

GOAL ALIGNMENT IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT: COLLABORATIVE BUT DYNAMIC –

THE AMSTERDAM INITIATIVE FOR MALNUTRITION AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Despite the rising popularity and hailed promise of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for development, to date little research has been done on the internal dynamics of these often complex forms of inter-organizational collaboration. With parties involved ranging from purely public sector based to private, commercially driven organizations, often answering to drastically different constituencies, both strategic and operational realities and the goals pursued through partnership diverge. Little prior research has been undertaken into the nature of the goals that are being pursued, and how these goals are being aligned for the purpose of the initiative. This paper presents a qualitative case study of the Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition (AIM), a prominent Dutch PPP for development involving government, academia, and various non-governmental organizations and private sector parties. An iterative coding procedure of data in the form of various documents and semi-structured interviews with key individuals was carried out. Goal alignment was shown not to occur at one moment in time, but instead to be an ongoing and dynamic process. The analysis revealed however, that at least in the PPP for development under investigation no explicit goal alignment process occurred. Instead, goal alignment appears to happen implicitly, influenced by various factors. This research fills a knowledge gap and contributes to the literature on public-private partnerships for development and inter-organizational collaboration, facilitating the practice of goal analysis and alignment in collaborative ventures.

Key words: Public-Private Partnerships, PPPs, development, goal alignment, inter-organizational collaboration, intersectoral collaboration, nutrition security, malnutrition



INTRODUCTION

To cope with changing perspectives on development aid and public demands for increased efficiency and effectiveness, the involvement of the private sector constitutes a growing priority in many development aid programs (IOB, 2013). Meanwhile, in a response to increasing demands for Corporate Social Responsibility and a growing realization of the potential of the so-called Base of the Pyramid (BoP) (Prahalad, 2005), corporations are increasingly targeting development issues. These developments are contributing to the emergence of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), a type of intersectoral collaborative venture involving government, business and potentially other parties, becoming increasingly popular in both development and corporate policy and practice as a means of addressing global development issues (e.g. Buse & Walt, 2000a; MFA, 2013a; World Bank, 2002).

Both the appeal of and the challenge inherent in PPPs for development can be related to the effort of building new relationships between actors that have drastically different constituencies and interests, accompanied by divergent strategic and operational realities. Whereas most public parties may be expected to leverage partnerships to contribute toward the achievement of their development objectives, businesses are generally perceived to partake in PPPs only when cooperation directly or indirectly contributes to corporate profitability (Bakan, 2004; Kolk et al., 2008). Strategic objectives of involved parties in PPPs for development could thus be very different. For a PPP to be effective however, shared partner commitment to formal goals and social value generation is argued to be crucial (Arya & Salk, 2006), indicating the need for alignment of the different goals that partners bring to the table.

The increase in popularity of PPPs for development has spurred research on these collaborative ventures, ranging from organizational perspectives evaluating internal dynamics, to policy perspectives concerned with external effects and impact of these partnerships, to governance perspectives analyzing the influence of the partnerships on public decision-making (Glasbergen, 2011). Several models depicting the process of such partnerships have been proposed, numerous impact and effectiveness studies have been performed, and several terms and definitions are proposed to label the phenomenon. Within this growing base of research, it is striking that the process of alignment of the goals pursued by different-sector organizations involved has been largely ignored. The research in this paper at hand therefore sets out to provide more insight into this process by answering the following research question: *How are the goals of parties involved in Public-Private Partnerships for development aligned for the joint initiative?*

DEFINING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

By definition, PPPs are an inter-organizational phenomenon and are a type of collaborative ventures, with two or more organizations contributing resources such as money, staff time, expertise, etc., to undertake a project that could and/or would not be done by one organization alone (e.g. Gray, 1985). Hence, according to the traditional economic view, these ventures are initiated based on the need to acquire necessary complementary resources in the pursuit of shared objectives. Such multi-organizational collaborative relationships have been the focus of extensive research (e.g., Gulati & Singh, 1998; Kogut, 1988; Williamson, 1991). These collaborative ventures may consist exclusively of private organizations, or may encompass collaboration among private, governmental, and/ or civil society organizations.



The latter form of collaboration, spanning the borders of the business, government, and civil society sectors, is frequently referred to in the literature as Cross-Sector Partnerships. This term again covers a variety of inter-organizational relationships and terminology under its umbrella, such as multi- or cross-sector collaboration (Hardy, Lawrence & Philips, 2006); business or government nonprofit partnerships (Austin, 2000c; Gazley & Brudney, 2007); business-community partnerships (Loza, 2004); collaborative or multiparty alliances (Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright, 2004; Zeng & Chen, 2003) and finally, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

These Public-Private Partnerships, in their traditional sense leveraged as a new approach for managing cities, are broadly defined as “an arrangement in which a government and a private entity, for-profit or non-profit, jointly perform or undertake a traditionally public activity” (Savas, 2000, p. 15), in which private partners are commonly involved for profit motives (Zadek, 2008). Public-Private Partnerships targeting development issues however, are subject to different dynamics than these ‘traditional’ PPPs. They are situated in an uncertain, complex, and often distant setting, generally lacking good governance. Moreover, with often heterogeneous partners successful collaboration requires a great degree of trust or at the very least an understanding of the different backgrounds of each partner (Kolk et al., 2008).

As is typical in a new and evolving field, terminology in the academic literature for these Public-Private Partnerships leveraged for development purposes, or shorter, PPPs for development, varies and to date scholars have not managed to reach an overall consensus on what actually constitutes such a Public-Private or Cross-Sector Partnership. Other references to these PPPs for development include cause-based partnerships (Parker & Selsky, 2004); Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSPs) (e.g., Selsky & Parker, 2005); issues management alliances (Austrom & Lad, 1989); business-community partnerships (Loza, 2004); social or multiparty alliances (Berger et al., 2004; Zeng & Chen, 2003); Social Partnerships (Waddock, 1991; Warner & Sullivan, 2004); and social service partnerships (Takahashi & Smutny, 2002).

Again, these terms encompass a very broad range of projects and there is a wide variety of forms and shapes these PPPs for development can take (Reed & Reed, 2009). They may vary in terms of their size, scope, and purpose. Moreover, they may vary in level of engagement (local to global) and diversity of partners, and range from dyads to multiparty arrangements. They may deal with a variety of issues, and potentially have a role in both agenda setting and implementation activities. Participation may be completely voluntary to fully mandated (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Finally, their timelines range from single, one-off events to collaborations going on over several years (Hemmati, 2002).

The multiplicity of terms and definitions, sometimes even used concurrently in the same document (e.g. United Nations, 2004), calls for greater clarity and rigor in the use of the term ‘Public-Private Partnership for Development’. For this research at hand the following definition of a PPP for Development is proposed:

A voluntary, integrative collaborative effort of actors from the private profit and/ or non-profit and public spheres of society, in which they strategically aggregate their resources and competencies and share responsibilities, risks, and benefits, aiming for joint value creation in pursuing a common, overarching development goal that no member can achieve on its own.



ANALYZING PPPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The existing literature provides several frameworks in which the development, management, and analysis of PPPs for development are depicted. They almost universally agree that these partnerships can be examined as consisting of chronological stages, and both strategic management and collaboration literature provide several stage models (e.g. Austin, 2000b; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Gray, 1989; McCann, 1983; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Waddell & Brown, 1997; Waddock, 1989). However, the number of stages, the labels attached to these stages, and the variables examined within these stages vary (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Generally, the more detailed models are said to further a better understanding of issues related to the management of the collaboration, such as how to select partners, how to design partnerships, and how long-term sustainability and success of these partnerships can be ensured (Glasbergen, 2011). One empirically validated process model in the literature describing collaborative strategic management is that of Clarke and Fuller (2001), in which they incorporated the dynamic, co-evolutionary process these PPPs for development generally were found to be subject to. Their model incorporates implementation of the partnership and dynamism in the collaborative process at both the individual organizational level and the level of collaboration. The authors moreover leave room for expanded outcomes of interest and included feedback loops. Their model does not just incorporate enduring collaboration as an outcome such as in Waddell & Brown's (1997), but also focuses on the collaborative strategic plan, the collaborative goals achieved, the actions taken both by individual organizations and the collaboration as a whole, and the organizational learning outcomes. Clarke & Fuller's (2011) model, displayed in figure 1 below, thus appears to be the most applicable when analyzing the process of goal alignment in PPPs for development.

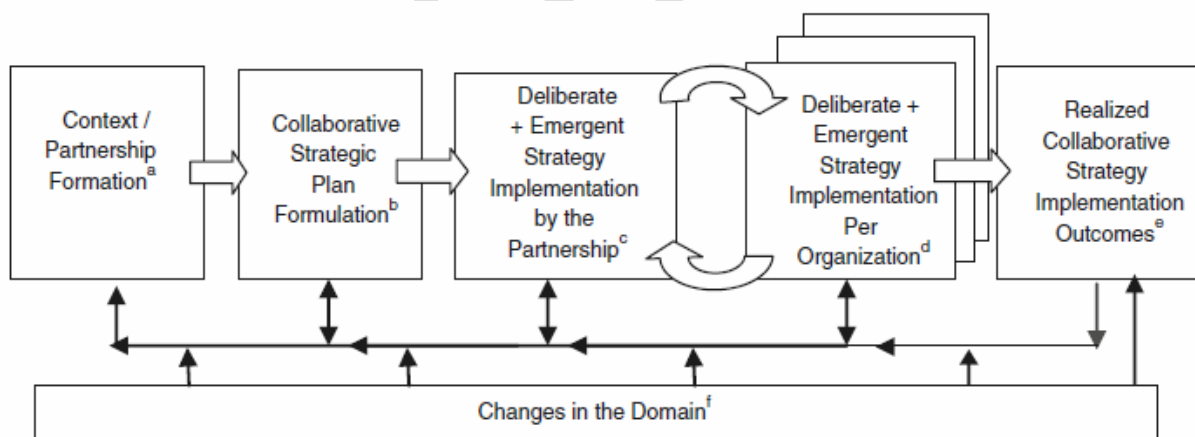


Figure 1: Process model of collaborative strategic management. Source: Clarke & Fuller (2011), p. 90.

During the first stage, marked with *a* in the figure above, the context is being assessed and the partnership is formed. There is usually a lead organization who targets the social problem(s) and considers different situational factors related to the issue, such as potential partners, resources needed, etc. (Gray, 1989). Next, this lead organization invites initial partners to join in a PPP.



During the second stage of the collaborative strategic management process the collaborative strategic plan is formulated. In this stage, marked with *b*, the partners that have formed the partnership in phase one work together to formulate a common vision, mission and/or values statement(s) and translate these statements into overarching, long-term collaborative goals, or *meta-strategy* (Glasbergen, 2011; Huxham & MacDonald, 1992) to achieve the partnership's overall goal, termed *meta-goal* by Huxham and Vangen (1996).

Thus, through defining the meta-goal and formulating a collaborative strategic plan, the goals of the partners are being preliminarily aligned. This process of goal alignment may proceed quickly or may take years to negotiate, depending on the nature and extent of the issues involved. Actors often agree to disagree to not be lost in endless discussions (Roloff, 2007), and extremely contentious and divisive topics are generally not included in the consensus documents (Huxham & MacDonald, 1992). The stability that is achieved by formalizing the partnership may become dynamic again when for instance new partners join the partnership or when the initial circumstances on which the partnership is based change in the following implementation phase (Glasbergen, 2011).

Most PPPs tend to alternate between the deliberation and implementation stages in their life cycle. Definitions of the issue, the meta-goals, and the approach may also be reconsidered after evaluation of the outcome of stage *e*. Some PPPs live on after its outcomes are known, other PPPs will either dissolve when the partnership fails to meet the expectations of the partners, or become something else, e.g. lead to the incorporation of results into laws and regulations or to the establishment of a formal organization. Many PPPs fail somewhere along these stages, because all actors need to honor their commitments and the PPP is put to the test by implementation problems. Roloff (2007) therefore included an extra stage into his Life Cycle Model, called the *institutionalization or extinction phase*.

GOAL ALIGNMENT IN PPPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

When actors from different sectors focus on the same issue they are likely to think about it differently, to be motivated by different goals and expected rewards, and to use different approaches (Selsky & Parker, 2005, Waddell & Brown, 1997; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991). The perceived value of collaboration should outweigh its risks. A stronger positive correlation between the goals pursued by partners leads to a stronger incentive to coordinate their actions to mutual benefit (Gray, 1985).

Differences in motivations are believed to derail collaborative intent (e.g., Gricar, 1981) and scholars argue that partnership effectiveness is likely to be the highest if the PPP fits all involved parties' strategic objectives (Kolk et al., 2008). The different motivations and goals that parties bring to the table thus need to be aligned to create a successful partnership. Indeed, based on a meta-review of eleven global partnerships, Bezanson & Isenman (2012) found dealing with asymmetries of power, different perspectives, and often conflicting interests to be influencing the effectiveness of partnerships. When divergent interests of different-sector partners are not being confronted directly and aligned somehow, these asymmetries may lead to sub-optimal results. A balance of value exchange which is perceived to be unequal may eventually even lead to the collapse of the partnership (Austin, 2000b).

However, while prior research has pinpointed the necessity of a "sufficient overlap" between goals of the partners involved, this does not entail that partners need to agree on everything; when they would, the essential



complementarity between partners would to a large extent be lost (Eden & Huxham, 2001; Vangen & Huxham, 2012). Though to ensure that all partners “play by the same rules”, it is key to have clearly articulated goals, transparency, and a clear understanding of each other’s interests, priorities and expectations (Malena, 2004).

Although no clear evidence to date is available, there are good reasons to assume that goal alignment of partners involved in PPPs for development does not happen at one moment in time, say, merely at the partnership formation stage, but rather is a dynamic process. The interests and context of partners can change over time, and new partners may join the partnership while others may leave. Partners communicate knowledge and frame and reframe issues, and the relationships among partners evolve while the situational changing changes (Glasbergen, 2011). It is more realistic to assume that goal alignment is a dynamic, co-evolutionary process. However, how this process among partners unfolds and develops is fully unclear and blank spot in research on PPPs for development. The literature only suggests a number of factors that may play a role in this goal alignment process in PPPs for development: trust (Glasbergen, 2011; Das & Teng, 1998; Malena, 2004; Arya & Salk, 2006; Lister, 2000), power (Doh & Teegen, 2002; Parker & Selsky, 2004; Reed & Reed, 2008; Waddell, 2000; Bezanson & Isenman, 2012), brokering (Westley & Vredenburg, 1991; Arya & Salk, 2006; Roloff, 2007; MirafTAB, 2004), governance (Bezanson & Isenman, 2012; Nisar, 2013; Bezanson & Isenham, 2013; Nisar, 2013) and the extent of goal alignment (Das & Teng, 1998).

Therefore, these factors are included in our study in order describe and reveal the goal alignment process in PPPs for development.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to describe and understand the process of goal alignment in public-private partnerships (PPPs) for development. As we assume this process to be dynamic, and due to the lack of research on the topic we chose for a case study design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Case studies have been a prominent methodology in past research on collaboration and have proven to be particularly useful for generating theoretical and practical insights (Gray & Wood, 1991). To allow for an extensive analysis of the case under investigation, a single case study has been conducted, for which a prominent and large Dutch PPP for development has been selected: the Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition (AIM).

The Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition (AIM)

The Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition (AIM) is a public-private partnership claiming to be a delivery mechanism bringing together different stakeholders to improve food and nutrition security. Officially launched in May 2009 as a partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a UN-affiliated NGO, three Dutch corporations, a Dutch knowledge institution and a prominent Dutch NGO, the partners agreed to work together toward the ambition of reaching 100 million malnourished people in 6 African countries.

In the following years, several other partners joined and at present, AIM consists of 29 partners from both the North and the South. Partners include governments, private sector partners, NGOs, a research institute and a knowledge institution. Partners have committed to invest more than 10 million Euros for the next 5 years into AIM, which then started to be described as a “joint initiative aimed at developing innovative social business ideas and sustainable solutions to tackle malnutrition using a market-based approach” (AIM, 2013).



AIM currently manages a portfolio of 7 pilot projects, or work streams, of which 6 were granted government funding in 2013. Projects are executed throughout the entire value chain and intervene on different aspects related to malnutrition. Common to all projects is that they aim to become sustainable in the long term, and that they provide for the possibility to be scaled up and replicated when they prove to work (AIM, 2013).

AIM, with its broad focal issue and objectives, addressing multiple interests and having multiple focal countries, may thus be categorized as a 'macro-partnership' based on the categorization of Kolk et al. (2008). Based on the categorization of the United Nations Foundation and the World Economic Forum (2003), AIM is a 'multifaceted partnership', collaborating to address the problem of malnutrition, but also aiming to influence government policy and create awareness and political will.

AIM has been selected as the subject of the case study because it is one of the few PPPs for development in which the Dutch government is in fully fledged partnership with the other partners, instead of merely functioning as a funder and then leaving the PPP to get on with its work, for which "donorship" may be a more accurate term (Ahmad, 2006). Because of the substantial involvement of the Dutch government, AIM is more representative of PPPs for development as described in prior research than other PPPs for development in which the Dutch government is involved, allowing for a better generalizability of the results. Moreover, the substantial involvement of the Dutch government provides for dynamics in the process of goal alignment that go beyond the public sector partner's goals boiling down to the requirements set for the PPP to be eligible for funding.

Method of data collection

The objective of the methodology is to gather qualitative and verified data useful for analyzing the key features involved in the process of goal alignment within AIM. Two types of data collection were used to gather data. Documents were made available through both the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the AIM secretariat, including annual reports, narrative progress reports, meeting presentations and minutes, and grant applications. Primary data was supplemented through a web search, analyzing publications of several partners on their websites related to their involvement in AIM.

However, the degree of influence of such official discourses or documents may vary in different circumstances, and what is omitted from such documents may often be fundamental to the operation of the partnership. The real level of influence of different actors thus depends on many factors beyond those that may be identified through a document analysis (McQuaid, 2000) and different actors within a partnership may have different views on its purpose, operation and power structures (McQuaid and Christy, 1999). Key informants of all parties involved were therefore asked for additional information through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow gaining insight into the interviewee's perception by giving them the opportunity to answer freely without guidance (Leech, 2002) and are intended to lead to a (semi-structured) conversation about the topic, leaving room for other, unforeseen but possibly relevant issues to arise. Such interviews are considered to be particularly helpful when trying to understand the perceptions and meanings key actors and their organizations attach to activities and developments (Kolk et al., 2008). Interviews served both to verify selected pieces of information about goal



alignment generated through the document analysis, and generate new information omitted from the documents. By doing so, these interviews increase reliability of the collected data.

The interview protocol consisted of 11 main questions relating to 8 aspects: the objectives of the partner; the meta-goal of AIM; the interviewee's perception on the goal alignment process; factors contributing toward fruitful collaboration; the interviewee's perception on the future of AIM; the role of the AIM secretariat; stakeholder representation; and the distinctive character of AIM as compared to other PPPs for development. Probes were included under the main questions to provide guidance to the interviewer as to which aspects may be interesting to elaborate upon.

In-depth interviews of all but two partners were carried out in the period between March and May 2014, during which senior management, operational staff members or both, depending on availability, were interviewed. Two partners (a Southern NGO and a Southern business partner) could not be reached. Depending on availability, duration of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes and an hour and a half, with an average length of approximately 75 minutes. To give respondents the opportunity to sufficiently prepare and eventually refresh their memories and/or gather information with others in their organizations, main interview questions were sent a few days prior to the interviews, together with a short briefing. To ensure that the respondents could speak freely, they were ensured full anonymity. All interviews were recorded and reports of these interviews were subsequently written and sent back to the respondents for authorization. By requesting feedback and authorization of the interview report by the interviewee, responses could be validated.

One of the former partners, a prominent Dutch NGO, announced to step out of the AIM platform in the same period the interviews were being conducted. Because it was expected that the motivation of this organization to exit the AIM platform could provide valuable insights into the goal alignment process, it was decided to still interview this partner using an adjusted interview protocol. This respondent received a briefing prior to the interview that was similar to the briefing the other respondents received, but which contained the adjusted main interview questions.

Method of data analysis

Data gathered has been analyzed using an interpretative approach, which has allowed to draw rich descriptions and possible explanations (Glaser & Strauss, 1980). The document analysis and semi-structured interviews generated a wealth of information, which has been coded and analyzed through an iterative coding procedure, using a computer software package allowing for deep levels of analysis of large volumes of qualitative data.

RESULTS

Through various questions partners of different sectors were asked about their reasons for involvement and their goals for the collaborative. An extensive document analysis generated further goal statements and indications of organizational goals. From the analysis of key goals of the different parties involved in AIM it becomes clear that all parties pursue multiple with their involvement in PPPs for development. Through the iterative coding process gradually three subcategories of goals emerged, defined as organizational goals, encompassing the motivations of each of the individual organizations for participating in AIM; collaboration goals, encompassing the goals that



partners aspire to achieve together, or the purpose the PPP for development should serve; and operational goals, referring to *how* the collaboration will be undertaken, relating to any aspect of the collaborative process.

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Goals of different partners involved

In table 1 below, these (sub)goals are summarized and wherever relevant integrated into the main goal they refer to. Goals that were stated by only one of the companies or NGOs are considered not to be representative for the category as a whole and are therefore not included in the table.

<i>Organization type →</i> <i>Goal type ↓</i>	Private sector	NGOs	Academia	Government
Organizational goals	Develop market Penetrate market Develop company (South) Reputational enhancement	Create impact on theme Expand network Organizational learning Reputational enhancement	Increase knowledge base Receive funding for research Reputational enhancement Expand networks Create impact on theme	Change government functioning Create impact on theme
Collaboration goals	Business focus Generate social change (South)	Business focus Advocate social change Lobby Experiment/ incubate	Business focus Generate knowledge	(Decentralized) MSP Experiment/ incubate
Operational goals	Implementation/ demonstrate results M&E	Implementation/ demonstrate results M&E Integration Strengthen local focus	Implementation/ demonstrate results	Experimentation Strengthen local focus M&E

Table 1: Summary of AIM goals per partner category

Results not only indicate that the type of outcome that is being pursued is not uniformly distributed among the different organization types; there is no uniform distribution of outcome types within the same class of organizations either. One NGO may put a larger focus on process-centric outcomes, whereas another NGO weighs plan-centric outcomes as more important. Organizations may moreover pursue different outcome types, and thus different goals, at the same time.



What is interesting however, is that there appears to be a common understanding, at least among businesses, NGOs, and academia, that AIM should generate business-led initiatives as sustainable solutions against malnutrition. These different goals and outcome types pursued are thus aligned to some extent toward this commonly stated purpose. As visualized in figure 1 below, organizational goals appear to translate down into collaboration goals. Goal alignment then, may be said to occur when collaboration goals align to such an extent that mutually shared operational goals originate. So how exactly did these organizational goals align to such an extent that commonly held collaboration goals were established?

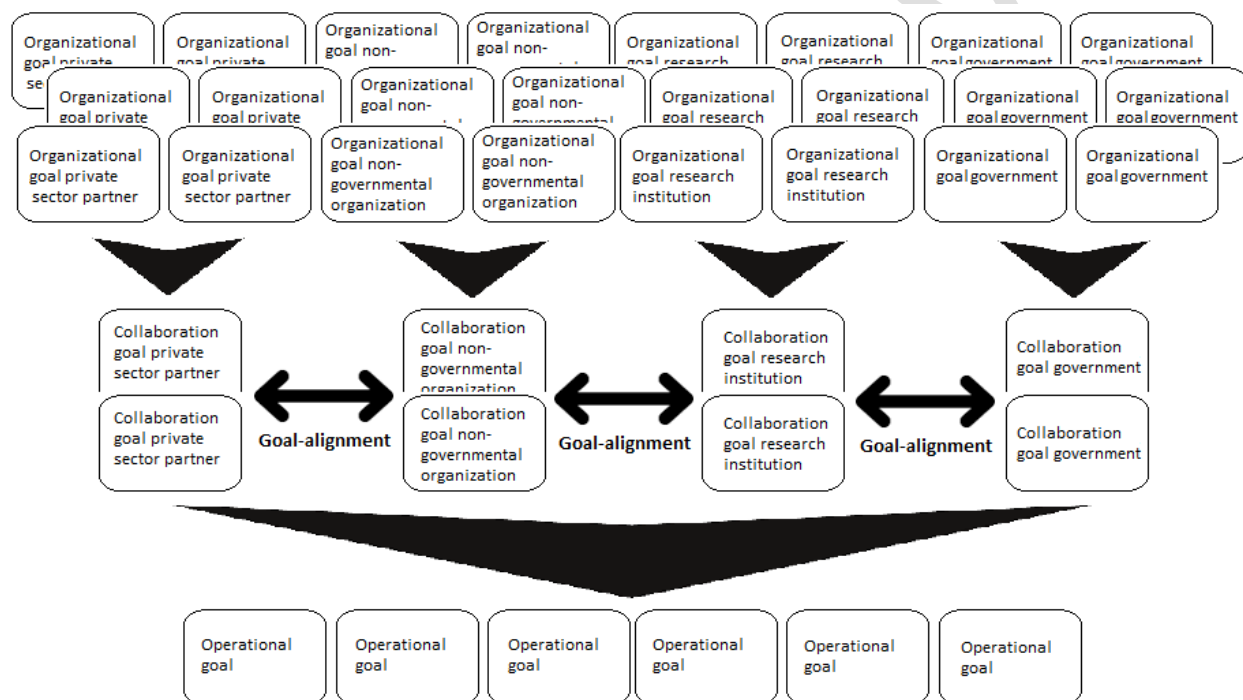


Figure 1: Goal-alignment in collaborative initiatives

Goal alignment in AIM

Where it all started

As explained in the method section, AIM was initiated by an NGO, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the CEOs of three corporations, based on an informal declaration of intent declaring that these organizations would jointly strive toward making a large impact in combating malnutrition. This process of starting up AIM mimics the *Partnerships formation stage* in Clarke & Fuller's (2011) process model of collaborative strategic management as explained in the theoretical framework. The CEOs and the government officials subsequently became enthusiastic because of the opportunity the subject provided to work together:

"The intention was that we would do something together, but what exactly, how this should look like, and where it should happen, we had no clue. That needs a lot of time."



The ambition for the initiative was formulated as ‘to have 100 million malnourished people reached in 6 countries by 2015’. This statement of what AIM is aiming to achieve, i.e., the goal for the common cause of the collaboration, thus constitutes the *meta-goal* (Huxham & Vangen, 1996) of AIM. This ambition, providing the identity of the initiative, is broad enough for many (potential) partners from both a business perspective and a societal perspective to identify itself with, and provides sufficient scope for the partners to relate to their own organizational objectives. The broadness and relevance of the subject, the degree of ambition, the availability of funding, but especially the novelty of the initiative at that time in the Netherlands, created a strong momentum:

“We all had the feeling in the beginning that we had gold in our hands, a big opportunity. We wanted to make an enormous impact by working together and had 22 million to help us.”

Getting from formulating a joint ambition to actual collaboration however, proved to be much more difficult:

“It has taken a long time before we managed to define what AIM was exactly. At the time, it simply started as an intention of five partners to increase access to a better quality of food for 100 million people in six countries, especially women and young children. This ambition came up suddenly and was not based on a thorough deliberation. It was based on what we might do.”

AIM was based on a commitment between high-level executives and the private sector organizations in particular got involved in a very top-down manner. When participants entered the stage in which the collaborative strategic plan was to be formulated (Clarke & Fuller, 2011), it proved to be a challenge to get the high-level organizational goals of CEOs translated down into the business line. The CEOs had been keen to sign the letter of intent, but it was a top-down process which needed to be tied in with real, country-based activities. New business ideas need internal approval in competition with projects that target the traditional customer segments. Lower margins associated to the BoP market pose a challenge to secure the needed business contributions, and for serving the BoP additional investments needed to be made, rendering the business case even more unattractive. Moreover, individuals initially involved did not know each other very well in the beginning, and due to inter-organizational competition there was a reluctance to open up. Some concrete interventions were being proposed, but none was found in which all the partners saw sufficient scope and benefit to bundle their efforts. It can be said that the meta-goal of the collaboration was not tight enough to provide sufficient direction for the organizational goals to translate down into concrete collaboration goals, and too tight at the same time to generate sufficient buy-in from all the partners.

Changing scope

Within AIM, the realization grew that the current course AIM of the initiative was not the way forward. A shift of focus was proposed during one of the partner meetings, which was relatively easily agreed upon by all the partners. AIM was no longer trying to do everything with all partners together, but instead broadened its theme and country scope and opened up. The new model, termed AIM 2.0, was developed much more from a bottom-up approach, with partners stating their interests and exploring what would work for their business models. New partners were invited, representing different points along the value chain leading to improved nutrition. The value chain approach did not only represent a broadened scope, but also provided increased opportunities for companies to work together. AIM



started looking at existing ideas within the private sector partners to see what was needed to get these ideas implemented. Sub-groups with matching interests and complimentary expertise were set up to focus on particular projects, which helped to inspire joint thinking.

Through changing direction toward AIM 2.0 by expanding the scope of AIM and involving more partners, AIM managed to enter the stage of *deliberate and emerging strategy implementation* (Clarke & Fuller, 2011). Not all partners had to walk in lockstep anymore; instead, the partners that could find common ground gravitated towards each other. Inviting new partners led to new dynamics and gave a push to the incubator function of AIM, generating new project ideas. AIM realized that it was not possible to align all of the goals of all partners on a platform level, and the focus of goal-alignment on a platform level shifted to a focus on goal-alignment on a project level, making buy-in of partners a lot easier:

“What we have tried to do is to allow partners to develop their own agenda and their own interests around that topic, and not tell them what to do and ask them to march on order.”

There are thus two levels within AIM on which goals are being aligned; the platform level and the work stream level, which appear to be subject to similar, but slightly different dynamics. Where dynamics are different between the platform and the project level, these dynamics are described separately.

The meta-goal

After broadening its scope, AIM’s official ambition stayed the same. Based on the direction AIM is going and the collaborative goals that were stated by different partners, it becomes clear however that his ambition ceased to be the meta-goal of the platform:

“Sincerely, we were putting projects in place to reach an impact. Metrics were not often discussed. I was not driven by that number. We were not measuring how far we are from getting there. The goal set the tone of the founders. Maybe time has come now to look for a more realistic, measurable goal.”

None of the respondents, not even the ones that are involved since the initial phases of AIM, recall a process of goal alignment. Many of the partners that joined in later stages do not even appear to be aware of the earlier shift in focus of AIM, or the reasons behind this shift. Instead, there is confusion and disagreement among the partners about what AIM is exactly and what meta-goal is being, or should be, pursued by the platform. Although other variables are involved, such as limited communication and decisiveness that is lacking behind, the frustration that is building among the partners of AIM may be attributed partly to disagreements between partners about the meta-goal and the collaborative goals of AIM. Whereas some partners have very clear opinions on their envisioned purpose of AIM, others are diminishing their involvement toward a project level. One of the partners indicated to consider leaving the platform due to disagreement over the direction of AIM.

Many of the respondents indicated the importance of having a shared vision, a shared agenda, and ownership of the goals of the platform. Beyond the declaration of intent, an explicit collaborative strategic plan for the platform level has not been formulated. The current dynamics on a platform level among partners within AIM clearly demonstrate the crucial functions a cleverly formulated meta-goal and a collaborative strategic plan fulfill in a PPP for



development. Achieving goal-alignment on a work stream level was perceived to be a lot easier, which is expected to have been facilitated by the fact that work streams have clearly stated and much more concrete meta-goals and collaborative strategic plans that are formulated during the incubation process.

Still, even while lacking a concrete and explicitly stated meta-goal or collaborative strategic plan providing direction for the overall platform, there are commonalities in understanding of the partners about collaboration goals for AIM. Somehow the goals of the different partners got aligned in the platform to such an extent that different work streams could be generated. The factors contributing towards the alignment of the goals on both a platform and the work stream level have been identified through an iterative coding process. These are: coordination, brokering by the AIM secretariat, trust, buy-in, leadership, power dynamics, and meetings. Due to a lack of space and the fact that the focus of this paper is on the goal alignment process we will not elaborate here on these factors.

Goal alignment during the course of the PPP for development

Before providing an analysis of how goals of the different partners stay aligned during the course of AIM, it is first important to know that AIM, despite having been implemented several years ago, was still in its early PPP stages at the time of data collection. Specifically, AIM was hovering between the stage of collaborative strategic plan formulation and the early phases of the implementation stage (Clarke & Fuller, 2011). It was therefore only possible to identify factors that may influence how goals stay aligned during these early stages. Although many of these factors may be expected to remain relevant throughout the PPP process, it may be that during later stages other factors turn out to have been at play that were not yet recognized by the partners at the time of our data collection. Factors which are considered to have been relevant during the early stages of AIM have been identified through an iterative coding process of the document and interview data, and will be further described below.

The meta-goal

Several respondents recognized that alignment of goals in AIM is an ongoing and dynamic process, both on the project and the platform level:

“We had to do some goal alignment, but it is probably an ongoing process. What you expect to be the goal at the initial stage, really has to evolve. And it did, as we learned more. All organizations go through their own changes and challenges. So things will change. As long as you keep in mind the overall goal and the ultimate outcome, we have to allow that things will change and adapt in between. Things don’t always go as expected.”

The above respondent thus stresses the importance of keeping the overall goal and the ultimate outcome of AIM in mind, as do most other partners. Keeping the overall meta-goal in mind provides for focus and prevents that partners get side-tracked into smaller things. A shared goal was moreover said to help overcome compromises that sometimes have to be made. Many partners explicitly or implicitly recognize however that a clear meta-goal for the AIM platform is lacking. Whereas it was already explained that the lack of this meta-goal and collaborative strategic plan causes disagreements and frustration among the partners, some partners indicate that this lacking meta-goal moreover leads to fragmented projects with unexploited synergies and a lack of cross-fertilization. It may thus be very plausible that, while the separate projects may lead to positive *strategy implementation outcomes*, the lack of a collaborative strategic plan will lead to predominant *emergent strategy implementation* (Clarke & Fuller, 2011) by



individual organizations on a platform level, and to a continuously mounting frustration among partners. When the partners do not manage to formulate an explicit meta-goal and collaborative strategic plan, AIM may eventually be in danger of dissolving, i.e., enter the *extinction phase* as described by Roloff (2007).

Complementarity

To achieve a sum that is greater than its parts, it is being recognized that partners need to complement each other in crucial areas. Such recognition of complementarity helps to retain internal trust and to increase partners' willingness to make necessary compromises and to adjust themselves to each other's working styles. AIM on the one side tries to secure its experimentation base by including as many new and different stakeholders in the platform as possible. Partners with complementing skills and expertise are then expected to gravitate toward each other or are brought together by the secretariat to undertake a project. Many of the partners recognize that complementarity between partners undertaking the project facilitates that goals stay aligned. Knowledge and research partners, while being complementary because of the necessity of M&E, feel however that they are being pushed out by the other partners. What is interesting is that they indicated to experience this with private partners in particular, whereas more than half of the private partners mentioned M&E as an operational goal.

With so many different partners in the platform, effectiveness and decisiveness on a platform level may be compromised and strong governance is required to ensure effective functioning and full leverage of complementary skills.

Governance

As explained in the theoretical framework, Bezanson & Isenman (2012) stress the necessity of a strong governance framework in PPPs for development, among others to ensure that there are appropriate strategies in place with realistic and attainable goals. Such strategies then could make sure that goals of the different partners stay aligned toward a common end. Official AIM documentation sets out a strong governance structure that is well thought through. A Supervisory Council is described in which each sector and key contributors are being represented. A management Board for delivery is moreover mentioned, again involving partners from each sector. Separate steering committees are described for each intervention, in which main project partners are involved, meeting on a monthly basis. It is moreover stated that clear roles and responsibilities are agreed upon upfront, including decision power on optimal usage of allocated budget on intervention level. Finally, it is mentioning the draft of a Consortium Agreement stipulating compliance and reporting requirements, liability provisions, and IP issues. Because of the extensive description of governance provisions in documentation, one may assume that there is awareness within AIM of the need of effective governance.

In practice however, partner responses indicate that the draft of the Consortium Agreement is a long and frustrating process due to various legal issues. Governance structure of AIM is moreover perceived to be weak and allocation of roles and responsibilities (i.e., setting strategy, management oversight, resource mobilization, risk management, etc.) are unclear:

"This board – we haven't really put that into practice yet. It is also meant as a possible escalation point if there are any conflicts between partners. It's also to be used to create some class around the partnership – targeting



higher level people. To get some more communication within and outside the organization and also to share synergy and get ideas for new projects. We try to avoid a partner that is not involved in a particular project to have veto rights on that project. We try not to make it too heavy at the top."

Such a lacking governance structure may be contributing toward the perceived power struggles and lack of effective leadership in AIM. Bezanson & Isenman (2012) moreover found that one of the indicators of weak governance are weak M&E systems to track program outputs and outcomes. Whereas the importance of M&E is being recognized by many partners and there is a separate work stream for M&E, indeed as explained before academia feel that they are not given sufficient scope to fulfill their task.

Buy-in

Sufficient buy-in of partners does not only facilitate the alignment of different organizational goals, but can also contribute toward these goals staying aligned. Corporate partners in particular recognize the need for buy-in throughout all levels of their organization to ensure ongoing commitment of their organization to AIM, in line with findings of Austin (2000b) who argued that internal support is necessary to ensure enduring involvement. For businesses, projects and partnerships often constitute merely a very small element of their overall business portfolio, and when organizational goals change this may lead to a loss of commitment:

"There have been conflicts within X. The same goes for Y, which had an iron component, which was only a very small part of its business, when they were facing budget cuts. It was very much about business manifesting itself in such a way that they could actually do something with their partners. The problem of commitment and conflicts was more inside companies than between partners."

AIM attempts to ensure sustained buy-in of businesses by focusing on generating projects that find traction and interest with the core business of private sector partners, i.e., that provide *collaborative advantage* (Glasbergen, 2011; Huxham, 1993; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994; Vangen & Huxham, 2006) as explained in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, It is recognized throughout the private partners that it is very important to maintain contacts and relationships on all levels of the organization. The secretariat therefore moreover helps business liaisons to advocate AIM within their organizations, and tries to involve high level executives in the governance of AIM.

Another factor that is mentioned by AIM partners to be important to maintain commitment is ongoing internal communication, both regarding progress and successes. Partners indicated to often be very busy working on the individual projects, which carries the risk of losing sight of the platform. External communication is moreover important to create a feeling of 'hey, I belong to this initiative!'. Both internal and external communication was indicated by many of the partners to currently be insufficient within AIM.

Staff rotations

Very few of the individuals involved in AIM at its start-up are still involved due to frequent staff rotations at most partners. Such staff rotations complicate the process of goals staying aligned in multiple ways. First, many partners claim that there is a lack of institutional memory. Decisions and progress are often not sufficiently documented, so



that when new representatives join the process starts all over again. Several partners moreover indicated that connections between partners happen at the level of individuals. It may be that when an individual rotates, trust has to be rebuilt or the new representative does not have a 'click' with the other individuals. This latter finding is in line with claims made by Lister (2000) on the influence of staff rotations on trust as explained in the Theoretical Framework. For organizations that have less staff rotation, e.g., SMEs, it may moreover be difficult to frequently adjust to different individuals. Although new people can bring refreshment, different individuals moreover have different ideas and interpretations which may cause a shift in (operational) goals.

Brokering

Brokering by the AIM secretariat, as mentioned earlier, does not only facilitate the alignment of goals, but could moreover contribute toward goals staying aligned. However, whereas several partners stress the importance of re-evaluating and revising platform-level goals, to date such an explicit revision has not happened. Conflicts between partners are intended to be mediated through several provisions in the governance system although to date, as explained before, this governance system has not been sufficiently developed.

Meetings

Regular meetings on both the platform and project levels are not only instrumental in getting goals aligned, but are necessary to ensure that all partners remain on the same page. Whereas some partners indicate that in order to keep AIM top of mind, meetings should be organized more frequently, others complain about the incompatibility of the high frequency of meetings with their busy schedules. A balance thus needs to be found and other factors as identified need to be leveraged to ensure that goals stay aligned in between meetings.

Flexibility

Finally, many partners recognize the flexibility in AIM as one of its strengths. Partners may choose to be involved on a project level, in multiple projects, or on a platform level, whatever aligns with their priorities and organizational goals. The AIM secretariat moreover indicated that in ensuring buy-in, they are sometimes being opportunistic; whereas they communicate that AIM activities of companies should be related to their core business, when at a certain moment these activities seem to align better with corporate CSR goals they 'go with the flow'.



Main factors facilitating and complicating the dynamic process of goal alignment are summarized in table 2 below:

Facilitating factors	Complicating factors
Concrete meta-goal	Rigidity
Collaborative strategic plan	Funding requirements
Flexibility	Staff rotations
Complementarity	Power struggles
Brokering by the AIM secretariat	Lack of a strong governance structure
Trust	
Institutional Memory	
Communication	
Meetings	
Leadership	

Table 2: Factors facilitating and complicating the dynamic process of goal alignment.

CONCLUSION

The research present in this paper has set out to provide insight into to how the alignment of goals is achieved and maintained throughout the course of collaboration between various organization types in Public-Private Partnerships for development. Through an extensive document analysis and semi-structured interviews with partners involved in the Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition it became clear that there is a divergence between the outcomes pursued by different classes of organizations. Single organizations moreover appear to pursue multiple goals and outcome types at the same time.

First and foremost, the analysis showed the importance of a concrete and explicitly stated meta-goal and a commonly agreed upon collaborative strategic plan to provide direction to the PPP for development and its partners, and to prevent emerging strategy implementation by individual organizations to dominate. Such a meta-goal and collaborative strategic plan moreover facilitate implementation and prevent disagreements on both collaboration and operational goal level. In particular, in large PPPs for development involving many partners and projects, having a secretariat acting as a coordinator, facilitator, and broker appears to be very instrumental to get goals aligned. A broker serves to bring partners together, facilitate discussion, and keep partners aligned.

This research revealed the differences in goals and outcomes pursued by different organizations as well as that partners recognize the importance of getting and keeping these different goals aligned. Goal alignment was shown not to occur at one moment in time, but instead to be an ongoing and dynamic process. Semi-structured interviews and the document analysis revealed however, that at least in the PPP for development under investigation no explicit goal alignment process occurred. Instead, goal alignment appears to happen implicitly, influenced by various factors.

Private sector partners were found to be pursuing plan-centric and outside stakeholder-centric outcomes in particular, whereas plan-centric outcomes pursued mainly appear to emanate from individual motivation. Non-governmental organizations, on the other hand, are mainly pursuing plan-centric outcomes, i.e., impact the issue at stake. Some of the goals stated by their representatives can also be related to partner-centric, process-centric, and outside stakeholder-centric outcomes, however. Academia appear to lie somewhere in between private sector organizations and NGOs, with a main focus on generating knowledge which may be characterized as both plan-centric, partner-centric, and process-centric outcomes. The government then, mainly involved for political symbolism motivations, particularly pursues process-centric outcomes.

What is moreover interesting is that interventions generated by AIM are directly related to private partners' core businesses, contradicting prior findings of Kolk et al. (2008). It may be that AIM constitutes one of the first PPPs of an emerging new class of PPPs for development, consistent with the contemporary conception that development aid should be combined with trade, and with a growing realization among non-profit actors that for solutions to be sustainable, core business interests need to be involved.

The iterative coding procedure revealed three levels at which stated goals of different organizations involved in PPPs for development may be categorized: organizational goals, referring to the motivations of organizations for participating in such collaborative initiatives; collaboration goals, encompassing goals of the organization for the respective initiative, or the purpose the PPP for development should serve; and operational goals, encompassing



the goals related to the process of collaboration or operation of the PPP. Organizational goals appear to translate down into collaboration goals. Goal alignment then, may be said to occur when collaboration goals align to such an extent that mutually shared operational goals originate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

Whereas PPPs for development have increased enormously in popularity in recent times, such PPPs are still a relatively young instrument. While knowledge on the tactical aspects concerning the management of such partnerships is slowly increasing (e.g., Andonova, 2010; Nisar, 2013; Vangen & Huxham, 2006), how goals of different partners get and stay aligned to date remained largely unaddressed in prior research. By providing insight into the process of goal alignment in PPPs for development, the research at hand has filled this knowledge gap to some extent. Such insight contributes toward a more fine-grained understanding of the working of such PPPs.

Prior research has been using a multiplicity of terms and definitions, classifying different phenomena under the same term, and using a variety of different terms and definitions for the same phenomenon. As a first contribution to theory, the theoretical framework of the thesis at hand gives a definition integrating common notions about Public-Private Partnerships for development. Moreover, a clear demarcation is provided of the concept of these PPPs for development as compared to other forms of interorganizational collaboration.

An iterative coding process has led to the emergence of a conceptual framework untangling the multiplicity of goals for collaborative initiatives. This framework categorizes these goals into a hierarchy of three levels, being organizational goals, collaboration goals, and operational goals. In doing so, it contributes to literature in allowing a more structured process for goals analysis by future researchers. The conceptual framework may moreover aide parties involved in PPPs for development in concretizing the goals they pursue through involvement and in analyzing and correctly interpreting goals pursued by their counterparts, potentially leading to a more explicit and streamlined process of goal alignment.

This research moreover provides insight into the various goals pursued by different organization types through their involvement in PPPs for development. Such insight adds to theory in confirming prior claims on goals pursued, and extends existing theory by indicating previously unidentified goals, e.g. for academia. These findings moreover contribute to practice by creating a better understanding among different parties involved of goals potentially pursued by their partners, which may contribute toward strengthened mutual understanding and better anticipation of their partners' actions.

Finally, the research highlights several factors contributing toward and constraining the dynamic process of goal alignment. Clearly this list of factors is not a panacea for collaboration, as it does not entail a set of clear rules for collaborating successfully. Collaboration, and specifically that of the intersectoral kind, is influenced by too many other variables. However, in addition to filling a knowledge gap by indicating some principles that may be applicable to a wide range of partnerships, findings may help practitioners to more effectively address contingencies. They provide insight into how PPPs for development may be shaped to ensure that the efforts of all partners are geared toward successful achievement of the partnership's goals and by doing so, they potentially contribute toward the



success of future PPPs for development. When these partnerships manage to fulfill their promise, they may lead to (private sector) development in developing countries and eventually, poverty alleviation.

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