

THE SWALLOWS IB PAPER ON PARTNERSHIP

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The Swallows India Bangladesh has a long history of working in partnership with local organisations in India and Bangladesh. Our partnership is built on mutual trust and open communication with the aim to eradicate poverty, establish social justice, promote sustainable development and strengthen local organisations so that they can support the target groups to claim their rights. This paper is developed to strengthen the relation to partners in India and Bangladesh and to clarify different aspects of partnership.

What is a partnership?

For us partnership means working together in mutual trust and respect with other organisations towards achieving a common goal. The Swallows and the partner share the responsibility to reach this goal. All projects, programmes and other initiatives should be owned by the local partner in order to be sustainable. The partnership can include financial support, but this is not a precondition for partnership. We can for example work together with a partner regarding advocacy work or experience sharing without funds being involved. We also continue being partners with organisations that formerly received financial support from The Swallows. We may also enter a partnership for technical or strategic reasons. The Swallows has identified four types of partnerships: economic, social, technical and strategic.

- *Economic partnership*

An economic partnership means that funds are involved, usually that The Swallows provides financial support to a project or programme implemented by the partner organisation. The Swallows strives for being not only an economic partner. Therefore we are always facing the challenge of being a donor and a social partner at the same time. Engaging in partnerships where one gives funds to the other is always a challenge. A set of responsibilities comes with receiving funds, in order for The Swallows to report back to members and donors. When entering an economic partnership it is important to be clear about the conditions for economic support and the difference between economic and social partnership. There is always a risk of dependency in an economic partnership. The Swallows and partners need to be aware and discuss these risks. Generally The Swallows does not fund partners longer than 10 years.

- *Social partnership*

The Swallows is not only a donor and the non---economic cooperation should always be the base of the partnerships we engage in. This means that The Swallows and its partners identify common areas of concern and ways to work together towards a common goal. A common understanding of the issues and strategies to reach the goals are fundamental. The following principles are guiding in a social partnership:

1. Long term cooperation
2. Common ideology, priorities, values and goals
3. Common context analysis
4. Mutual initiatives from both partners
5. Mutual respect and open communication
6. Clear and well defined roles and areas of responsibility • Equal influence
7. Sharing of information, success stories and good practices. Both partners should have access to the same kind of information

8. Willingness to learn and change

In order to keep in contact with social partners the aim of The Swallows is to:

- invite social partners to common seminars/ workshops
- provide a partnership paper/ newsletter on regular basis to all partners
- communicate with partners on regular basis and on special occasions through an emailing list
- invite social partners to discussions on specific topics

- **Technical partnership**

The Swallows can enter a technical partnership with organisations which are expert in a specific area (advocacy, human rights, monitoring, sustainable agriculture, environment, action oriented research etc.). Their expertise can strengthen the capacity of The Swallows or our social and/or financial partners.

- **Strategic partnership**

Sometimes The Swallows enter a strategic partnership for example in order to ease the process of implementing the programmes when it comes to reaching out to the target group to gain credibility and trust. Some examples are clerics or religious leaders, upper cast groups etc. This needs to be discussed for every specific case and also the risks and disadvantages of cooperating with strategic partners must be considered.

Handling unequal power balance

Ideally all decisions regarding the common work should be taken by The Swallows and partners together, but since The Swallows has commitments to members and donors, some conditions are pre-set. In the Values and Guiding principles of The Swallows it is clearly stated that there should be an awareness of the unequal power balance. The following principles can help us handle the unequal power balance:

- Awareness of the fact that the contextual knowledge is with partners in India and Bangladesh
- Clearly state what preconditions that are non-negotiable (maybe because they come from our donors)
- Openness to feedback

Working in partnership

The agreement: In cases of economic partnership an agreement is always signed and is legally binding. In the agreement all parties' rights and responsibilities are stated. An agreement can be developed also for social, technical and strategic partnerships.

Memorandum of Understanding: Could be developed in economic, social, technical and strategic partnerships. A memorandum of Understanding could contain access to information and guidelines for communication.

Capacity building: It is important to identify the need for capacity building for all partners as well as for The Swallows in order to strengthen the common work.

Advocacy work: The Swallows supports advocacy work in India and Bangladesh. The partnership will be strengthened if we work with similar issues in Sweden.

Corruption: All parties must agree to combat corruption.

Exit strategy: The Swallows has a document called *Strategies on Exit and feedback on partnership*, which is mainly a guideline to exit economic partnership. A similar strategy can be developed also for social partnerships.