory workshop to define the scope of promoting Plan as a learning organization could provide the basis for concrete action within the current CSP that will affect all CPOs and work priorities.

► **Pilot activity development** that involves coalitions of partners for a common objective can become a pragmatic basis for common learning. Similarly, demonstration projects that highlight Plan's concerns, and which are implemented by groups of partners in different locations can serve a similar purpose. In many of the 127 VDCs that Plan operates in, other development agents have also been active. A good beginning to joint action would be the identification of child-poverty related issues for special management with other INGOs and the local government through a grant.

These suggestions provide a conceptual and practical basis for improving the contribution of partners to Plan and vice versa, and to generate common learning among partners and stakeholders. Many of these suggestions should also contribute to diluting the insularity that Plan has been perceived of, which stems from its relative lack of dependence upon other sources of finance and material resource.

Plan's experiences with partners in Nepal have resulted in almost three decades of real achievement in the area of child and community development. However, a fresh opportunity now presents itself in the changing political circumstances and governance of the country. New spaces are being opened through these changes, and Plan must creatively use these for the benefit of children in poor communities. To optimize resource use and generate the growth of common understanding to this end, it is important that Plan partners different kinds of stakeholders and work in a more egalitarian mode.

7. PLATFORM FOR ACTION: In summary of the above section, the following platforms for action (Table X) in the short (eight months) and long (beyond eight months) terms suggest themselves for Plan Nepal.

Table X
PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

Organisational factor	Short term actions	Long term actions
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing a single locus of control for partnerships in Plan through the appointment of a Partnership Manager -Review and redesign of contracts to locate the work of partners within the respective CPOs and CSP -Develop a perspective of community organization that includes federation of community organizations according to region, work affiliation and issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partnership Manager assumes responsibility for all partnership related functions currently under the purview of technical coordinators and PU Managers -Federation of community organizations according to the perspective and strategy developed
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -develop OD module to aid partners in holistic vision development -seek to soften weight of Plan systems by finding middle ground between requirements of Plan FOB and CPME, and existing systems of partners, develop agreed middle way -initiate action to develop formal feedback and sharing systems beyond CPME and FOB to develop shared understanding and improve transparency -review selection process for transparency of action and common understanding of selection criteria and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -implement OD module for vision development of partners -field test and implement middle path with regard to FOB and CPME, generate learning within partners about use of these for knowledge creation -develop formal fora for sharing at district and national levels for increased learning and common understanding -Partnership Manager to take responsibility for transparency of selection processes and criteria, and to apply uniform standards
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -review capacity building processes to reinforce knowledge of principles and practice of child centredness -formalise strategy for federation of community organizations (in continuation of perspective discussed under "structures" above) -Plan initiates steps to open its systems to public audit, sets example to community of international donors in Nepal -initiate steps to adopt and institutionalize AIN's Code of practice to make commitments transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -conscious screening of all capacity building inputs to include knowledge of child centredness and child rights programming -implement strategy for federation of community organizations with the assistance of NGO and government partners -Systematic annual public audits of Plan's systems and performance in Nepal with documentation -including code of practice discussions in the scope of public audits so as to include partners within the audits
Staff and Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -HR Manager to develop module for leadership development and succession policy in partners -HR Manager and Capacity Building Manager to develop module on attitudinal reorientation of Plan staff to dissolve donor-subordinate consciousness -review HR systems available at partners, and develop support to assist partners in developing comprehensive HR management systems -external review of training systems and strategy to develop a learning focus at all levels, with appropriate knowledge creation as the basis for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -implement module on leadership development with groups of partners, on pilot basis initially -implement module on attitudinal reorientation of Plan staff through initial meetings at district level -implement HR systems development for partners -apply learning from review of training systems to lay foundation for a learning organization through knowledge recognition, consolidation and application at all levels
Synergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -review potentials for creating solidarity groups (issue based) and child rights groups among partners and community groups -explore potentials with other donors for joint action for policy influence, identifying specialist areas (eg ECD) -external review of all Plan activity for real degrees of social inclusion of the weak and marginalized -explore potentials to address structural causes of poverty through Plan projects, and in conjunction with other donors' efforts -review current links with government, and explore potentials for more meaningful collaboration beyond fund provision, to innovation and creative exchange of resources -initiate dialogue with like minded stakeholders to improve child rights awareness -initiate dialogue with existing partner network on child poverty issues, with a view to identify potential for special and joint action -review of learning systems to initiate systematic sharing of information and knowledge from Plan's work with all partners and other donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -organise solidarity groups and child rights groups, facilitate initial meetings, share documentation -develop, with other donors, action plans for policy influence and shaping in selected areas -sharing findings of review of social inclusion in Plan work with partners, identification of steps to be taken, and agreement of common action plan with monitoring of efforts -initiate policy debate within donor circles and with partners to improve common understanding of structural causes of poverty, and identify first steps to address these -improve working with government so as to reinforce Plan presence in government circles, alignment with policy and planning cycles of government -joint action with donors and coalitions of partners on child rights awareness and child poverty related issues -implement first steps to share information and knowledge from Plan and partner experiences in selected areas through specialized for and publications

This table provides a quick overview of the roadmap in the near and distant future for Plan Nepal to build upon its present partnership and activity base and evolve more meaningful relationships within Nepal's polity and institutional structures. The success of its execution and the realization of results from this platform for action will depend upon the degree of commitment with which Plan leadership and teams in Nepal approach this challenge. While the analysis aimed at improving partnership quality, this set of findings clearly indicate a wider range of benefits for the Plan family in Nepal that could significantly improve Plan's presence in Nepal, and fulfillment of its ambitions in these times of change for the country.