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STATE-CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS FOR POLICY ADVOCACY AND IMPLEMENTATIN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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In industrialized, transitional, and developing countries, interest in cooperation between state and non-state actors has grown appreciably over the last decade or so. Around the world, there is wide recognition that societal problems cannot be solved by governments acting on their own. In the U.S., for example, this is a component of the message of the reinventing government movement (Osborne and Gaebler 1992) as well as of champions for local community action. In the transitional economies of the former Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe, as well as the developing world, the need to reduce the scope of government intervention has been preached by International Monetary Fund and World Bank economists as part of the gospel of structural adjustment (see Haggard and Webb 1994, Greenaway and Morrissey 1993). Within nations themselves, newly empowered civil society groups call for redrawing the borders between government and citizens (Fowler 1991, Sachikonye 1995, Serrano and Tandon 1996).

This recognition is also reflected in the current terminology that speaks of governance, rather than government. The emphasis on governance stresses the role of citizens, both individually and organized in various forms of association, in the policy process, from issue identification, to policy formation, implementation, and feedback and evaluation of results. Thus, governance does not merely include the actions of government, but extends beyond government to address the way groups and communities within a society organize to make and implement decisions on matters of general concern (see Frishtak 1994, Turner and Hulme 1997). In many cases such activities take place without a high degree of day-to-day government management or oversight. Instead, management of societal activity may be shifted to organizations completely outside the framework of direct government administration. Examples include such activities as nonformal education, community self-help, locally managed farmer or credit cooperatives, and labor organizations (see Uphoff 1993).

Linked to concern with governance is the transition to democratic political systems. Democratization stresses accountability through open competition for authority (usually through electoral choice among alternatives), responsiveness and policy pluralism through participation in the policy process, particularly by non-state actors, and respect for human rights. Combining democracy with governance emphasizes the need to devise ways of managing public affairs in a transparent, participatory, and accountable fashion. A growing body of research and experience has demonstrated that democratic governance provides the most promising enabling environment for broad-based economic growth by fostering not only competence and effective societal management, but shared, pluralist management and decision-making (e.g., Brinkerhoff 1998a, Haggard and Webb 1994, Rothchild 1994). This offers opportunities for non-state actors to demand favorable policies from states, including the right to manage their economic affairs without excessive state intervention.

Democratic governance, then, expands the field of societal problem-solving beyond the sole purview of public sector entities operating under delegated authority derived from the political decision-making process. This form of governance is much more interactive, and directs attention to how the state relates to the private and NGO sectors. As Clark points out, "Governments' stance can be noninterventionist, active encouragement, partnership, cooption or control" (1995: 598). A growing body of experience is exploring the relationships between governments and civil society from a variety of governance perspectives, from the broadly normative to the narrowly instrumental (see, for example, Coston 1998a, 1998b; Fisher 1998; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Farrington, et al. 1993). The focus of this paper is on the partnership mode of interaction between the public sector and the private and non-governmental sectors.[1] The paper examines cases of policy implementation where governments and civil society groups/NGOs are jointly involved, and offers some preliminary lessons relating to:

a) the situational variables that constrain or facilitate state-civil society partnerships for policy reform;

b) effective mechanisms and processes for bringing together diverse groups to cooperate around a policy issue;

c) the applicability of strategic management process techniques and tools for supporting cooperative action.

These cases are drawn from the field activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Implementing Policy Change Project (IPC). The paper begins with an overview of some of the critical issues related to policy implementation partnerships involving civil society and NGOs.[2] The next section briefly overviews four case studies. The concluding section submits findings and conclusions on the three topics mentioned above, and offers suggestions on what governments can do to promote partnerships.

Clarifying State-Civil Society Partnerships

In broad terms, state-civil society partnerships can be defined as cross-sectoral interactions whose purpose is to achieve convergent objectives through the combined efforts of both sets of actors, but where the respective roles and responsibilities of the actors involved remain distinct. The essential rationale is that these interactions generate synergistic effects; that is, more and/or better outcomes are attained than if the partners acted independently. This definition suggests a set of factors that partnership arrangements need to address in order to contribute effectively to policy implementation. These include: specification of objectives and degree of convergence, mechanisms for combining effort and managing cooperation, determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities, and capacity to fulfill those roles and responsibilities.

Specification of Objectives and Degree of Convergence

Logically, the specification of compatible and convergent objectives is the starting point for any partnership. However, especially in the developing country context, this specification is often problematic for a variety of reasons. First is the multiplicity of actors and their broad range of interests. National governments, international donors, international NGOs, local NGOs, and other civil society organizations all have differing agendas. Development experience is replete with stories of the difficulty of reaching agreement on policy and program objectives. Sometimes the compatibility of objectives is more apparent than real; over time the hidden agendas often work at cross purposes with the ostensible ones.

Second is the power differential among the various actors, which arises as a function of differences in resource levels, operational capacity, and political clout. These are particularly salient in cases where international donors are funding the implementation of programs and projects and/or where international NGOs are working with local civil society groups (see Brown and Ashman 1996). Similarly, national governments are in a significantly more powerful position vis à vis local NGOs. The objectives of the relatively stronger partners tend to prevail.

Third is the tendency for partners' objectives to shift and potentially diverge over time. Policy implementation is an extended process, and the interests and purposes of the actors involved can change. A classic illustration is when local NGOs initially involved as service delivery conduits begin to want more of a say in policy and resource allocation decisions (see Smith 1987, Fisher 1998).

Mechanisms for Combining Effort and Managing Cooperation

Making cross-sectoral, multi-actor arrangements operate effectively is key to the success of any policy implementation partnership (Brinkerhoff 1996a). Managing interdependencies is the sine qua non of both policy management and of state-civil society collaboration. Much has been written on these topics, but several factors appear critical: participation, decentralization, and incentives. These three are all interrelated.

Participation is an important factor for two main reasons. First, from the instrumental perspective of improving the quality of policy formulation, planning, and implementation, participation has the following benefits. Participation leads to better policy targeting, that is, a closer fit between the needs and demands of beneficiaries and the design of policy objectives and modalities. As a result of improved targeting, policy solutions can be achieved more effectively, and at a lower overall cost. Participation also can build ownership for policy solutions among beneficiaries and implementors; which can lead to higher use rates of policy goods and services, reduced maintenance and operating costs, and better conformity between policy intent and outcomes. Over time, participation facilitates greater sustainability of policies and programs (e.g., Thompson 1995).

Second, participation is significant from a democratic governance perspective because of its empowerment potential. Increased participation of civil society groups and beneficiaries in policy implementation partnerships can be one of the means by which the accountability, transparency, and responsiveness features of democratic governance are operationalized and reinforced. Through participation civil society partners can expand their degree of influence, for example, in decision-making for policy planning and in implementation; under other policy formulation/implementation arrangements, this power resides solely with government. Citizen participation in policy oversight and service quality monitoring is another example of empowerment. Tendler (1997) illustrates this kind of empowerment in her analysis of improved governance in Brazil, where citizen involvement in performance monitoring coupled with central government shaping of task parameters and job incentives for local public employees led to significant increases in policy/program effectiveness in several sectors, such as community health and agricultural extension. These cases demonstrate the potential for participatory partnerships to generate synergy and increase societal problem-solving capacity.

Decentralization in its various forms -- deconcentration, delegation, devolution, deregulation and privatization -- can be both an enabling condition for the emergence of partnerships and a means to establish them. Decentralization redefines the relationships between national and subnational entities (regional, state, and local), and between those entities and civil society and the private sector. By allocating authority to regional and local levels, decentralization assures that non-state actors will have someone to enter into partnerships with (Fiszbein and Lowden 1998, see also Teune 1995). Decentralization through privatization in essence creates partnerships with private sector actors by narrowing the scope of government's role in goods production and service delivery, and opening up the playing field to private business (Rondinelli 1998). To the extent that decentralized relationships already exist that support and promote local autonomy and cross-sectoral collaboration, partnerships can more easily form and operate effectively. In situations where administrative and service delivery structures remain centralized, partnerships are a way of experimenting with different forms of decentralization, demonstrating which forms work best under particular conditions, and/or providing operational capacity at the local level in cases where it is non-existent or weak (e.g., Brinkerhoff 1995).

It should not be overlooked that central government has an important role to play in making decentralization and participation effective, beyond the initial steps of deconcentrating, delegating, devolving, and empowering. The center creates the parameters within which a particular partnership operates, shaping the scope and nature of the interactions between the state and non-state actors involved, as the Brazil cases cited above illustrate (see Tendler 1997). This activity can include, for example, development and communication of a consistent message regarding the policy reform that the partnership addresses, determination of rules that limit clientelist behaviors at the local level, and/or promulgation and enforcement of uniform quality standards for citizen consultation or for NGO service delivery. Such parameter-shaping efforts lead directly to a consideration of incentives.

Incentives are the essential lubricant that makes partnerships possible. Positive incentives provide the stimulus that impels partners on both the state and non-state sides of the equation to work together; negative ones discourage them from doing so. Incentives are related to participation in the sense that opportunities for increased participation and empowerment furnish incentives to civil society to enter into partnerships. Decentralization links to incentives because, as noted above, it changes traditional administrative relationships and encourages new forms of cross-sectoral interaction at the local level. Incentives are fundamental to the feasibility of using partnership mechanisms for policy implementation, and to the sustainability of policy outcomes.

Determination of Appropriate Roles and Responsibilities

In the developing world the state, until recently, assumed major responsibility for policy formation and implementation. Resource constraints, advice and pressure from the international donors and multilateral development banks, international market forces, and citizen demand for democracy have all combined to force a fundamental rethinking of the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the state from the former Soviet Union's economies in transition to the incipient democracies of sub-Saharan Africa (see Frishtak 1994, Migdal 1988, Kooiman 1993, Turner and Hulme 1997, World Bank 1997). The thrust here has been on limiting and circumscribing the role of the state so as to create space for other actors. Politically, this has meant creating a legal and institutional framework that establishes civil liberties and public accountability. Economically, the major vehicles for reducing the role of the state have been market liberalization and privatization. In combination, these measures define a role for the state in policy formulation and implementation where the state undertakes the direct provision of a limited set of essential goods and services, and facilitates and encourages the engagement of civil society and the private sector across a wide range of social and economic sectors.

The scope of civil society's role in policy formulation and implementation, then, is highly dependent upon the discretion of the state, at least initially. To the extent that political and economic liberalization establishes new state-civil society boundaries and interaction patterns, and opens the door to institutional pluralism, potential opportunities are created for a larger role and new responsibilities for civil society (see Brinkerhoff with Kulibaba 1996, Coston 1998b, Fisher 1998). Over time, interactions between government and civil society actors can reshape those boundaries and enlarge (or shrink) civil society's role and responsibilities. Vis à vis the state, civil society has a central role to play in accountability and responsiveness of the state to citizens, although getting beyond simplistic nostrums requires delving into the political economy of state-civil society relationships. Especially at the level of local government, clientelism and particularistic interaction patterns can result. Determination of appropriate roles for civil society in policy formulation and implementation needs to take account of these dynamics.

Within the broader civil society category of non-state actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a number of roles in policy formulation and implementation: service deliverer, project manager, intermediary and spokesman, information disseminator, dialogue promoter, and/or advocate and lobbyist. In many developing countries, particularly at the local level, NGOs fill a service delivery void, often operating relatively independently in the absence of government services (see McCarthy et al. 1992). They also participate more directly with governments through service co-production arrangements, building on their comparative advantage for efficient and effective service delivery (see Ritchey-Vance 1991, Smith 1990). Concern for impact has led some NGOs to focus more strongly on the policy advocacy role, though fewer numbers of NGOs function in this mode than in the service delivery one (see Bratton 1990, Korten 1990, Fernando and Heston 1997).

In many developing countries, however, the determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities is contested territory, with significant differences in points of view among governments, NGOs, and international donors. For example, African governments are often uneasy about the political implications of service delivery partnerships with relatively autonomous NGOs whose grassroots activities can lead to challenges to state authority (e.g., Bratton 1989b, Ndegwa 1993). In Latin America, many governments view NGOs with suspicion, given past links to liberation theology and insurgency movements (Fiszbein and Lowden 1998). Donor agencies, by favoring programs with NGOs, can exacerbate state-civil society tensions when governments perceive themselves to be in competition with NGOs for scarce resources. NGOs sometimes view collaboration with government with suspicion, concerned about loss of autonomy or interference. Private sector groups tend also to be suspicious, seeing government as anti-business, overly controlling, and/or inept.

Capacity to Fulfill Roles and Responsibilities

The full potential for policy implementation of NGOs and civil society has not been tapped. Factors on both the state and civil society sides of the equation limit this potential. For partnerships to function effectively, the state needs both the willingness and the capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to input from civil society (Coston 1998a, Migdal 1988, Tendler 1997). As Fiszbein and Lowden indicate, "partnerships should not be seen as a substitute for conscious efforts directed toward the strengthening of public sector capacity... for the partnership to achieve its full potential private actors require effective public partners" (1998: 73).

However, building management capacity in the state alone is an incomplete strategy for promoting the competition and balance vital to the development of partnerships for policy implementation. The current conceptualization of governance expands the notion of improving public management effectiveness by calling for the improvement of management capacity in civil society among NGOs and other private sector actors. The effect of supporting developing country managers and stakeholders is to promote meaningful competition among groups, empower participation at multiple levels, and thereby enhance democratic governance.

On the civil society side, non-state actors must possess the capability to insert themselves into the policy formulation and implementation process. Enhancing the effectiveness of partnerships is linked to fostering the ability of civil society groups to address both supply and demand issues. The supply side deals with capacity to handle the managerial and technical tasks involved in implementation partnerships, including issues of scaling up, responsiveness, etc. (Edwards and Hulme 1992, Fowler 1997, Korten 1990). Demand-making capacity relates to advocacy and policy dialogue functions, as well as policy monitoring and ability to interact with policy-makers and public sector implementors to promote accountability and transparency.

Four Case Illustrations

This section briefly presents four cases of state-civil society partnerships, drawn from the IPC Project's experience over the past several years.[3] The literature distinguishes two broad categories of interaction between government and civil society regarding democratic governance: partnerships that focus on advocacy and responsiveness/accountability to civil society, and those that focus on policy planning, implementation, and service delivery. Of the four cases reviewed here, three of them fall primarily into the policy advocacy/accountability category and one mainly into the policy planning/implementation category. These groupings, however, are not mutually exclusive, and to varying degrees all of the cases combine advocacy and implementation.

The first case, regional livestock trade reform in the Sahel, illustrates a partnership focused on a specific set of policy reforms involving three countries. In this case the policy reforms had already been elaborated prior to the formation of the partnership. The partnership operates via a set of task forces/committees with cross-sectoral membership. The partnership combines an emphasis on technical problem-solving to implement the planned reforms, along with advocacy on the part of the civil society groups involved for additional changes.

The second case, the West African Enterprise Network, exemplifies a partnership whose dynamics revolve around policy advocacy. The Enterprise Network's early experience represented a pre-partnership situation where the majority of activities concentrated on helping the partners prepare to engage each other effectively in a dialogue process that would ultimately pave the way for collaborative effort. The policy agenda has emerged gradually over time, and varies from country to country. Once the individual national networks became established, activities shifted to substantive engagement with government around the items on the agenda. Among other things, the case highlights the links between democratic governance and the ability of civil society groups -- business associations here -- to engage in advocacy.

The third case looks at an effort in Bulgaria to promote small and medium enterprise (SME) policy reform through an emerging partnership among business associations, think tanks, and public officials. The partnership focuses on the quality of the relationship between government and citizens in the private sector as well as on specific SME policy reforms. Improving this relationship has built new processes of interaction between public officials and members of the SME community, processes based on participatory and democratic principles. As in the West African case, the SME policy advocacy, planning and implementation agenda was not predetermined, but has grown out of the partnership process.

The fourth case, African natural resources co-management, deals with partnerships for technical service delivery where the public sector delegates responsibility and some degree of authority for resources management to local community groups, frequently with international and/or local NGOs functioning as intermediaries to assure oversight and capacity-building. This case focuses primarily on implementation of policy reforms already designed, though there is a strong element of experimentation and policy learning in many of the countries involved. These implementation partnerships have resulted both in more effective conservation and utilization of the resource base and in increased empowerment of local groups to manage their own affairs. The case shows how partnerships for sectoral policy implementation can embody and give practical effect to principles of democratic governance.

Sahel Regional Livestock Trade Reform

In the African Sahel, the efficiency of commercial livestock trade is significantly constrained by the prevalence of corrupt practices associated with government regulation of crossborder trade. In 1991 the World Bank and USAID jointly financed the formulation of an action plan to improve the efficiency of livestock trade in the central corridor of the Sahel by lowering administrative and procedural barriers to inter-country commerce. The draft plan was subsequently distributed to African governments, regional organizations, and international donor agencies for discussion. In March 1992, at a conference jointly sponsored by two regional organizations, representatives of twelve nations in the Sahel and coastal West Africa adopted a modified version of the action plan and recommended that Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ivory Coast implement a pilot effort to promote regional economic integration.[4] This came to be known as the Nouakchott Plan, after the Mauritanian capital where the conference was held.

The plan presented an integrated approach to reform that builds upon the convergent interests of government, whose leaders would like to see their economies grow, and civil society actors, who are the direct beneficiaries of reform. These latter include livestock producers and traders, professional organizations, private transporters and the consumers of livestock products in each of the three target nations. It addressed a politically charged topic (reducing corruption) in the context of a universally accepted objective: the promotion of regional economic integration. Its proposals to reduce corruption focused upon limiting opportunities for rent-seeking through reduction of regulation, rather than upon sanctions to discourage it.

To implement the plan, a partnership with a committee structure was created. National coordinating committees were established, made up of government officials from a variety of ministries or agencies and civil society actors representing stakeholder groups in all three countries. While the partnership arrangements were at first largely informal, ad hoc fora for the discussion and elaboration of a reform agenda, in less than a year the committees obtained legal recognition via governmental decrees that established the committees as deliberative bodies with official convening and operating authorities. Thus the partnership took on a formal identity.

Progress in implementing the reform agenda has taken place during a period characterized by major changes, including advances toward democratization and greater public sector accountability in each of the three countries and, in January 1994, a massive devaluation of the region's common currency, the CFA franc. The dynamism in the environment has required a high degree of flexibility from the partnership's coordinating committees. Building an inclusive coalition for reform to mobilize the numerous stakeholders having an interest in political and economic outcomes of efforts to reduce the costs of corruption has placed a premium on strategic skills. These are important because progress on reforms often engenders countermeasures aimed at recovering lost revenue or privileges, which then need to be dealt with by the reformers. For example, in Burkina Faso the suppression of one set of quasi-official levies was met by efforts to reimpose those same fees under another rubric. Similarly, in Mali, when livestock traders contested the imposition of fees for services provided by customs brokers, the brokers organized an effective political defense of their interests. Unable to obtain suppression of the brokers' levy, livestock traders shifted tactics and organized a campaign to broaden and improve service delivery by customs brokers.

Despite some setbacks, however, the partnership, through the national coordinating committees, has enhanced the prospects for reform success by ensuring that the principal stakeholders -- winners and losers alike -- play a structured role in the policy implementation process. Although demand-making and advocacy were not an explicit focus of the partnership, the committees have proven to be an effective counterweight to the tendency of African governments to deliberately exclude or marginalize non-elite civil society groups from the policy process. The USAID-supported technical assistance from IPC to facilitate the functioning of the committees has built civil society actors' capacity to lobby effectively for change while increasing public sector actors' ability to listen to constituencies and engage in policy dialogue.

The West African Enterprise Network

The idea of creating a network of business persons, from both anglophone and francophone West Africa, emerged from a 1991 conference jointly sponsored by USAID and the OECD's Club du Sahel. The conference focused on the business climate in West Africa, and one of the issues raised was the need to modify the policy environment to make it more supportive of business. Many countries have policies, regulations, and procedures that hamper private sector operations. African conference participants recommended the establishment of some sort of coalition among members of the region's private sector to work on advocacy for policy reforms and to explore ways of interacting with governments to pursue reform agendas. USAID initiated a capacity-building project funded through IPC to set up such a network with the dual objectives of improving the business climate in member countries and promoting regional cross-border trade and investment.

Over the past eight years, thirteen national networks of entrepreneurs and a regional network structure have been created. Network members are typically second generation entrepreneurs, between 35 and 45 years old, who have returned to Africa from overseas in the last five or ten years to set up businesses. Generally educated abroad with a pre-existing set of international contacts, members have invested their personal equity in their enterprises, often in conjunction with other family members. Most had not visited another country in the region before joining the network, but have quickly become convinced of the potential of regional trade integration. They tend to be innovative, aggressive, and impatient with the pace of change in their countries, and willing to finance their participation in the network out of their own pockets. The Enterprise Network started with 20 donor-selected representatives from eight countries; today it comprises around 300 locally designated members in thirteen countries.

Initially the national networks were informal entities, but three to four years ago most of the networks formalized their status as registered NGOs or nonprofit corporations. As part of their strategic planning process, each national network identified policy reforms, articulated policy positions, and undertook actions to promote the reforms. In most of the networks, these action plans began with internal mobilization around a policy agenda, followed by lobbying of government and donor officials. Later, however, national networks engaged in partnership activities, such as participation with government officials in joint task forces to explore policy options, organization of policy debate fora and roundtables, and provision of comment and review of proposed legislation and regulations. Besides national-level consultative partnerships in individual countries, the Enterprise Network as a regional entity has participated in a variety of joint collaborative efforts with regional organizations. For example, these include working with the West African Monetary Union (UEMOA) on harmonization of investment codes, and with the Central Bank of West Africa (BCEAO) on private sector financing.

Some national networks are more dynamic than others. Differences have emerged in the effectiveness of network leadership, the relative strength of members' participation in planned activities, and the relative progress of country governments toward democratization and open governance. Among the West African countries, the networks in Ghana and Mali have made the most progress. In Burkina Faso, where the government has authoritarian tendencies, the network members have proceeded gingerly with the pursuit of an advocacy agenda. The state-civil society partnership potential of the Enterprise Network has been limited to date by government mistrust both of the private sector specifically, and of civil society groups generally. Organizing autonomously for any purpose has, until recently, been viewed by the state as a possible threat. The state-dominated, corporatist sociopolitical systems that historically dominated post-colonial Africa have impeded the development of formal associational activity (see Bratton 1989a), but as civil society gains strength in many countries these dynamics are changing.

SME Policy Reform in Bulgaria

The transition from command-and-control to open-market economies in Central and Eastern Europe has launched fundamental changes on the part of both government and citizens, but the countries in the region are at various stages of this change process. The collapse of Bulgaria’s communist dictatorship in 1989 instigated political freedoms and constitutional reform. However, it did not result in any significant change in economic policy. A succession of governments consistently failed to restructure the economy and it sunk progressively into stagnation, inflation, and recession. By 1996, an estimated 90 percent of the population lived in poverty. One of the key components of USAID assistance to Bulgaria focuses on nurturing private sector development, particularly of small and medium enterprises, in recognition of the importance of SMEs to economic growth in the region. SME-focused objectives include: increasing the availability of financial services and equity financing, strengthening the capacity of a selected set of individual firms, and improving laws and policies that promote competitive private sector growth. To support the third objective, USAID targeted assistance on creating a policy dialogue process involving the stakeholders in Bulgaria_s SME sector.

During Bulgaria’s democratic transition, civil society organizations blossomed, including the formation of a number of business associations. USAID turned to IPC to help with establishing a partnership that could build on the vibrancy of Bulgarian civil society to engage government in policy dialogue and reform related to SMEs. This effort began in early 1997 in collaboration with a new organization, the Bulgarian Association for Building Partnership (BAP). The BAP, with IPC assistance, developed a SME action plan and a coalition-building campaign that led to a coalescing of support for SME reform nationwide from over fifty private sector groups. In the meantime, public outrage over the failure of government led to the collapse of the socialist government, and a reformist government came to power in the spring of 1997. The new regime was much more open to change, and subsequently adopted the BAP platform as part of its economic restructuring package submitted to the National Assembly in the summer of 1997.

The success of the coalition-building campaign and the new openness of the government led to the formation of a SME policy reform partnership that linked civil society and the state. A “trialogue” strategy evolved, bringing together three categories of actors. The first two are civil society entities: business associations and policy research/advocacy think tanks. The third group is composed of members of the public sector: government officials and parliamentarians. The three nodes of the partnership have pursued a diverse program that concentrates on: a) effective interest aggregation among SME stakeholders, b) high-quality technical information and policy analysis, and c) open and receptive public administration.

Interest aggregation took a huge leap forward with the formation in mid-1997 of a national coalition of business associations, called the National Forum, intended to be a policy advocacy entity with the capacity both to lobby government and cooperate with it in the development of critical legislation. At its organizing meeting, a structure was developed and voted upon. The BAP, chosen as coordinator, subsequently oversaw the establishment of a working group to develop a strategic plan. Over the past year, the National Forum has continued to grow and strengthen its capacity while engaging in a targeted campaign of policy dialogue and legislative lobbying.

Work on policy analysis has focused on support to local think tanks to undertake analyses and develop position papers. The think tanks work in close collaboration with the members of the National Forum, and are carefully building linkages with government that provide them with a seat at the table for policy discussions while preserving their independence. Over the past year, think tanks have participated actively, along with business associations, in the development of the National Strategy for SME Development.

On the public sector side of the partnership, the range of actors has included the Public Information Working Group of the Council of Ministers, the Economic Commission of the Bulgarian Parliament, the Bulgarian National Assembly, the Agency for SMEs, the Foreign Investment Agency, and the Agency for Mass Privatization. The unifying theme of their activities is increasing openness, access, and participation. For example, during the summer of 1997, members of the Public Information Working Group undertook a study tour to the United States to increase their capacity in public relations and information dissemination. The Economic Commission organized a roundtable discussion on the Law for Foreign Investment. The National Assembly put together and promoted a handbook containing biographical data and contact information for members of parliament, a list of parliamentary commissions, lists of constituencies and parliamentary groups, and names of Assembly leadership.

In the fall of 1997 as part of the process of developing the National Strategy for SME Development, the Economic Commission convened a series of seven participatory regional town hall meetings around the country to bring together SME stakeholders, government officials, and parliamentarians to discuss policy issues and strategy. These public fora were managed by a joint civil society-government working group. A team drawn from the working group drafted a policy paper, building on the outcome of the town hall meetings. The draft strategy was reviewed by a cross-sectoral joint committee in January 1998, revised and finalized, and then a national summit was organized by the Economic Commission and the Agency for SMEs, attended by nearly 300 participants from government, civil society, the private sector, and international donors. This type of participatory structured policy debate was a first for Bulgaria. Following the summit, a small cross-sectoral working group drafted legislation for SMEs, which in July 1998 was submitted to and accepted by the Council of Ministers. Further "trialogue" among members of the partnership is planned for the future, building on the successes achieved so far.

Natural Resources Co-management

Sub-Saharan African economies are heavily dependent upon their natural resource base, yet many of those resources are being degraded and/or exploited at an unsustainable rate. Turning these trends around is critical to the survival and well-being of the people of sub-Saharan Africa. With assistance from international development agencies and NGOs, Africans are rethinking approaches to environmental and natural resources (ENR) planning and management. Traditionally throughout Africa, ENR policies have been considered to be the responsibility of the state. Yet the track record of public sector ENR policy implementation is uniformly poor. Across Africa ENR policy design and implementation reflect two trends. The first is less reliance on control-oriented policies, which involves a move away from centralized regulation and proscriptive policies, and toward positive incentives and increased participation of NGOs and local communities. The second is a growing mismatch between the new tasks associated with ENR policy innovations and the old organizations charged with their implementation.

These two trends form a general pattern, referred to as co-management, which can be defined as the integration of local and state-level ENR management systems in partnership arrangements where power and responsibility are shared between the government and local resource users. Co-management offers the possibility of developing viable common property resource management strategies that combine centralized state control with local-level self-management. Co-management calls for a changed relationship between government and NR users. Because co-management involves government-civil society partnerships, delegation of authority to the local level, and responsiveness of government to citizens, ENR policy reforms are closely linked to issues of democratic governance.

The configuration of ENR partnerships features a division of responsibilities between central public sector agencies, NGOs, and local resource users. Policy formulation, elaboration of regulations and incentives, and technical/scientific tasks are reserved for the state agency(ies) with statutory authority for the ENR sector. However, field-level implementation functions are devolved to NGOs and/or NGO associations, which then undertake participatory NR conservation and protection activities in concert with local communities. One of the major forces pushing for public-civil society partnerships is the above-mentioned lack of government capacity to implement ENR programs effectively. While some ENR policy functions must necessarily reside with the state, others can be accomplished by non-governmental entities.

Often the NGO partner serves as the guarantor of the community's ability to manage the resource, and as the source of technical assistance to strengthen community NRM capacity. For example in Mali, CARE, with USAID funding, has supported a village self-help organization -- the Ogokana -- to manage forest resources on a contract between the Ogokana and the Malian Department of Water and Forests. In Zimbabwe, the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) has created a partnership between two government agencies, the Forestry Commission (FC) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM), and local communities. A local NGO, Zimbabwe Trust, supported by several international NGOs, works with the local communities and serves as an intermediary with the FC and the DNPWM. CAMPFIRE distributes wildlife resource management between the DNPWM and local communities, and the FC developed mechanisms to involve local residents in determining ways to provide access to gazetted forest areas. Villagers and bureaucrats became partners in protection and sustainable use.

In the Zimbabwe case, a specific example illustrates how the partnership has operated: the DNPWM provided technical assistance to communities participating in CAMPFIRE. DNPWM technical experts established the game quota parameters within which the community made its decisions. If DNPWM determined that an offtake of eight elephants was appropriate, the community would then decide how many would be reserved for sale to a safari operator and how many would be allocated to local hunters. Department staff would then assist in the negotiations with the commercial organizations to help the community receive benefits such as higher fees, employment and training for community members, and low-impact hunting practices to preserve the physical surroundings.

Situational Variables Influencing

State-Civil Society Partnerships

The literature and the cases suggest several basic situational variables that condition both the emergence and the degree of success of state-civil society partnerships. Four are reviewed here.

Regime Type

A fundamental variable is the type of regime, which influences the nature of the state, state relations with civil society, and the "space" available to civil society (Fisher 1993 and 1998, Frishtak 1994, Rothchild 1994). The ability of civil society to play a role in either service provision or advocacy and mobilization/expression of demand depends on the larger politico-bureaucratic setting. As a rule, democratic political systems offer a more supportive enabling environment for state-civil society partnerships than authoritarian or limited democratic (so-called pseudo-democracies) forms of government (Diamond 1994). As Foley and Edwards observe,

> Where the state is unresponsive, its institutions are undemocratic, or its democracy is ill designed to recognize and respond to citizen demands, the character of collective action will be decidedly different than under a strong and democratic system. Citizens will find their efforts to organize for civil ends frustrated by state policy -- at some times actively repressed, at others simply ignored (1996: 48).

The four cases support this observation. The Sahelian livestock coordinating committees have depended upon the willingness of the three governments involved to remain open to civil society input to the policy implementation process. As noted above, the West African Enterprise Network members have experienced more or less success in organizing and pursuing a dialogue with the state depending upon the degree of democratization and government openness to citizen input, with Ghana and Mali at one end of the spectrum and Burkina Faso at the other. The effort in Bulgaria began under a government that was relatively unreceptive and unresponsive to citizen involvement; little progress on the partnership was made until a reformist administration came to power. ENR co-management has progressed furthest in countries such as Botswana, Zimbabwe, and -- more recently -- Mali. All three are characterized by relatively democratic regimes.

However, the pursuit of partnerships does not have to wait until democratic regimes have come to power. As noted above regarding participation and decentralization, partnerships can serve as demonstration efforts that help to "push the envelope" of the possible. This is one of the ways that sector-specific partnerships can contribute to encouraging democratic governance (see Brinkerhoff 1998a). Further, as Coston points out, "Governments are not monolithic. Regimes of all types may incorporate agencies and actors that are more cooperative or repressive than the overall regime" (1998b: 364).   This means that, while regime type is important, especially for scaling-up of partnerships and for their sustainability, finer grained assessment is called for to determine the degree of receptivity and responsiveness of the particular public sector entities that could be potential partners.

Level of Trust

Partnerships are on occasion uneasy collaborations, both from the government and the NGO/civil society sides (e.g. Coston 1998b, Farrington et al. 1993, Hulme and Edwards 1997). The level of trust between the partners influences their willingness to initiate joint activities and to work together over time. State actors tend to be concerned that the very features that give civil society organizations and NGOs their grassroots advantages also provide a potential springboard for political activity. In some cases, governments are sensitive to the presence of NGOs in service delivery and technical assistance roles as implicit criticism of their lack of capacity to fulfill those roles, and are resentful of the donor resource flows going to NGOs instead of to ministries. On the other hand, governments frequently cite concerns about lack of NGO capacity, particularly for programs that involve a significant expansion of activities initially begun as pilot or experimental efforts. As one 18-country assessment found, African governments are not uniformly receptive to NGO participation in ENR management (Brown et al. 1993). As noted above, Latin American governments' perceptions of NGOs are often colored by their past association with populist insurgency movements.

From their side, NGOs are often suspicious of government intentions, particularly in the case of regimes with limited commitment to poverty reduction, ENR protection, private enterprise development, etc. Further, NGOs are rankled by government attempts to monitor and control their activities, often perceiving such efforts as unwarranted interference (see Fisher 1998, Ndegwa 1993, Edwards and Hulme 1992). For some NGOs, partnership arrangements can appear too constricting compared to the relative freedom of independent grassroots development projects and programs.   NGOs are also concerned that over time, partnering with government will jeopardize their autonomy, integrity, and ability to pursue their own mission (see Fowler 1997).

The trust issue emerges as important in each of the IPC cases. The experience of the national coordinating committees in the Sahelian regional livestock case illustrates a "two steps forward, one step back" pattern where trust levels rose and fell, and then had to be renegotiated, with the IPC team playing the role of neutral brokers to the process. In the West African Enterprise Network case, the caution exhibited by the founders of the national networks in keeping their structures small and informal during start-up reflected their concern for building trust with their government interlocutors. Network members were careful to maintain their focus on private sector policy issues, and to engage public officials in problem-solving discussions rather than attack government as the source of problems. This helped to build trust. National networks formalized their structures into full-fledged NGOs only when they were convinced that government did not perceive them as potential political threats. In Bulgaria, both sides of the partnership were initially wary of the motives and intentions of the other; the shared experience of collaborating has led to greater trust among the partners. In the ENR co-management partnerships, state lack of trust in community capacity to manage resources, and community mistrust of government, was mitigated by having international environmental NGOs serve as intermediaries between state and community.

Over time, the experience of working together has increased the comfort level of both state and non-state participants in these partnerships.

Legal Framework and Regulation

The presence of a supportive legal and regulatory framework is another important factor conditioning state-civil society partnerships. This factor is related to the other two. Non-democratic regimes tend to have restrictive regulations applying to NGOs and local associations. Even in democratizing countries, there are often legal impediments to innovative partnership arrangements, for example, limitations on the ability of local organizations to be recipients of public funds, or onerous accounting requirements. Such regulations are manifestations of lack of trust in NGOs; they are often implicitly designed to limit political activity by NGOs although ostensibly justified as safeguards against corruption and financial malfeasance (see Clark 1995).

This factor is central to the Sahelian livestock policy case in that a major focus of the partnership has been to review and revise the legal and regulatory framework for regional trade in order to make it more open and responsive, and less susceptible to rent-seeking. It emerges in the Enterprise Network both as a target of the networks themselves, and as an influence on the development path of the networks, whose members sought initially to remain small and informal so as to avoid legal and regulatory problems. In the Bulgaria case, the legal framework for SMEs is an explicit focus of the partnership's joint efforts, along with a new and more participatory approach to policy and legislative development. The factor is important across Africa in ENR policy implementation because often a barrier to co-management arrangements is lack of legal recognition for local forms of resource management structures (see, for example, Bragdon 1992).

However, it is not simply laws and regulations applying to NGOs and community groups that are important. The legal framework for the organization and operation of the public sector is critical to the ability of government actors to enter into partnerships. This can be at the macro-level, as for example in cases where new democratic governance procedures mandate citizen involvement in public decisions through various consultation mechanisms. Or it can be at the more micro-level of individual agency operations. For example, in the Sahelian livestock policy case, a key target of reform has been the rules governing how the public sector interacts with private sector interests and NGOs. Another example concerns the laws and procedures relating to decentralization, which set the parameters of central-local government responsibility and authority. These parameters condition the extent to which local public entities can: raise and retain revenue, use funds without onerous central oversight, enter into service-delivery partnerships, etc. In the ENR case, the public sector legal framework in most African countries has created a highly centralized system resulting in weak or non-existent local public sector presence and capacity. This has been a factor in creating the space for a role for NGOs and community groups in resource co-management.

The Nature of the Policy to be Implemented

The potential for successful state-civil society partnerships is also influenced by the characteristics of the policy that the partnership deals with. Policies vary in terms of the degree of technical expertise required, the timeframe within which results and impacts occur, the array of interests affected, and their distributive consequences. These features shape the determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities of the partners, and are important for capacity and incentive issues as well (Gustafson and Ingle 1992).

For example, regarding the degree of technical expertise, the civil society participants in the Sahel livestock policy committees consist of members of livestock herder and transport associations, marketing groups, and butchers associations. They all possess in-depth knowledge of the technical issues involved, in some cases to a greater degree than their government counterparts. Thus, civil society participation in the committees has contributed greatly to the success of the reform implementation not simply by representing demands to public officials but by assuring the technical correctness of proposed solutions.

Another example of the technical expertise demands of a policy comes from ENR policy implementation partnerships. Local civil society groups have several advantages here. They have detailed knowledge of the resource base and they often know how to adapt technologies to exploit those resources, because they depend directly upon them for survival. For some aspects of ENR policy, however, in-depth technical expertise beyond what community members possess is required. As the CAMPFIRE example reviewed above shows, specialists located in public agencies can provide vital technical information that local groups can then use for ENR management. Farrington et al.'s study (1993) of government-NGO partnerships for agricultural development further illustrates the allocation of different components of policy implementation to the partners involved, capitalizing on their strengths: basic research and technology development to government research institutes, and extension and field applications to NGOs.

In the Bulgarian case, the partnership's formulating and vetting the National Strategy for SME Development illustrates how the technical expertise of the business community was brought into the process. Further, the participatory arrangements assured that the policy's formulation addressed the panoply of stakeholder interests as part of the development process.

The Sahelian livestock policy case illustrates the influence of the array of interests and the distributive aspects of policy. Livestock policy touches on a broad range of stakeholders, both inside government and in civil society, and because livestock trade is an important component of the economies of the three countries involved, the distribution of benefits and costs is a critical concern. Two important issues over the life of the partnership have arisen: how to manage a policy dialogue and planning process with a large number of participants, and how to keep the process on track when various interest groups seek to bend (or in some instances hijack) the process to fit their particular purposes.

The interest array factor also emerged in the Enterprise Network case in terms of the incentives for organizing around a particular policy agenda. The formation of the national networks required a flexible approach to agenda-setting in order to galvanize members, and stimulate and maintain their commitment to pursue policy advocacy and enter into partnerships. Because the civil society side of partnerships often involves voluntary collective action, successful policy implementation partnerships must pay attention to crafting an agenda and actions that solicit and hold the interests of the non-state partners, whose contribution is usually noncompulsory and nonremunerative. Structurally, the Enterprise Network addressed the incentive question by creating sub-networks around specific interests, such as auditing and accounting, export marketing, and private sector finance/investment.

Effective Partnership Mechanisms and Processes

The case examples summarized here illustrate variations on the two major categories of partnerships between governments and civil society: policy advocacy and service provision. However, the cases are in no way representative of the full range of state-civil society partnership possibilities. Much has been written about partnership mechanisms and further work remains to be done. Nevertheless, a few generalizable points regarding partnership mechanisms and processes emerge from the discussion as tentative guidance and lessons.

Ad Hoc versus Formalized Mechanisms

The Bulgarian SME policy reform and the Enterprise Network cases illustrate a pattern of ad hoc and relatively informal partnering mechanisms at the start of the partnership. This informal approach appeared to be successful in engaging state actors for purposes of policy dialogue, advocacy, and design with civil society. It permitted a "testing of the waters" of cooperation by both sides without committing either one to a formalized path until trust and agreed-upon modes of interaction could be developed.

The ENR case illustrates the use of more formal mechanisms from the start. Government agencies -- departments of forestry and of wildlife management -- entered into formalized agreements, in some cases actually specified in contract-like documents, with NGOs and/or local communities for resource management. These agreements clarified at the outset the roles and responsibilities of the partners, the terms by which the partnership would be evaluated, and criteria for continuation. The partnership in essence constituted a delegation of authority and responsibility for ENR policy implementation from the state to civil society actors.

The Sahelian livestock case is an intermediate one. The partnership emerged in response to the need to implement the action plan, and thus began with a set of preset objectives. However, much remained to be elaborated in terms of the details, and the partners were relatively wary of each other at the outset. Thus the partnering mechanisms began as ad hoc, but quickly became formalized once interaction among the partners started up.

A preliminary conclusion is that formalized partnership mechanisms appear to be more appropriate for partnerships whose objectives focus on implementing predetermined policies and programs. Such objectives can more easily be clarified and negotiated at the point of partnership creation, thereby allowing for a more formally structured approach. The informal, ad hoc mechanisms appear more suited to partnerships with initially more diffuse objectives, or where the ultimate path of the partnership is not initially clear. This pattern characterizes the partnerships that emphasize policy advocacy and policy design.

Initiation of the Partnership

It is interesting to note that in the four cases reviewed here, in none of them did the government initiate the partnership. The major impetus for the creation of the partnerships came from international donors. However, in two of the three advocacy/demand-making cases, the Sahelian livestock action plan and the Enterprise Network, the initiative quickly passed to the civil society actors involved, and it was they who pressed ahead to define their agenda and make progress. In the case of the Bulgarian SME policy reform, initial donor-supported work with business associations laid the groundwork for the partnership, which once the reformist government came to power was supported by all sides of the "trialogue." The ENR case tells a somewhat different story; throughout Africa partnerships for ENR co-management have been brokered by multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, often in collaboration with international environmental NGOs, such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) or the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The cases discussed in this paper confirm the fact that governments in the developing world and in transitional economies are, for the most part, still relatively mistrustful of civil society and tend to retain vestiges of old attitudes concerning the primacy of the state. Governments, left to their own devices, do not tend to seek out partnership arrangements with civil society, and in many cases view NGOs at least with suspicion, if not hostility. Democratizing regimes, however, are more disposed to respond to demands from civil society groups for more involvement, and thus may be less likely to resist partnership arrangements. The implication is that much remains to be done to move governments to the point where partnerships become more widely employed for policy implementation and development (see Coston 1998b and 1995, Osaghae 1994, Fiszbein and Lowden 1998). Further lobbying, education, and experimentation are called for. There continues to be a role for international donors in promoting and funding efforts to engage civil society in policy partnerships -- both in the initiation phase and later in formalizing them and moving toward sustainability (ODC and the Synergos Institute 1995). For example, USAID's New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) promotes partnerships among local government, business, and civil society.[5]

Coordination and Linkages

State-civil society partnerships are prime examples of interorganizational activities where success depends upon coordination of effort and effective linkages among the actors involved. Getting groups to work together across sectoral boundaries is not easy, and a significant amount of analytic effort has focused on this question (e.g., Alexander 1995, Brown and Ashman 1996, Kooiman 1993). In Bulgaria, the partnership operates with relatively diffuse linkages, and the various partners have tended to use the IPC technical assistance team as a sort of informal coordination hub. The Sahelian livestock and Enterprise Network cases illustrate the complexity of not simply cross-sectoral coordination, but also cross-national. Critical to moving the livestock action plan forward has been the efforts of the national coordinating committees in the three participating countries to orchestrate the efforts of their members to reach agreements, resolve disputes, and implement agreed-upon steps. Similarly, the Enterprise Network supports both individual national networks as well as a regional set of actors to engage in policy dialogue. These two cases suggest the value of informal coordination and linkages as appropriate to deal with a fluid and evolving policy dialogue process.

Service delivery partnerships also pose coordination problems, as the ENR co-management case illustrates. Here the lack of trust and the differing agendas of the partners often find expression in conflicting interpretations of coordination and linkages. For example, in Madagascar local communities with support from both international and local NGOs implemented small ENR projects through contracts. Those contracts were designed and coordinated by a quasi-governmental agency attached to the Department of Forestry. The agency interpreted its coordination mandate to mean close supervision and contractual oversight, insisting that weaknesses in local management capacity warranted this degree of control. The NGOs rejected this perception, complaining that their flexibility was being limited and their autonomy impinged upon. From their perspective coordination did not signify hierarchical supervision, but rather collaborative interaction among equals.

As this example indicates, governments frequently want much tighter and more formal coordination arrangements than do their NGO and community partners (see Brinkerhoff 1996a). Increased decentralization is one way of addressing these problems, as is a broader mix of informal linkages that allow for greater flexibility and participation (see Schubeler 1996, Thompson 1995).

Management Techniques and Tools for Cooperative Action

Making partnerships work effectively depends, as noted above, on the capacities of all of the partners involved. Experience has shown that the techniques and tools of strategic management, which orients actors to look outward beyond the confines of their individual organizational boundaries, can serve as a useful operating framework for the planning and implementation of policies through cooperative partnerships (Brinkerhoff 1998b and1996b, see also Fowler 1997).

Through iterative and collaborative processes that center on assessment, problem-solving, planning, conflict resolution and consensus-building, action, and results, the IPC strategic management approach operationalizes cooperative action in a democratic governance mode, establishing norms and procedures for openness and transparency, accountability, responsiveness to the needs and interests of civil society, and concern for performance. Both public sector and civil society actors can use strategic management processes to: 1) assess a policy situation, its options and constraints; 2) develop strategic implementation plans; 3) involve people and groups who have a stake in the change, helping them to clarify and develop a consensus on the policy implementation issues which affect them; 4) shape, initiate, monitor, and/or influence implementation; and 5) take actions and promote coalitions and/or partnerships needed to carry implementation to a successful conclusion.

IPC has provided technical assistance to the Sahelian livestock action plan coordinating committees and other groups working with them. Starting in late 1992 and continuing through 1997, a small team of consultants, both American and African, supported the committees on an intermittent basis. This support focused on introducing strategic management techniques for promoting, coordinating and implementing reforms in each of the action plan countries. With IPC assistance, the committees developed strategies and workplans for: a) identifying alternatives to existing policies, procedures and regulations; b) developing consensus and support for those changes; and c) coordinating related initiatives in each of the action plan countries. The TA team provided ongoing coaching to the committees, articulated around meetings that bring together various groupings of the actors involved for progress reporting, discussion, and negotiation.

Similar assistance through IPC has been provided to the West African Enterprise Network since 1993. A two-person team has worked with each of the national networks and with the regional structure. On average, each of the eleven national networks are visited two to three times a year by the team. Early in the capacity-building effort, the team transferred skills to network leaders so that they could take on responsibility for moving ahead with the strategic plans each network developed. The team has taken a facilitative, coaching approach to assistance that has pushed the networks to take ownership for establishing and building their membership, deciding upon what actions to pursue, and determining the most appropriate partnership activities to engage in.

Since January 1997, Bulgaria has had an IPC team composed of a resident advisor and short-term consultants, both local and expatriate. Assistance focused at first on civil society, through business associations, helping them with issue identification, stakeholder analysis, policy agenda setting, and lobbying and advocacy. With the coming to power of the new government in the spring of 1997, public-sector actors began to express openness to input from civil society and the private sector, reaching out for such input on their own initiative. This change expanded the target of IPC technical assistance in strategic planning and policy reform to public sector partners as well. Over the past year, the IPC team's role has increasingly evolved toward facilitation of the policy "trialogue" process and away from capacity-building.

IPC's work with ENR policy implementation has been more analytical than technical assistance, although some training workshops for ENR managers have been conducted. The analyses conducted have highlighted the importance of strategic management techniques and flexible processes to making ENR partnerships work effectively, where critical issues revolve around the interaction of governments and civil society groups in confronting how to control access to, and judiciously manage natural resources. Examples of such issues include the extent of delegation of regulatory enforcement authority to non-state actors, the appropriate mix of resource conservation versus exploitation measures to be undertaken, and the timeframe for assessing implementation progress of partnerships.

Steps Governments Can Take to Enhance Partnerships

The cases reviewed here and the broader experience analyzed in the literature suggest that there are a number of steps that governments can take to enhance both the opportunities for engaging in state-civil society partnerships and the possibilities that partnerships, once entered into, will be effective and successful. The state occupies both a privileged and challenging role in partnerships: privileged because it holds the legal prerogative of creating the rules of the game, and challenging because unless state actors at all levels respect and abide by those rules, the potential success of the partnership can be undermined.

To assure the success of partnerships that can capitalize on the synergies of joint action, governments need to undertake the following steps:

- Create the administrative structures, procedures, and mechanisms that will facilitate the establishment and operation of partnership arrangements. Primary among these is decentralization. However, full-scale devolution is not a prerequisite; partnerships can proceed with initial steps toward devolution. Other examples of these administrative measures include, for example, increasing opportunities for civil society access to government officials, establishing venues for dialogue, forming working groups, and so on.

- Build the institutional capacity of public sector agencies and staff to work effectively with civil society. Such capacity-building includes providing agencies with the resources and incentives to interact with citizens' groups and NGOs, and developing monitoring programs to assure adequate oversight and to reduce the potential for local-level clientelist dynamics. This step represents a particularly important function for central government to undertake as a contribution to making partnerships effective.

- As a corollary to capacity-building, provide training to public agency staff. This could be, for example, in the areas of strategic management, policy implementation, community relations and outreach, stakeholder consultation, service quality assurance and monitoring.

- Establish the legal framework necessary to enable civil society organizations to engage in partnerships with the public sector. This involves such actions as legal recognition for non-state entities of various types (e.g., NGOs, interest group associations, etc.), establishment of financial and contracting mechanisms to allow funding for partnership activities, and so on. These mechanisms should go beyond standard contracts to focus on shared authority and joint decision-making between the potential partners.

- Develop communications and public relations strategies for informing civil society regarding government intentions and plans for partnerships, and for assuring stakeholder participation in partnering arrangements and the policy process. An important legislative accompaniment to this step can be the passage of sunshine laws that mandate such communication and participation.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has examined state-civil society partnerships for policy implementation, focusing on the basic factors partnerships need to deal with in order to be effective. These include: specification of objectives and degree of convergence, mechanisms for combining effort and managing cooperation, determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities, and capacity to fulfill those roles and responsibilities. Four partnership cases drawn from the field activities of the IPC Project, funded by USAID, were presented. Three of the cases are from Africa: Sahelian livestock trade policy reform, the West African Enterprise Network, and natural resources co-management. One is from Eastern Europe: Bulgarian SME policy reform. The cases were analyzed in an effort to identify: the situational variables that influence state-civil society partnerships, effective partnership mechanisms and processes, and management techniques and tools for supporting cooperative action. The situational variables discussed were: regime type, level of trust, the legal and regulatory framework, and the nature of the policy to be implemented. Regarding partnership mechanisms and processes, the discussion touched upon the use of ad hoc versus formalized structures, the point of initiation for partnerships, and issues of coordination and linkage among members of a partnership. The paper considered the applicability of strategic management approaches and tools, and reviewed IPC's technical and analytic support to the four policy partnerships. Finally, it suggested a series of steps for governments to consider taking that hold the promise of strengthening the successful pursuit of state-civil society partnerships.

State-civil society partnerships make sense from both an instrumental/technical viewpoint and a democratic governance perspective. Appropriately structured and managed, partnerships can produce better technical policy solutions and outcomes. The synergies generated can extend the capacities of both state and non-state actors beyond what each can accomplish by acting on their own. These synergies, in turn, lead to higher levels of policy impacts and improvements in people's lives. In addition, state-civil society partnerships can promote more responsive, transparent, and accountable government; and can facilitate increased citizen participation in public affairs, empowerment of local groups to take charge of their livelihoods, and capacity to advocate for policy reforms with public officials and political figures. These kinds of changes provide opportunities to define democratic forms of governance more operationally, and help move democratization away from the abstract and toward the concrete.

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ENDNOTES

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[2] Civil society is a term with a variety of definitions. International donor agencies frequently treat the term as synonymous with NGOs, although it is now commonly accepted that, "civil society encompasses a wide range of private associations well beyond NGOs" (ODC and the Synergos Institute 1995: 2). Diamond defines civil society as referring to formal and informal groups of "citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable" (1994: 5). For an extensive overview of the literature, see Coston (1995). See also Bothwell (1997), Coston (1998b), and Fisher (1998).

[3] More extensive discussions of the four cases can be found in other sources. On Sahelian livestock policy, see Kulibaba (1996). For more on the Enterprise Network, see Orsini et al. (1996). On Bulgaria, see Brinkerhoff and Webster (1996) and Webster (1998). Regarding African natural resources co-management, see Brinkerhoff and Honadle (1996).

[4] The sponsoring organizations were the "Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel" (CILSS) and the "Communauté Economique du Bétail et de la Viande" (CEBV). Translation: the Permanent Inter-State Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel and the Economic Community of the Livestock and Meat Sectors.

[5] Information about the NPI and numerous NPI documents can be found on USAID's website at http://www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/npi.

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