



Making it Collaborative

CASE # 12.2

A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ALLIANCE – FOOTBALL FOR WATER

[Relating to Section 12.2.2 of the book – see footnote 5]

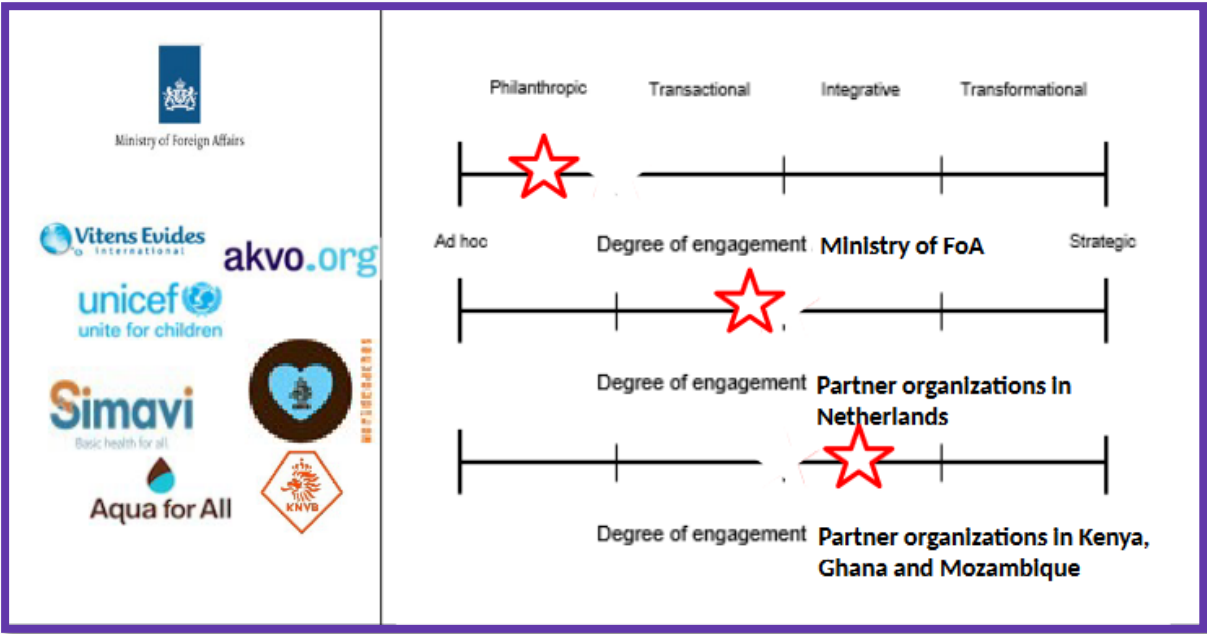


THE CASE

In 2012 a Football for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (F4WASH) alliance was created between seven organizations from different corners of society. The partnership can be classified as an ‘opportunity-seeking’ alliance. It was created because the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened up a funding facility for water and sanitation partnerships. The F4WASH alliance comprised one governmental partner, three organizations that work on WASH (water and sanitation projects), one football organization (KNVB), and two support organizations. Furthermore, the alliance worked with additional implementing partners in Kenya, Ghana, and Mozambique. This public-private partnership was intended to combine the strengths of football and WASH, by building football fields and sanitary facilities near primary schools. It also encouraged soft skills: improving teamwork and awareness of how important hygiene is for children’s health, through games and football. The program’s impact as measured in the mid-term review proved positive, particularly the lessons in teamwork and hygiene given at schools, which stick in pupils’ minds thanks to the popularity of football and the playfulness of the lessons.

SEARCHING FOR A DYNAMIC FIT

At the start of the partnership – due to its size and complex stakeholder positioning – it was challenging to position each partner’s engagement along the collaboration continuum. Partners have their own roles and activities, helping them to work toward a goal that is not inherent to any of the individual organizations’ goals. The government – an initiating partner – now plays a coordinating and financing role. The three organizations appear similar since they all work on WASH implementation. However, according to Simavi, there are many differences between them regarding the methods and procedures and the regions in which they work. As a result, learning and exchange are more difficult and also create barriers to further integration and coordination between the Dutch partners. In the countries where partners build toilets and football fields and give coaching, the implementation has been more integrated. For this effect to materialize, communication and fine-tuning have been more crucial to the program’s success and earlier mismatches in activities resulted in delays in the program. The football partner, KNVB (the Dutch Football Association), appointed a coordinator who was knowledgeable about governmental programs as well as WASH implementation. The supporting partners, AKVO and Aqua4All, had worked with WASH partners before. In recent years, the partners in the Netherlands improved the learning and exchange from South-North and North-North, which makes their “star” (see figure below) move towards the more integrative side of the continuum.



WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE PARTNERSHIP?

In 2019, an evaluation study was conducted on the results of the partnerships. The program was implemented in two phases: the constituting phase 1 from 2012–2016 and the continuation phase 2 between 2017 and 2019. The original targets of 740,000 schoolchildren and 1,100 primary schools were adjusted to “more realistic targets” at the end of phase 1, i.e., 500,000 schoolchildren and approximately 780 schools. A mid-term review had recommended some changes to the F4WASH consortium: it advised stronger links to local

stakeholders (systems) and questioned the ‘fundraising strategy’. The review recommended staying away from public fundraising, i.e. – in terms of the alignment figure above – from becoming overly dependent on sponsoring/philanthropic contributions. In the second phase – classified as an extended ‘learning phase’ – the program management function was also handed over from a football partner organization (KNVB) to a more professional WASH partner (Aqua for All), while the program endeavored a more decentralized and bottom-up management approach with improved alignment of the program activities in the F4WASH countries. Many partnerships that are initiated in Northern countries and funded by donors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) tend to be organized top-down for reasons of accountability and control. The partnership also adapted to changing circumstances by adding more schools, while the project was also included in the strategic SDG strategies of the majority of the partners.

CASE QUESTIONS

- Define the starting position of each of the partners along the eight archetypical governance positions (Chapter 8).
- Consider the for-profit and non-profit orientation of each of the organizations.
- Did this partnership start as an issue-driven or an opportunity-driven partnership?
- Observe the level of ‘goal alignment’ that these organizations were able to achieve in the original set-up of the partnership; did the partners define their impact sufficiently?
- How did these organizations deal with the success factors of the partnership formation phase (sections 12.2 and 12.3)?
- Do you consider this partnership a good ‘fit’ for the problem they aim to address?
- What lessons can be learned for the continuation of this partnership for each of the participating organizations? Was the interim evaluation sufficiently sophisticated to address all major issues? Can one expect, therefore, the next stage of the partnership to be more impactful?

FURTHER READING

Uijtewaal, E., with support from Ariano, Z., Irungu, J. N., & Amable, D.F. (2019). *End of Phase Evaluation of the Football for Water Programme (2012-2019) Final report*, MDF. <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/06/01/end-of-phase-evaluation-of-the-football-for-water-programme-2012-2019-%E2%80%93-final-report>

Football for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (F4WASH) website and Knowledge Hub: <https://www.footballforwater.org/>, <https://www.footballforwater.org/knowledge-hub/>