

Transnational Water Partnerships in Fragile Areas



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INTRODUCTION

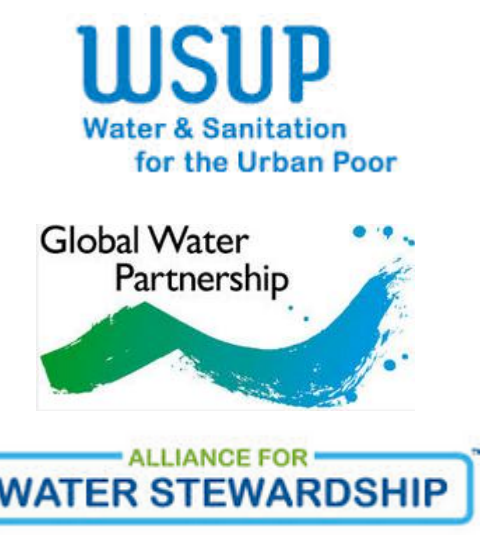
In situations where governments lack the capacities or the political will to provide collective goods and services, transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships may provide critical governance functions like the provision of clean drinking water and sanitary services. This project assesses how and to what extent transnational partnerships for sustainable development (as external actors) can provide these collective goods and services in fragile areas, i.e. under conditions of limited statehood.

Research Question:

Under what *conditions* are transnational *partnerships* for sustainable development *successful* (in terms of output, outcome and impact) in fragile areas?

Our empirical research covered 21 partnerships for sustainable development and now focuses in particular on water partnerships like:

- Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), an example of a service partnership, which aims at improving access to water and sanitary services in poor urban areas;
- Global Water Partnership (GWP), an example of a knowledge partnership, which wants to enhance and spread the concept of integrated water management; and
- Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), an example of a standard-setting partnership, which develops the International Water Stewardship Standard.



METHODS

We assessed:

- ▷ **institutional characteristics** of the partnership and its projects, e.g. partnership and project management, degree of institutionalization, inclusiveness;
- ▷ **characteristics of the fragile areas** where partnership projects are implemented, e.g. security issues or capacities of the local state and non-state actors;
- ▷ the **interplay** between the institutional characteristics of the partnership projects and the characteristics of the area in which projects are carried out: does the project design reflect the specific challenges in the area?

The analysis is the result of eight years of research on partnerships. More than seven months were spent in the field in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Uganda, where approx. 300 semi-structured interviews with partnership staff and members, local partners and stakeholders were conducted.

Success factors: We analyze which *design characteristics* matter most in a typical project cycle to achieve output, desired outcomes, and a long-term impact.

LOCAL-LEVEL FINDINGS

For implementing partnership projects at the local level, an *adaptive design* is most important.

We find that service partnerships, whose tasks involve the implementation of water and sanitation projects, first have to win *local support* to be effective, for example, by including community-based organizations in the process, achieving good and sustainable cooperation with relevant local state and non-state partners, and by taking local habits and customs into account. Most important during the phase of project implementation is *monitoring* the project's progress and developing the *capacities* of the community, the local service providers, and the involved state agencies. Continuous monitoring also creates the basis for ongoing *change management* and an *adaptive project design* – that in turn mitigates the unique challenges partnerships face in these areas.



Most partnerships struggle to ensure the *impact* and on-going viability of their projects. The replication and up-scaling of pilot projects – especially in fragile areas – often proves to require a higher degree of flexibility and adaptation than expected. In that context, we find that (a) *institutional learning* across partnership levels and within and across regions can be considered a basic requirement for successful replication of projects. Former project performance needs to be evaluated for redesigning future schemes and fostering learning within and among project partners. Some of the partnerships in our sample are quite good in developing measures to enhance the long-term impact and sustainability of their individual projects. They do this through building (b) the *ownership and capacity* of their local partners and handing over responsibilities step by step, and by strengthening the (c) *business case* for continuing the project after the external funding has ended.

There are also *limits* to partnerships in a context of state failure. Specific challenges such as security threats, extremely low capacities in certain areas, or rejection of programs outweigh the potential of project design to effectively cope with adverse circumstances.

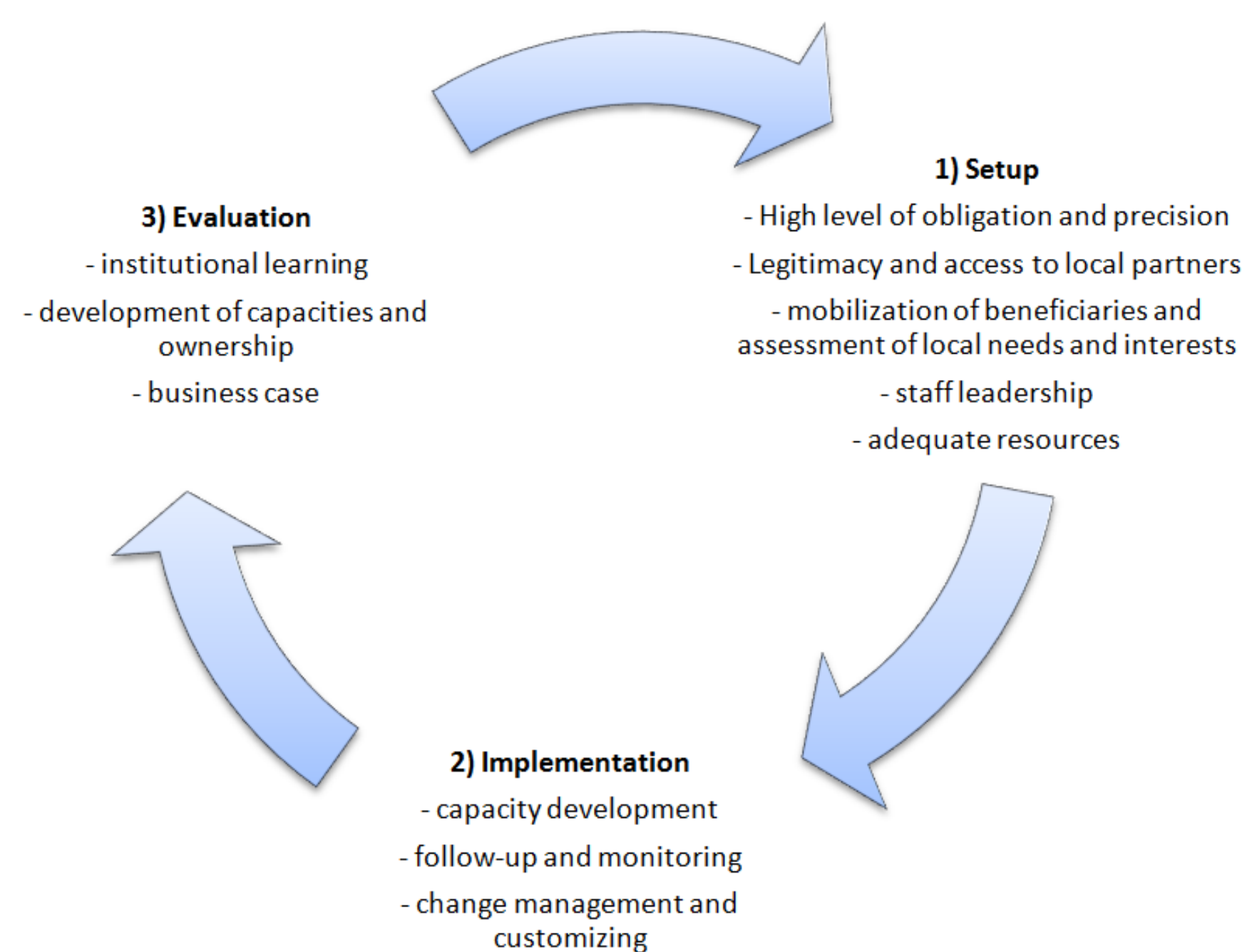


Review procedures could further help partnerships to evaluate and improve their work.

GENERAL RESULTS

We find that *institutional design* does matter significantly.

We find the overall effectiveness of PPPs to be strongly correlated with the degree of *institutionalization* and the quality of *process management* (see Policy Cycle below). In particular, it is important for an institutional structure to balance *precise and obligatory norms* and independent *monitoring* with *flexible and adaptive strategies*.



This is particularly evident in two *types* of partnerships: *Service-providing* (e.g. Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor) and *standard-setting* partnerships (e.g. The Alliance for Water Stewardship).

A third type, *knowledge* partnerships (e.g. the Global Water Partnership), does not necessarily require binding rules and a monitoring system to be effective in generating or sharing knowledge. For them, good process management, effective learning mechanisms, pronounced openness and critical reflection are crucial.



OUTLOOK 2014 - 2017

Building on the past eight years of research, we continue to assess the overall and long-term *impact* of partnership activities and the conditions for achieving this impact.

Moreover, we now focus on the *meta-governance of partnerships*, i.e. the role of guidelines or regulatory frameworks for partnerships. We are especially interested in the United Nations' guidance and activities for a second generation of partnerships for sustainable development. As these partnerships keep playing an important role in the Post-2015 agenda and for the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), we will analyze the UN's activities and provisions for partnerships. We will analyze the new 'SD in Action Registry', the wished-for Partnership Facility, and the role of the future review mechanism of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which shall provide a platform for partnerships. We will also explore national and private initiatives that aim at better meta-governance for partnerships.



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This poster presents results researched by the SFB700 / D1 project team, see www.sfb-governance.de/ppp.

NEW BOOK OUT: M. Beisheim, A. Liese (eds.) (2014) *Transnational Partnerships: Effectively Providing for Sustainable Development?* Palgrave Macmillan.

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