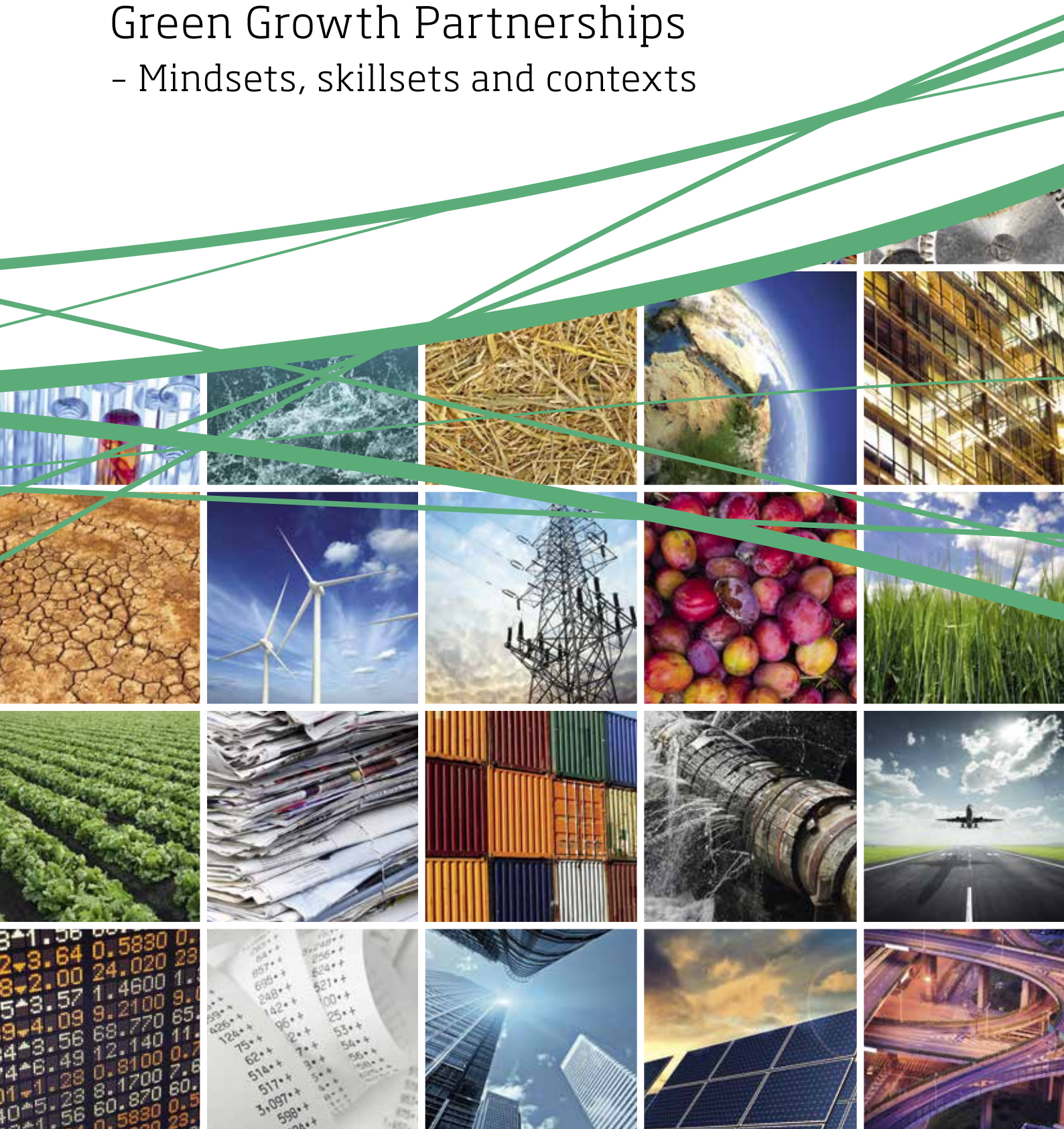


Report

Success Factors in Green Growth Partnerships - Mindsets, skillsets and contexts



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Foreword

Collaborative partnerships are widely cited as a key solution to green growth; a way to address the Sustainable Development Goals and problems thrown up by globalisation.¹ There is barely an environmental or developmental issue today for which there is not a multi-sector partnership. The rationale is simple - the complexity of green growth and the interdependency of the issues means that no single institution or sector can effectively respond to today's challenges².

Partnership building is not as simple - the energy and enthusiasm around green growth partnerships can mask the difficulty of making them happen. It's not easy bringing together individuals and organizations from the public and private sector with different cultures, interests, incentives, value systems and expectations. Effective partnerships manage these differences with a rigorous approach, underpinned by the right mindset and skillset.

This short paper has been written to help catalyse green growth partnerships: it outlines why partnerships matter; identifies what makes partnerships work; and explores how success can be achieved at scale and at speed. It draws on emerging findings from the Global Green Growth Forum (3GF) which has over 30 collaborative partnerships under its umbrella. This paper is a first effort to consolidate learnings across partnerships around water, energy, food and along the value chain.

ABOUT 3GF

The Danish-led 3GF seeks to accelerate the transition to a green future by being a global platform that initiates and enables scalable green growth solutions through an annual process, convening top decision makers from governments, business, finance, civil society, and international organisations, with a view to exchanging strategic green ideas, share novel green growth evidence, and push forward innovative partnerships for green growth.

For more information about 3GF:
www.3gf.dk

Acknowledgements

The following individuals kindly provided input into this paper: Gerard Bos, IUCN; Carina Larsfältén, WBCSD; Peter Brun, SETI Alliance and Craig Hanson, World Resources Institute.

1. Witte, Jan Martin and Charlotte Streck, 2003, Progress or Peril? Networks and Partnerships in Global Environmental Governance. The Post-Johannesburg Agenda, Berlin/Washington D.C: Global Public Policy Institute
2. Nelson Jane, 1996, Business as Partners in Development, PWBLF / World Bank / UNDP

Why partnerships matter

Over the past twenty years, many innovative partnership structures have emerged to address long-term, complex, social, economic and environmental challenges. These partnerships have arisen where conventional approaches to solving business or development challenges proved ineffective.

In the policy arena, partnerships have now been recognised as a critical means of implementation. Since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched in September 2015, partnerships are no longer only discussed in the cacophony of side events surrounding multilateral negotiations and assemblies, but are heralded as a key means to address global problems. The prize on offer is trillions of dollars of new investment, more liveable cities, greater health and wellbeing for people, reduced poverty, and a stable climate. Green growth partnerships can help to secure this prize.

The partnership approach has spread widely across sectors, regions, and cross-cutting issues - from water stewardship, to the eradication of child labour, and the transition to renewable energy. The precise structure and operating model, varies widely according to thematic, re-

gional and other contexts. In this document, partnerships refer to negotiated voluntary multi-sector initiatives between actors from businesses, investors, think-tanks, experts, international organisations and governments working towards green growth³.

Over time, the potential impact but also the complexity of partnerships has become more evident. In response, a 'partnership support system' has gradually emerged, to understand why partnerships work, share the common success factors, and apply professional rigour in partnership implementation. 3GF is an important part of this support system.

Partnership operating models and financing and governance arrangements have evolved in radically different ways, according to the particular people, organisations, regions and themes. It is clear however, that partnerships do not necessarily mature through a linear process, but through a series of evolving cycles, towards a clearly-stated vision.

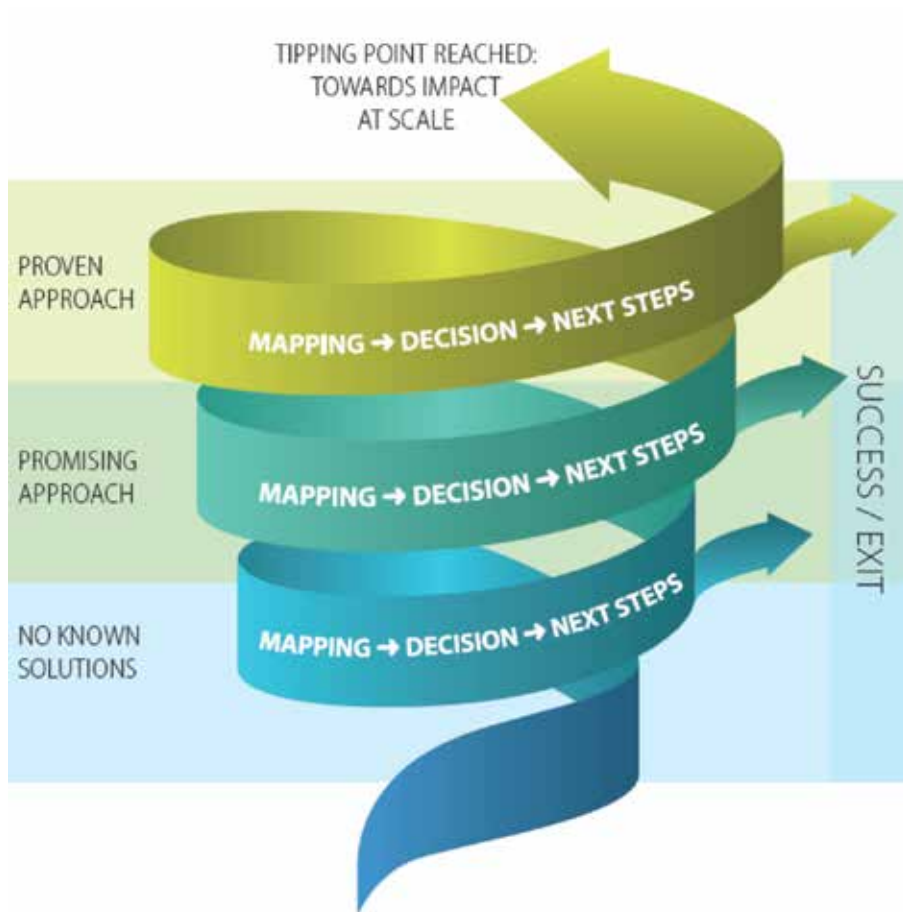
In order to work with this iterative approach towards greater impacts, a particular mindset and skillset is required. As Unilever CEO and 3GF champion, Paul Polman *summarises*

*"Future leaders need to have a high level of awareness and engagement to address societal issues and put their business model to the service of solving these - beyond the narrow focus on building shareholder value. I think it's a case of being able to think of new models based on longer-term purpose-driven partnerships."*⁴

3. 3GF, 2011, *Accelerating Green Growth through Public-Private Partnerships*

4. 'Reinventing growth by reinventing leadership' Interview with Paul Polman, the Leadership Vanguard. Undated, available at: <http://www.theleadershipvanguard.com/paul-polman/>

The evolution of a green growth partnership towards impact at scale



What makes partnerships work

This report is centred around six success factors drawn from 3GF partnerships and beyond. The success factors highlight how partnerships work and what to consider when forming similar partnerships. These success factors should be seen as a recipe, rather than a blueprint.

The product of the 'recipe' will vary according to the specific themes, regions, organisations and individuals involved. Examples of 3GF partnerships are provided below, to illustrate how the recipe might work in practice.

1. Understanding when to partner

Not all green growth issues require a partnership solution. Partnerships will be less effective when a single organisation is able to do the work through a conventional project approach, where similar efforts already exist and where immediate results are required. Or when the expected benefits of partnership outweigh the costs of the time and resources needed to run the partnership effectively⁵.

Collaborative partnerships are needed when critical barriers require joint, coordinated action from public and private players that they would have been unable to conquer alone⁶. They are often appropriate in pre competitive situations and are likely to be effective when they seek to address long-term, complex, systemic challenges which key stakeholders recognise as strategically important.

2. Defining the problem

A critical step in the partnership building process is understanding the problem and the underlying barriers. The problem is likely to be a market failure or a governance gap, for example: a lack of data, the absence of standards, or a lack of capacity. The solution should then address the logic of how the specific actions taken by the partnership will meet this gap.

A lack of information may require additional research and interviews to ensure the partnership is focussing on the problem not the symptoms. It is helpful to ensure a shared understanding of the problem from the outset and to ensure engagement and buy-in of existing partners and motivate new ones where necessary. Telling a story or developing a shared vision can help stakeholders to relate and own the problem (and solution)⁷.

3. Engaging unusual suspects

Partnership solutions that have not yet been discovered are unlikely to be found within incumbent networks, mature and stable markets, or amongst existing business partners and associations. Unexplored opportunities however can be found by bringing together players from different sectors and different parts of the value chain, and in areas of rapid change.

The "usual" suspects can hold entrenched views of which solutions are (or aren't) politically or financially acceptable. So while they need to be part of the process, sources of ideas, resources and spaces for experimentation may come from other quarters. This may require moving beyond individual or organisational comfort zones, which can be supported by a broker or change agent.

4. Enabling core competencies

The key to a successful partnership is enabling each partner to make its unique contributions whilst balancing the interests of the other partners.

Partnerships bring together various actors with different motivations, skills and resources. There can be significant value in working upfront with individual partners to understand their motivation and interests and to identify the risks and rewards of partnering. Addressing potential risks and concerns early on can prevent problems later on and secure greater engagement and buy in.

Understanding the motivations and interests of each partner can also help with identifying their core competencies and potential contributions to the partnership. Developing partnership principles can help with this process and establish desired behaviours and outcomes.

5. Developing a shared language

Successful partnerships recognise the differences between actors and may evolve a shared language in order to support problem solving, enable decision-making and build consensus.

Partnerships operate across very different sectors and organisational cultures. Each partner has their own beliefs and behaviours which play out through working practices, management structures and communication styles. Language for example, is littered with acronyms and jargon and words can have very different meanings in various settings and organisations.

Some partnerships have found the need to elevate topics to avoid them getting stuck in operational and/or transactional issues⁸. Others have established a set of ground rules which facilitate behaviours and communications. Developing shared partnership communications will also create a shared language - and help maintain buy-in from the individual partner organisations.

6. Agreeing roles and responsibilities

A range of cross-cutting and specialised skillsets are required to make partnerships work. Different roles through partnership lifecycle could include champions, brokers, facilitators, leaders and managers. These roles need to be recognised and resourced and professionally delivered. Trust partners with significant responsibility, as this is resource efficient and creates buy-in, but hire independently when neutrality or different skills are required.

Many partnerships benefit from the presence of a high-level political champion or business leader who creates a call to action on the issue. Equally important are public or business leaders who demonstrate leadership by "walking the talk" and allocating resources coherently. Finally, successful partnerships use a neutral and trusted broker to initiate the partnership and/or when specific topics cause issues, this brings experience of partnership-building and avoids the duplication of common mistakes.

The Food Loss & Waste (FLW) Protocol is a multi-stakeholder process to develop the global standard for measuring food loss and waste in a consistent, credible and transparent manner. The FLW Standard is the first-ever set of global definitions and reporting requirements for companies, countries and others to consistently and credibly measure, report on and manage food loss and waste. The standard comes as a growing number of governments, companies and other entities are making commitments to reduce food loss and waste.

The World Resources Institute acts as lead partner and convenor, assembling partners with the necessary attributes and competencies. The Food and Agriculture Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme are the global bodies with the most significant stake in food loss and waste, bringing major institutional knowledge and influence with governments on these issues. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) collectively represent hundreds of companies worldwide with a business interest in reducing food loss and waste. Finally, two European NGOs, FUSIONS and WRAP, bring significant technical knowledge on measuring food loss and waste. flwprotocol.org

2030 Water Resources Group (2030 WRG) is a platform to engage in fact-based, analytical approaches and coalition building initiatives that help governments catalyse sustainable water sector transformations. 2030 WRG facilitates open, trust-based dialogue processes to drive action on water resources reform in water stressed developing countries aiming to close the gap between water demand and supply by the year 2030. The 2030 WRG works with a diverse set of partners from the private sector including The Coca Cola Company, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller and Unilever, who are all highly dependent on water for their production, as well as political decision makers, donors, development banks and civil society. They are all working to achieve a common goal: To develop environmentally and economically sustainable solutions to closing the water supply demand gap.

To date, the 2030 WRG has assisted 7 countries in developing national water plans. In Africa, the 2030 WRG has worked specifically in South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya to develop programmes to expand water efficiency practices and technologies for sustainable water use, including irrigation and water storage, as well as treatment of waste water. Financing models for sustainable mini-water management solutions have also been established. In Asia, 2030 WRG is active in Bangladesh where they are reforming water use tariffs in agriculture and developing a model for green investment financing. 2030wrg.org

The Sustainable Energy Trade Initiative (SETI Alliance) is a mechanism to bring together governments and businesses to work constructively towards green trade liberalisation and lowering barriers to trade in clean energy goods and open markets. The SETI Alliance was established because 'green protectionism' was felt to be hindering the uptake of sustainable energy technologies. The lead partner, the ICTSD# International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development# (an independent not-for-profit organization promoting sustainable development) identified an opportunity for a collaborative approach towards green trade liberalisation.

Since there was no existing entity that might do this work, the SETI Alliance brought together the combined voices of industry, civil society and government in order to make progress on sustainable energy trade liberalisation. Since its launch in 2012, the SETI Alliance has been expanding its membership with over 1800 supporters representing a broad range of countries and industries. The SETI Alliance played a pivotal role leading to the launch of the negotiations of the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA), which are on track to deliver the first results on industrial tariff elimination at the end of 2015. The EGA currently has 16 participating WTO members (plus the EU member states). seti-alliance.org/

5. 3GF, 2012, *Accelerating Green Growth through Public-Private Partnerships*

6. 3GF, 2012, *Accelerating Green Growth through Public-Private Partnerships*

7. 3GF, 2015, *Perspectives on Green Growth Partnerships: Strategic Water Partners Network South Africa*

8. 3GF, 2015, *Perspectives on Green Growth Partnerships: Strategic Water Partners Network South Africa*

Achieving success at scale and at speed

“We have never had to deal with problems on the scale facing today’s globally interconnected society. No one knows for sure what will work, so it is important to build a system that can evolve and adapt rapidly.”⁹

Partnerships are not yet meeting the enormity of the green growth and sustainability challenge and there is still much to do. Despite the concerted collaboration between scientists, technologists, policy makers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, philanthropists and activists in many areas, the problems are still getting bigger while our ‘win-win’ solutions struggle to reach critical scale.

The key question moving forward is how can partnership success factors be applied at scale and at speed? Part of the answer lies in the catalytic role of platform organisations, such as 3GF, operating at global, regional, national and local levels to enable rapid transfer of knowledge, capacity and expertise.

These platforms can be defined as formal or informal mechanisms to drive and broker partnerships, through convening and aligning government, business, NGOs, donors and other actors around particular issues or geographies¹⁰. Knowledge and expertise transfer can take place in multiple ways, both online and offline: from partnerships to platforms; between partnerships; from platforms to partnerships; and between platforms.

- *Between partnerships and platforms:* Individual partnerships are beginning to mature and scale solutions through replication, mainstreaming or influencing the enabling environment. These partnerships can collaborate with formal platforms to unlock further learning as they start to achieve impact at scale, for example Global Forest Watch has provided lessons from its experience to similar platform Global Fishing Watch.
- *Between multiple partnerships:* Partnerships can achieve impact by speed and by scale by exploring synergies between partnerships, including from different sectors, such as health and sustainable energy. Informal knowledge-sharing networks already exist between partnerships. For example, the Partnership for Newborn, Maternal and Child Health has facilitated a series of dialogues as part of an ‘alliance of alliances’ with other global partnerships. There are opportunities to strengthen these networks.
- *Between platforms and partnerships:* Partnership platforms such as 3GF can create expertly-facilitated peer-learning opportunities to better understand what makes partnerships work. Partnership platforms

9. Ramalingam, Ben, 2013 ‘Aid at the edge of chaos: Rethinking international cooperation in a complex world’

10. TPI, 2014 ‘Platforms for partnerships: Emerging good practice to systematically engage business as a partner in development’

can help to facilitate these conversations, and not only in formal conferences and summits, but in a wide range of formal and informal settings.

- *Between multiple platforms:* Partnership platforms operating at both global and local levels can share knowledge more effectively. There is valuable knowledge and experience to be shared between global platforms such as 3GF and the World Economic Forum; between national platforms; and between national and global platforms.

Moving forward, platforms and partnerships should continue to identify what works and what doesn't and use this learning to help scale up green growth partnerships. We have come a long way over the last 20 years and there are now green growth and sustainability partnerships at national, regional and global levels on numerous different issues. The conversation is no longer about creating the case for partnerships but about how to maximise impact through partnership.

The six success factors identified in this document offer a reminder that partnerships have a positive impact when we work through trust-based relationships with the right people, using the right language, to tackle the right issue, at the right time. Successful partnerships tend to emerge when the right people come together and instinctively develop open, trust-based, innovative and skilful working relationships. These intangible ingredients are often the most important and we need to get better at understanding this chemistry and how to make it work quicker and at scale¹¹.

11. 3GF, 2015, *Perspectives on Green Growth Partnerships: Strategic Water Partners Network South Africa*

Appendix: Further reading

This document seeks to build on 3GF's existing knowledge base and is supplemented by practitioner interviews and insights from conveners and participants of 3GF partnerships in 2015. It also seeks to align with broader green growth and partnership discussions. This report draws on the following sources:

Business as partners in development: Creating wealth for countries, companies and communities, Nelson, J., PWBLF, UNDP and World Bank, 1996

Business and the SDGs: Building blocks for success at scale, Harvard CSRI and Business Fights Poverty, 2015

Business and the United Nations: Working together towards the sustainable development goals, SDG Fund, Harvard CSRI and Business Fights Poverty, 2015

Endearing myths, enduring truths: Enabling partnerships between business, civil society and the public sector, Zadek, S. et al., Business Partners for Development, 2004

IFAD and public-private partnerships: Selected project experiences, IFAD, 2014

Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development, World Bank, 2012

Perspectives on Green Growth Partnerships, Strategic Water Partners Network South Africa, 2030WRG / 3GF, 2014

Platforms for partnerships: Emerging good practice to systematically engage business as a partner in development, The Partnering Initiative, 2014

Poverty reduction, sustainable development and global public goods: Multi-stakeholder partnerships in Danish development policy, DIIS, 2014

Creating new models: Innovative public-private partnerships for inclusive development in Latin America, WEF, 2014. See in particular, chapters on *Innovative Public-Private Partnerships*:

Concepts and Emerging Trends, and on Partnership Enablers: Tools, Practices and Opportunities for Empowering iPPPs.

Scaling up impact: A guide for collective action, Forum for the Future, 2014

New Vision for Agriculture: Country Partnership Guide, World Economic Forum (January, 2016)

Understanding the value of backbone organisations in collective impact, FSG / Stanford Social Innovation Review (July 2012)

The following organisations, networks and platforms offer further insights into collaborative partnerships and green growth.

The Partnering Initiative supports the development of tools and guides, and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience of partnership practitioners worldwide.
www.partnerinit.org

Business Fights Poverty, the world's largest network of professionals harnessing business for social impact, has a zone on partnerships.
www.partnerships.businessfightspoverty.org

Devex Impact is a global initiative by Devex and USAID in partnership with top international organizations and private industry leaders. Partnerships can be searched for by location and/or topic at
www.devex.com/impact/partnerships

The Partnership Resource Centre at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, is an 'open centre for academics, practitioners and students to create, retrieve and share knowledge on cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development'.
<http://www.rsm.nl/the-partnerships-resource-centre/>

The Partnership Brokers Association is 'the international professional body for those managing and developing collaboration processes'.
www.partnershipbrokers.org

Stakeholderdialogues.net is an initiative of the **Collective Leadership Institute**, whose dialogic change model reflects the iterative learning cycle described in the 3GF Partnership Approach.
www.stakeholderdialogues.net

The **Shared Value Initiative** is a global community of leaders who find business opportunities in societal challenges.
www.sharedvalue.org/resources


The UN **High Level Political Forum** has been appointed to follow up and review implementation of the sustainable development goals, including the contribution of partnerships.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

The **UN-Business Partnership Hub** supports and facilitates collaboration between the UN and the private sector. The site provides a wealth of inspiration/information and matches UN needs with the resources of businesses around the world.
www.business.un.org/en

The **Sustainable Development Goals Fund** is an international cooperation mechanism that supports sustainable development. It facilitates UN agencies to collaborate with national partners to build integrated and sustainable responses to development challenges.
<http://www.sdgfund.org/>

www.3GF.dk

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