



Power and Partnership: Social Pathology or Social Health?

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Geographical Paper No. 191



The University of Reading

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Contents

Chapter		Page number
	<i>Contents</i>	2
	<i>Abstract</i>	4
1	Partnerships: A gap in knowledge or a gap in understanding?	5
2	Analysing partnership in aid chains	10
3	The partnership space and survey	21
4	Meaning of partnership	30
5	Partnership: reality or pretence?	35
6	The Church and state aid	47
7	Partnership in context	70
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	76
	<i>References</i>	77

Abstract

This report presents the findings of a research project designed to explore partnership in the aid chain of the Catholic Church. The project sought to generate new empirical data on the functioning of partnerships in the Catholic Church aid chain and thus create insights that can better inform those involved as to strengths and weaknesses with a view to the dissemination of good practice. The theoretical basis for the project was drawn from a number of sources in the literature, including the wielding of power in relationships. One aspect of the latter is that partners will evolve their discourse over time to reflect this difference in power.

The aid chain selected for the research was that comprising the dioceses of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP) in Nigeria and four of the major International Catholic Church-based donors. Also included were respondents from the government aid agencies of the countries in which the Church-based donors were located and personnel from the Federal Government in Nigeria. Data collection was primarily via interviews with key respondents in Abuja Ecclesiastical Province and the donors, along with respondents working at national and provincial level in the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

The main findings of the research can be summarised as follows:

- a) There is variation in relationships between the Church in Nigeria and the donors. Some dioceses were more successful than others in terms of leveraging resources and donors had different modes of operation which had repercussions for relationships at national and provincial levels in Nigeria. Donors also differed in their *modus operandi* and in their relationships with respective government aid agencies.
- b) The unevenness of dioceses in terms of their ability to lever support was a concern; but this was the result of a number of factors, including history and the limited resource available to donors which encourages a need to put resources into places which have the best prospects of success.
- c) Despite much good intention there seems to be only limited success in addressing this inequality between dioceses. The Province has tried to instigate a sharing of experience between dioceses and in particular help to support newer ones. Attempts at greater coordination between donors have so far had only limited impact.
- d) Relationships between one donor in particular and the National and Provincial organisation in Nigeria have been turbulent, largely because the donor has been perceived to be bypassing Church structures by working directly with a selected group of dioceses. This was driven, in part, by the conditions of the support the donor had received from its government agency, but this had not been communicated.
- e) In general while personalities were important in relationships within the aid chain it was the structural nature and *modus operandi* of agencies that had the largest impact.

- f) The Church-based aid chain is very resilient and has lasted many years. Individuals come and go as indeed do agencies and their policies; but when problems have occurred there is the time and determination to work matters out. While taking a slice across time lines as was the case in this research, difficulties occurred in the short term but could be resolved over a longer timeframe. This suggests inter-dependency between all those involved (akin to a family) which provides a solid foundation for partnership.

As a result of the above the Catholic Church aid chain resists the simple categorisation of relationships into 'partnership' or not. Over time and space relationships will change but there is an inter-dependency which results in feelings of attachment and a desire to maintain a relationship '*for better or for worse*'. There are ties which bind the members together.

Keywords: Partnership, aid chains, Catholic Church, Nigeria

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Chapter 1. Partnerships: A gap in knowledge or a gap in understanding?

“partnership, it’s the buzzword of the ‘90s when it comes to economic and community development efforts”

Woodward (1994; page 66)

The notion of ‘partnership’ as the ideal form of relationship between development aid donors (typically based in the Global North) and field agencies (typically based in the Global South) blossomed during the 1990s but even in the early years of the 21st century it is increasingly being espoused (Crawford, 2003; Robb, 2004; O’Sullivan, 2008). The term is liberally applied by many and has been referred to as a “*pivotal theme*” in development aid (Black and Tiessen, 2007); but what it is and why should it be viewed as the ideal relationship in aid chains when it would be straightforward to opt for a customer-supplier or service provider model instead? Does it simply sound or/and feel better when the stated emphasis is on interaction and a “*contract between equals – the agency and its partner – who share the same commitment of poverty reduction, each with obligations to the other*” (Cox and Healey, 1998; page 3)?

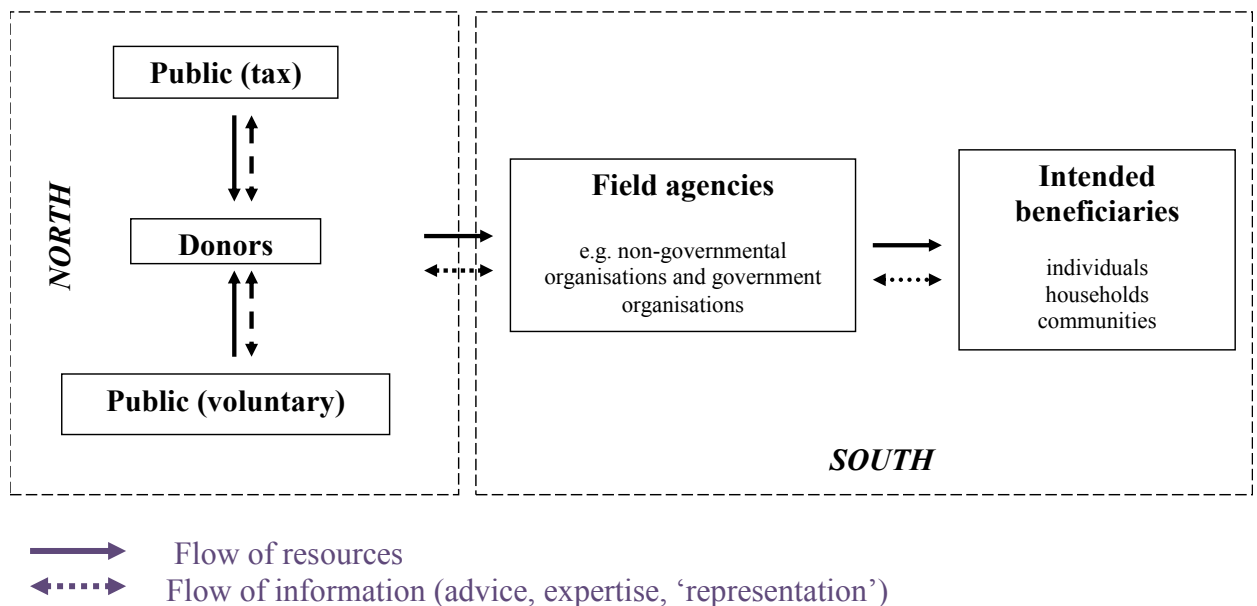
Partnership is founded on an intimate and long lasting interaction with mutual respect for each others’ independence (Larkin, 1994; Lister, 2000). Others like Davies stress output (Davies 2002), implying that partners agree as to what their partnership should be (Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) and upon a rational division of labour to achieve it (Anderson, 2000), but with the ultimate aim of making development ‘better’ than it would be under a client-customer model. However, in practice ‘partnership’ has such an appeal that it is indiscriminately used to cover almost all relationships, including ephemeral, non-intimate and short-term relationships of contractor and sub-contractor (Hailey, 2000; Mohan, 2002). Does this grandiose term simply mask what is in practice an agenda driven by the donor (Green and Curtis, 2005)?

An important dimension to the issue of partnership in aid chains is the diversity of the agencies involved. The development chain linking donors and intended beneficiaries can be summarized as in Figure 1. Figure 1 is, of course, a simplification. Different parts of the chain may be embedded in quite diverse political, economic and cultural contexts, and each of the boxes can comprise a diverse range of organisations, each with their own structures, procedures and mandate, and may include ‘non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) as well as government organisations (GOs) and commercial organisations (Ashman, 2001a) that will also have a wide range of linkages and networks not described in Figure 1. What the diagram also fails to convey is the level of ‘patchiness’ of intervention both across space and time. The boxes to the right of the diagram may be highly variable in scale – from one household or even individual to a whole region – and the relationships between all actors in Figure 1 can change with time. However, it is typically assumed that partnership makes the best use of scarce resources by utilising compatibility between groups in the boxes of Figure 1 (Johnston and Lawrence, 1988; Mohan, 2002). In essence it is claimed that a donor with its range of field partners can achieve more with the same resource; donor supplies the resource and manages accountability while the field agencies have the local knowledge and infrastructure required for implementation. There may also be assumptions of mutual learning and institutional development for all involved so that what the partners do is assumed to be an

improvement over more contractual relationships (Postma, 1994; Lewis, 1998). However, some argue that the motives of donors to encourage ‘partnership’ can be varied, including the need to cultivate a better image (Rundall, 2000).

Figure 1.1 Simplified version of the aid chain connecting ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ peoples.

The boxes to the left represent donors, those in the middle the ‘intermediaries’ or field agencies and those at the right the intended beneficiaries. Given that donors to the left-hand side of the model are typically located in the developed world and field agencies and beneficiaries in the developing world the spatial axis of the model is predominantly North – South. Those on the left hand side of the diagram have the resources which are being distributed while those to the right hand side by definition do not. The field agencies construct representations of the poor they wish to serve (Bebbington, 2005).



There is a surprising dearth of literature which critically evaluates the performance of partnership (Davies, 2002) as well as a lack of analytical frameworks which allow partnership to be dissected (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). An understanding of partnership – cutting through the rhetoric – is a necessary prelude to checking whether it is succeeding (Chambers and Pettit, 2004). Unsurprisingly, given its applied nature, much of the literature which does exist on partnership in aid chains has been published within development studies and management journals. Much of it focuses on analyses based on obvious power differentials (donors have the resources and field agencies compete for those resources) and how partnerships should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness. Given the complexity of partnership it is perhaps understandable that these studies have tended to be case study based – illustrating examples of good practice and highlighting problems – without necessarily trying to explore broader issues (Bebbington, 2004). Perhaps more surprisingly given the spatial-temporal-institutional landscape of Figure 1.1 the geography literature offers little insight into partnership in aid chains.

One of the important features of Figure 1.1 is the role played by NGOs (Hill et al., 2007) and in particular religious-based groups; Christian, Islamic and others (Clarke 2007). These would be expected to be founded on longer-term relationships based on shared beliefs and ethics which stress tolerance, respect for neighbour and a need to listen. Faith-based development groups also presumably have a sense of legitimacy if they reflect the presence of that faith within their society. Thus they are organic organisations, existing in a society because the faith exists. The legitimacy of development NGOs to represent the poor has been rightly questioned by some (Lister 2003) but it seems reasonable to suppose that the faith-based groups are accepted by their communities. Many faith-based aid chains are also what Townsend (1999) refers to as a ‘trans-national community’; they are global in character. These advantages would surely pervade Figure 1.1 and hence must come close to being the ideal basis for partnership’ but does it occur and does it succeed in bringing about more and ‘better’ change as is generally assumed? Answers to these questions have surprisingly been few and far between, despite the prevalence of faith-based groups active in development.

The Catholic Church is one example of a faith-based aid chain, with organisations based in the North charged with accessing and distributing resources to their partner organisations (also mostly Catholic) in the South. The Catholic Church is universal in nature and its theology has derived a global doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching (CST; Curran, 2002) which is based upon principles of:

- Sanctity of human life and dignity of the person
- Family, community, and participation
- Rights and responsibilities
- Preferential Option for the poor and vulnerable
- Dignity of work and the rights of workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God’s creation

From a brief perusal of these headings it is clear that underlying concepts of sustainable development are deeply embedded throughout CST. Hence the northern and southern based development agencies of the Church share the same moral beliefs

in a global community of equals. It has the advantage in theory of being a community seeking lasting transformation with members open to learning from each other and not just a temporary and ephemeral partnership created to deliver a once off development project. However, what is the degree of ‘patchiness’ that occurs within the aid chain model of the Catholic Church, especially given the central thrust of Catholic Social Teaching is the sanctity of human life, the inherent dignity of human beings and the rights of every person to life and the necessities of life; *we must be our brother’s keeper* (Genesis 4:9). This immediately implies, of course, a need for Church-mediated interventions to address inequality.

There have been attempts to analyse the Catholic Church aid chain, particularly in comparison with that of Protestant groups. Olsen (2006) explored differences in institutions and type of intervention between Catholic and Protestant Evangelical groups in an area of Peru, a country of 28 million people of whom 90% in the 1993 census declared themselves Catholic. Peru and indeed Latin America has a long history of Catholic Church mediated development, especially following the Second Vatican Council of 1963 to 1965 which stressed the need for the Church to engage in social development. Olsen explored how these different groups with their different structures, links to donor networks and related but separate identities create “*development truths*” and then seek to put them into practice. Indeed while Catholicism is transnational there are local influences as well:

“the development truths emerging from transnational religious processes are revised by local history and memory which, in turn, provide a script for interpreting the relationship between faith and development.....religious organizations provide an important space in which development truths – and even who comprises the knowing and the moral – are marked and negotiated.”

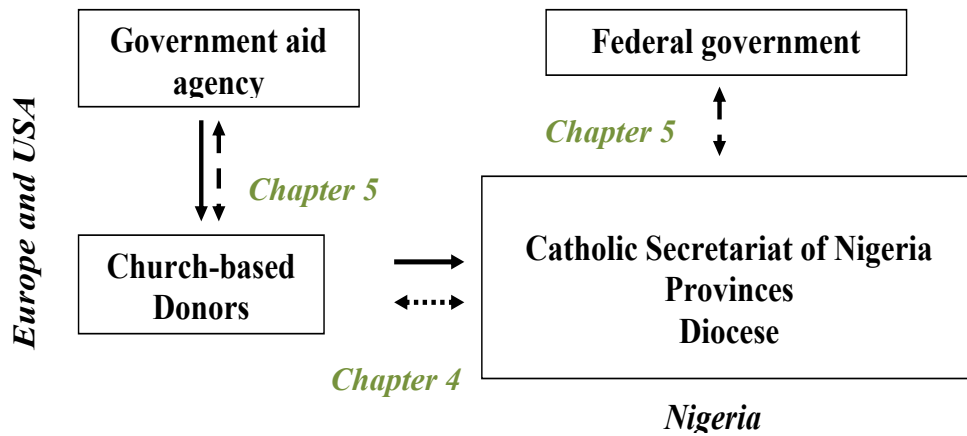
Olson (2006; page 899)

The research reported here and supported by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) in the UK sought to add to an understanding of partnership in aid chains by focussing specifically on the Catholic Church chain linking donors from three countries of Europe and one from North America and the diocese of one province in Nigeria, West Africa. Specific objectives of the research were to generate new empirical data on the functioning of partnerships in the Catholic Church aid chain and thus create insights that can better inform those involved as to strengths and weaknesses, the overall objective being the dissemination of best practice.

The report sets out the main findings of the project organised into three main chapters. In **Chapter 4** there is an exploration of the meaning of partnership amongst those interviewed. These ‘meanings’ along with the results of a literature survey presented in **Chapter 2** are employed to test the realities of partnership set out in **Chapters 5 and 6**. **Chapter 5** is focussed on partnership within the aid chain, between the diocese as well as between the diocese and other parts of the Church structure in Nigeria and the Church-based donors. **Chapter 6** looks at relationships between the Church organs, including donors, and their respective government aid agencies or departments. Thus the chapters deal with the modified form of **Figure 1.1** as shown in **Figure 1.2**.

With something as complex as partnership much can depend upon how the investigation is undertaken and in **Chapter 3** the ‘space’ within which this was attempted in the study is outlined. In the final chapter (**Chapter 6**) the findings are brought together in order to set out the main insights achieved by the research.

Figure 1.2 Sets of partnership covered in this report amongst components of the Catholic Church-based aid chain.



Chapter 2. Analysing partnership in aid chains

A number of attempts have been made to derive a more theoretical basis for analysing partnership, and in a recent review of the literature exploring the role of partnership in sustainable development Van Huijstee et al. (2007) suggest that there are two major perspectives in the partnership literature: **institutional and actor**. The first of these explores partnership as a set of arrangements between institutions (the boxes of Figure 1.1) while the second is more focused on ‘goal achievement’. Under the ‘institutional’ perspective a commonly used approach is to focus on power, or, more accurately, the inequality of power which is assumed to exist across the aid chain (Saidel, 1991; Postma, 1994; Atkinson, 1999; Lister, 2000; Ansell, 2009). To an extent this is quite understandable.

“Power has become one of the central concepts of the social and human sciences per se”.

(Clegg 1989, xviii)

“Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere....power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”

Foucault (1998; page 93)

Michel Foucault is regarded as one of the foremost thinkers in the Western intellectual tradition (Cheong and Miller, 2000). He summarised the nature of power as modification of the actions of people by the actions of others, and rejected the notion of power as an entity; instead it is in all human relationships even if the balance is not even. Thus Foucault argued that it is not possible to speak of one person in a relationship having power while another does not; both have power and instead what should be explored is the nature of the interaction and modifications which take place ensuring respect and reciprocity for all those involved. Within the development discourse this is often missed. Instead there are often fundamental assumptions that some (the developed) ‘have’ and some (the developing) ‘don’t have’ and the latter are seeking help from the former. Thus the ‘haves’ embody power in that they can make choices (actions) over to give, to whom to give, what to give and how to give. The ‘don’t have’ are in no position to make the decisions and can only seek to influence them (also an action); they are at the mercy of the ‘haves’. Foucault maintained that power is everywhere; the ‘don’t have’ also have some power over the ‘haves’. Indeed there may be agents operating between these two groups who ‘represent’ one to the other. Even so, how is an observer residing outside of that relationship to recognise the nuanced exercising of power?

More than twenty years ago Nicholas Burbules in his essay ‘*A theory of power in education*’ (1986) argued that for power to be a part of a social relationship there must be grounding within a conflict of interests. Person A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests. However, if it is assumed that those that ‘have’ wish to help those that ‘don’t have’ then just what is the conflict of interest? Given that the ‘don’t have’ comprise a large and diverse group, and also assuming that the ‘haves’ are willing to give only a part of their resources then an obvious conflict arises with choices over who to give to and how much to give. Thus

the 'haves' are clearly exercising power against the wishes of those who don't receive anything. In other words given that demand for help far outstrips supply then choices will inevitably have to be made and power is exercised by those making the choices. Beyond that it becomes more subtle, but conflict can exist nonetheless. Of those who do receive support there may be disagreement over the extent, form and conditions associated with that support, yet it is the decision of the 'haves' as to how to proceed.

The Burbules perspective on power was derived from the education sector but continues to have relevance for development institutions. He implies a negative, as the 'haves' can refuse to give or not give enough, and this fundamental choice can be employed to threaten those who do not comply. Thus power forces a compliance which should be visible and Burbules sees this as a kind of "*social pathology*". If consent occurs and there is a willing and genuine acceptance of decisions, then he argues that this is not an exercise of power as all are truly satisfied. However, Burbules argues that consent can occur as a result of complete domination by the 'haves' over the 'have nots'. In effect the 'have nots' accept and accommodate themselves to the dominance of the 'haves', and thus readily consent to the latter's wishes. They may even adopt the language of the 'haves' and thus appear to be in alliance yet deep down have an aversion to the nature of the relationship based on such inequality. Burbules argues that with suitable methods it should be possible to identify symptoms of such 'social pathology'. Note that power should not be confused in this analysis with benefit. Just because the 'have nots' are forced to comply this does not mean that they do not materially ultimately benefit from what the 'haves' provide.

Much of the development literature which explores donor – recipient relationships has a strong resonance with this somewhat basic, stark and even pathological perspective of power of the 'haves' over the 'have nots'. Competition for limited resources is always intense (Smillie, 1995; Aldaba et al., 2000; Hailey, 2000), and it is inevitable that some agencies in the South will be better able to lever resources than others (Moore and Stewart, 1998). Much the same can be said of donor relationships with government agencies in the North (Lewis, 1998; Wallace, 2003; Townsend and Townsend, 2004). Thus it is often argued that donors have the resource and effectively dictate to recipients what they have to do with any grants they receive, and this applies not only to NGOs but even to government agencies in the South also reliant on such aid (Curtis, 2004; Samoff, 2004; Green and Curtis, 2005). Indeed governments can be torn between accountability to international donors and their own citizens (Kakande, 2004). Putting the matter again in stark terms - if a recipient does not do what they are told then the funds are cut. As a result of this field agencies in effect lose the power to set their own agenda (O'Bannon, 2005).

However, some have dismissed this essentially negative view of power. Bellous writing in 1993 at the start of the era of partnership argues that a consequence of the Burbules analysis is that "*we cannot be good and powerful at the same time*"; that power relations must be abandoned for democracy and equality to flourish. After all, a dominance of 'haves' over 'have nots' does present difficulties in terms of human dignity and respect, and it fails to take into account that motivation behind a relationship can be informed in part by a desire to love thy neighbour even if the practice is imperfect. Thus for Bellous there has to be a move towards a sense of partnership where the 'haves' knowingly give up their power and thus the partners

break out of the Burbulesian social pathology. The problem, of course, is with reality rather than the ideal. As Farber states in the same year (1993) in response to both Burbules and Bellous:

“We cannot fully imagine what any of our theoretical wishes and desires might come to if somehow realized in the world. In the meantime, while we explore the subtle issues that surround the subjective experience of empowerment, we had best keep an eye on those places in the world where different visions of self are rooted and the wishes of some do in fact cause others harm.”

Farber (1993)

Perhaps unsurprisingly given these early exchanges in the rise of partnership this debate in development aid chains has been persistent and reverberates throughout the 1990s and during the first years of the 21st century. Robb (2004) provides a brief history of power in aid chains spanning the 1960s (era of technical interventions), 1970s (basic needs approach) and 1980s (structural adjustment) to the present emphasis (from the 1990s) on participation and partnership. She concludes that what we have today is still flawed and based on unequal power relations even if “*sometimes it works*” (page 37). Cox and Healey (1998; page 3) argue that true partnership has to be a “*contract between equals*” with an intimate and long lasting interaction founded on mutual respect (Larkin, 1994). Fowler (1998; page 141) states that “*partnership was intended to be an equality in ways of working and mutuality in respect for identity, position and roles*”. Lister (2000; page 228) concludes from her reading of the literature that a successful partnership requires a host of characteristics including mutual trust, clearly articulated goals and transparency. Also, of course, as well as equality and trust there is assumed to be complementarity with field agencies charged with implementation on behalf of those they seek to serve. Indeed field agencies construct representations of the poor (Bebbington, 2005) and the donors must respect their partners wishes and views (Davies, 2002; Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) with the ultimate aim of pooling respective advantages so as to make development better (Johnston and Lawrence, 1988; Anderson, 2000; Mohan, 2002). It is certainly the case that the partnership rhetoric has become widespread within development, and donors and their field partners continuously espouse the principles. Nowhere is this more readily apparent than within faith-based aid chains (Clarke, 2007) with their functionality founded on shared ideals.

However, the complication here is that an espoused rhetoric of egalitarianism and respect can be used to screen an essentially negative vision of power in the Burbulesian mode, and ironically this screening can be put in place by all partners (Hailey, 2000; Mohan, 2002; Green and Curtis, 2005). Thus the partnership turns out to be nothing more than a re-packaging of the same power inequality (Crawford, 2003). After all, if the ‘don’t haves’ know that they can gain favour with those having power by extolling the rhetoric of partnership and equality even if they know it doesn’t exist then they have an incentive to do so. In this analysis partnership becomes a reframing of language to hide ‘business as usual’. Indeed given that the partners hide the negative aspects of their relationship then cutting through the language in order to explore reality can be difficult and time-consuming for an outsider given what could be at stake. As a result it is perhaps understandable that studies of development partnerships have tended to be case study based with the aim

of illustrating examples of good practice and highlighting problems (Bebbington, 2004). Allied with this is a general lack of analytical frameworks for partnership (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998).

The dilemma with the Burbules thesis rests with just how a relationship is to be analysed to detect social pathology? After all, if the partners collude to hide a power imbalance and present a positive face of equality and partnership then just how can a researcher look behind this? How can ‘social pathology’ in partnerships be identified? Hastings (1999; page 104) makes the point that:

“the level of rhetoric which surrounds the partnership project together with the growing emphasis on the effective presentation of policy makes issues such as the nature of inter-sectoral power relationships, or contestation over the nature of the policy problem, particularly difficult questions to research”.

Lister (2000; page 230) reinforces this point:

“The existence of a consensus does not therein eliminate the possibility that power is somehow being exercised – indeed those situations which may appear to be free from the exercise of power can be those in which power differences are the most deeply ingrained”

This invokes quite a challenge. A commonly applied approach in such analyses of power is to explore discourse between the partners. Critical discourse analysis (CDA; Widdowson, 1995, 1998) is defined by Fairclough (1992; page 135) as:

“discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.”

Thus it is based on an assumption that there is a dialectical relationship between the use of language and social change between individuals and groups such that changes in one will be influenced by changes in the other and these changes can be identified even if the relationship is opaque. Indeed opacity itself can be telling as Burbules implies. CDA is a complex topic but can be employed in theory to identify the exercise of power in social policy formulation and relationships (Hastings, 1996, 1998, 1999). For example, Dahl (1957) in his classic paper on the topic of power set out what he regarded as the four key constituents of power

1. **Base:** the resources using to bring about influence by one partner on another. In a crude sense this could be the financial resources available to the donor, but it is more subtle than that and could include knowledge and expertise.

2. **Means:** the specific actions that can be taken to bring about influence. This can include the formal application process and evaluation criteria, as well as promises.
3. **Scope:** the scope of influence which the donor can exert using the means of power. A donor may seek to influence the operation of a field agency as well as the institutional structure (staffing, responsibilities, accounting etc.) within the field agency.
4. **Amount:** the extent of the influence of the donor, including the longevity of the influence.

Using CDA to examine written exchanges (letters, minutes of meetings, reports etc.) between institutions in a relationship it may be possible to identify these four constituents within a relationship and the extent to which influence is being brought to bear as well as providing explanations. For example, the donor may be explicit with a field agency with regard to what they must do and how they must restructure as a condition for receiving resources. The period of interaction may be relatively short, perhaps 3 years or less, but the contact even if only by letter or email may be relatively intensive. The field agency may be uncomfortable with some of the stipulations and express that in various ways but depending upon the base, means and scope of power in the hands of the donor those involved may have little choice if they wish to receive the resource. To piece together what happened and why it is necessary to have access to these historical records and the context at the time when they were written. Complete access to such records can be an issue, especially if the institutions are sensitive about offending each other. A further complication may be that an intensive relationship between a donor and an individual field agency may typically only last for a few years, at most, during the lifetime of a specific project. However, outside of that project's 'hot house' period of interaction the field agency may be in regular touch with the donor via meetings and grant applications, and the donor may well exert a more pernicious influence: 'if you do X then that will make it more likely that we will provide funding for you to receive support'. Thus the field agency may adapt its operation and structure, or perhaps want to be seen to be making changes, in order to obtain funding. Here it is the promise of support which is the driver. This discourse leaves a written trail which can be prised apart.

While a researcher can attempt to gauge these constituents of power from available texts coming to a decision as to whether this is a true partnership or a social pathology may be more difficult. For example, what if the field agency claims to agree with all of the changes they have implemented as a result of the project 'hot house' and thus may have seen the light with regard to their poor practice in the past? Thus while textual records may point to a wielding of power of donor over field agency the latter may be repentant and claim the donor was right all along. After all, aid chains comprise people with all of their biases, strengths and weaknesses working within their respective organisational context and thus the map is a complex one. If field agency staff salaries are dependent upon a regular stream of donor income then they clearly have a vested interest in a meeting of minds with their funders.

Lister (2000) provides an example of an analysis of power founded on the Dahl constituents between a group of organizations. Her chain comprised three

components; a funder, a northern-based NGO and a group of southern partners in Central America. Lister (2000) came to the conclusion that individual actors and relationships are critical in any partnership as it is primarily through them that the four constituents of power are expressed. As a result “*the partnership is vulnerable to changes in individuals and patterns of organizational leadership*” (Lister 2000, page 236), and this calls into question “*much of the theory currently being developed for NGOs in terms of capacity building, institutional strengthening, scaling-up and diffusion of innovation, which all rely on organizational processes as the basis for change.*” (Lister, 2000, page 237).

It should also be noted that field agencies are not without power; the aid chain axis is not a simple matter of donors having all the power and field agencies having none. Forbes (1999) has described examples where field agencies have made use of their closeness to the local scene (and knowledge and representation of the ‘local’) to influence donor behaviour. After all, the relative spatial and social remoteness of donors does mean that they will typically know far less than their local partners about the very groups they are trying to help (Lancaster, 1999). Donors also need to work with good and reliable field agencies which help them deliver ‘success’ (even if this is only in terms of how the donors see it) otherwise the very *raison d’être* of the donor becomes questionable. Indeed following from this latter point an interesting approach to analysing relationships in aid chains is the adaptation of ‘inter-dependence theory’ for individuals in close relationships (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003). Here the partnership is not just a useful and temporary conjunction to fulfil an agreed objective, but one based on a longer-term interaction with a level of investment, “*including feelings of attachment to a partner and desire to maintain a relationship, for better or worse*” (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993; page 180). One advantage of this school of thought is its potential to generate a multi-dimensional “*taxonomic characterization of situations*” (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003; page 370) as a first step in analysis. Bantham et al. (2003) posit what they refer to as mindset and skillset enablers in all relationships:

- **Mindset.** This comprises an awareness of tensions in relationships as well as a willingness to address them. While tensions may be internal or external to the relationship, unless partners are willing to recognise that they exist and deal with the tensions then partnership cannot happen.
- **Skillset.** Recognition of tensions and a willingness to address them are obviously important, but skills are also required to facilitate the management of tensions. Bantham et al (2003) suggest that skills such as ‘non-defensive listening’, ‘active listening’, ‘self-disclosure’ and ‘editing’ are included here, and it is perhaps understandable that some suggest “*listening is at the cornerstone of effective partnership*” (Ndiaye and Hammock, 1991; cited in Postma, 1994; page 454). However, the dilemma here is in the detail. Listening (hearing the words) may be one thing but acting upon them may be something entirely different. A field agency may express a collective view that its donor partner does listen, and indeed it may hear and read its partners words, but do changes occur as a result?

A third approach to the analysis of partnership takes a more grounded and practical perspective than the examples discussed so far. Within the ‘actor’ perspective of Van

Huijstee et al. (2007) Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) provides an example of a more ‘goal achievement’ analysis of partnership. This follows from a reasonable assumption that partnership is of little use unless it does enhance the achievement of sustainable development. After all, the point of the partnership is not just to be a “*blind mantra with little consideration of what the processes conducted under those banners actually produce*” (Davies, 2002; page 201) but to ‘add value’ and hence generate tangible benefits for the intended beneficiaries. Brinkerhoff (2002a and 2002b) provides a checklist of characteristics under four main headings to help with evaluation of partnership performance.

1. *presence of pre-requisites and success factors*
2. *partnership practice*
3. *partner performance*
4. *outcomes of the partnership relationship*

Items 1 to 3 more or less map onto the analyses of power and inter-dependence summarised above but item 4 is new and asks a fundamental question namely does the partnership deliver? Of course caution is necessary as partners may have their own representation of success which they pass between themselves without actually helping those meant to benefit (Geddes, 2000). Indeed tracking achievement outside of the partners space may require a great deal of effort on the part of the researcher, especially as it may be necessary to avoid the help of the field agency who may well insist on a potentially biased sample of key informants. Also, of course, it has to be acknowledged that adding this dimension implies that not all relationships have to necessarily be partnerships in order for success to be achieved. Neither should it be assumed that successful collaboration between agencies is partnership (Lister, 2000). A formal contractor-sub-contractor relationship could also lead to success for those meant to benefit, and frankly would intended beneficiaries care about the nature of the relationship between donor and field agency provided they saw tangible benefits? Partnership does imply that it is somehow better at bringing about success than other forms of relationship but given the paucity of literature on this point it is often an article of faith rather than proven fact.

The advantage of the more pragmatic approach to partnership is that it is grounded in practical achievement and one can easily set measurable indicators to gauge attainment. Figure 2.1 displays the four headings of the Brinkerhoff framework and the sort of parameters that need to be sought under each. Some are measures of success such as whether partners meet their objectives, while others are geared towards identifying the nature of their relationship. Thus there are phrases such as “*reciprocal accountability*”, trust, confidence and “*tolerance for sharing power*”. These factors can be ascertained in a research project, either by interviews and/or digesting minutes of meetings, correspondence and so on. Whether they exist (or not) gets to the heart of the Burbules thesis, but the problem is that if partners collude in an uneven exercise of power then questions may well generate answers which superficially point towards partnership without it really being there. How is it possible to verify objectively whether ‘trust’ or ‘confidence’ really exists? Also, the Brinkerhoff approach has elements in common with the classic Arnstein (1969) ‘ladder of participation’ (Figure 2.2) when set out as a matrix with ‘identity’ and ‘mutuality’ as the scales. For example, in this matrix ‘contracting’ is equated with what Arnstein refers to as ‘informing’; i.e. one person/organisation tells the other

what to do. Partnership exists in both and corresponds with high mutuality and high identity. However the indicators which can be derived to look for all this may say little about the driving forces at play in relationship. Just what are the factors that push a specific relationship into the various boxes of [Figure 2.2](#)? Is it due to the nature of the individuals involved or are there issues of institutional culture at play? Indeed much of the work in organisational theory to date has focussed far more on the identification of variation rather than explaining it (Greenwood and Empson, 2003). Thus it tends to be descriptive (*what is happening in the relationship?*) rather than analytical (*why or how is it happening?*).

It is perhaps of no surprise, given the overlaps that have emerged in this brief review of the literature, that the various approaches to analysing partnership can be combined. [Figure 2.3](#) employs the more ‘actor’ approach characterised by Brinkerhoff as a skeleton and superimposed upon this is a theoretical overlay of power and inter-dependence for analysis of institutional relationships. Many of the factors identified by Brinkerhoff can be re-classified under skillsets and mindsets although the latter is a much broader set than those given in [Figure 2.3](#). For example, skills such as ‘non-defensive listening’ are not explicitly set out in the Brinkerhoff framework but presumably underpin a number of factors such as equality in decision making and senior management support. Similarly, as already has been mentioned, there are elements in the Brinkerhoff framework that do give pointers as to the balance of power in the relationship. For example, a willingness to adapt the needs of partners would be an important indicator.

Therefore, to summarise, the literature on partnerships is indeed a large although perhaps somewhat weak on practical advice as to how partnerships can be analysed to avoid the pitfalls of what can be euphemistically called the ‘*Burbulesian Trap*’; an analysis which points towards partnership as that is what all those involved wish an outsider to see. Whether the analytical framework is founded on power, inter-dependence or indeed a more grounded analysis of performance the outcome would be the same if partners wish to present it that way. How can the trap be avoided? One answer may be for those embedded in the partnership to do the analysis. This would have the distinct advantage of aiding access to key individuals and at the same time elicit perhaps more genuine stories of what happened and why. Insiders would have some knowledge of what went on in the relationship and those being interviewed would be aware of that. This gives such ‘inside out’ as distinct from ‘outside in’ analysis a distinct advantage. However, ‘inside out’ analyses are also problematic given the positionality of those involved. If they have an involvement in relationships that are being explored can they really be regarded as ‘honest brokers’? Even if the research team comprises a combination of insiders and externals then is this not shifting the trap to a different place? Can the insider not influence the externals and thus help paint the same rosy picture of partnership even when the reality is far from that ideal?

Therefore this research attempted to go beyond the need to generate new empirical data on the functioning of partnerships and create insights that can better inform practice. To do this it was necessary to draw from the analytical frameworks set out above and also to avoid the ‘*Burbules Trap*’ as far as possible by adapting an approach that was driven by the ‘inside out’. The next chapter will set out some detail as to how that was achieved.

Figure 2.1 Partnerships – an analytical framework for evaluation (after Brinkerhoff, 2002a, 2002b)

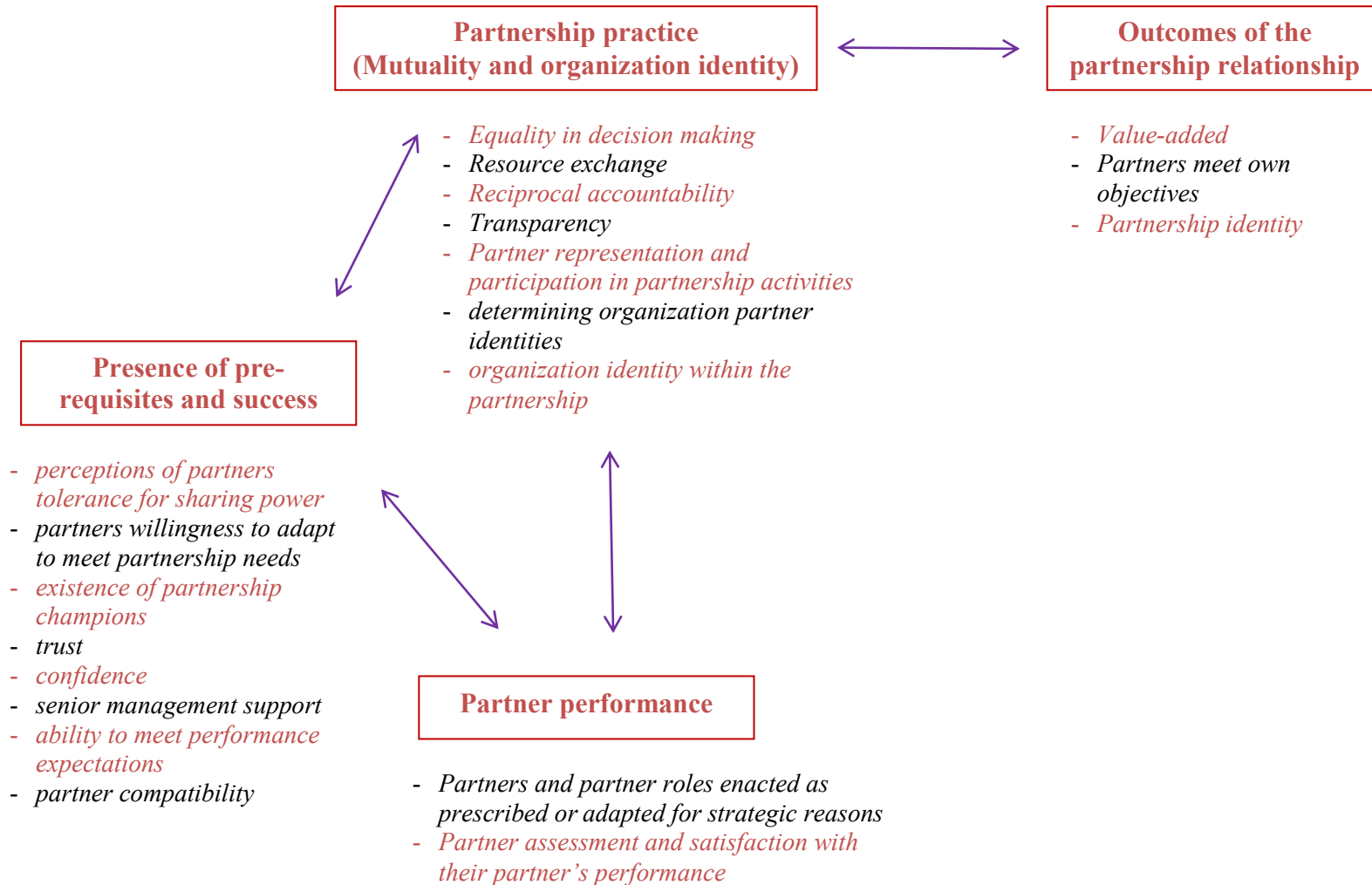


Figure 2.2 Models of relationships between citizens and those with power and between organisations.

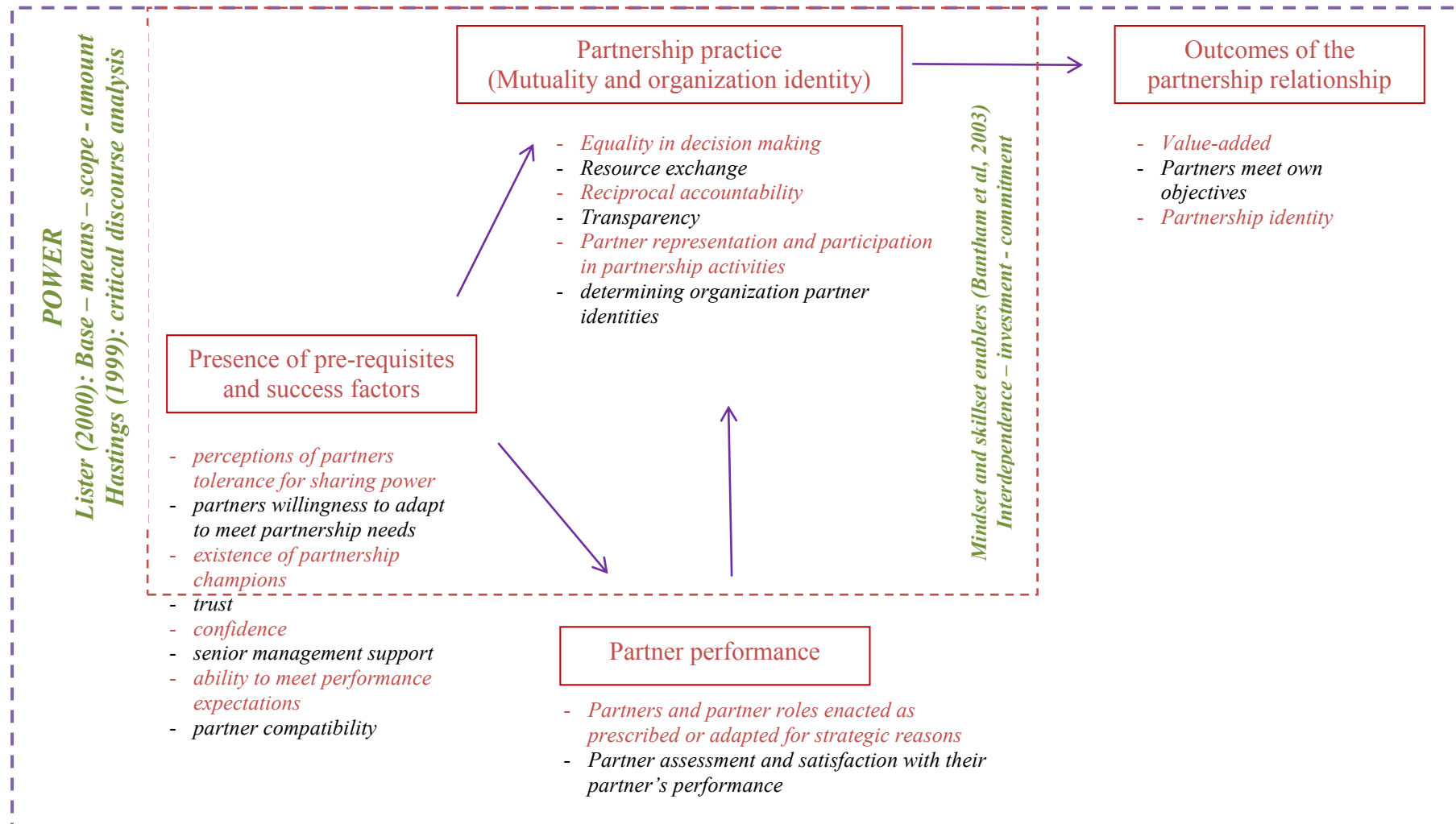
(a) Between organisations (after Brinkerhoff, 2002a, 2002b)

		Mutuality (mutual dependence)	
		Low	High
Organizational identity	High	<p><i>Contracting</i></p> <p>one organisation contracts another</p>	<p><i>Partnership</i></p> <p>organisations work together to meet their goals</p>
	Low	<p><i>Extension</i></p> <p>one organisation becomes to all intents and purposes an extension of the other</p>	<p><i>Co-optation & gradual absorption</i></p> <p>one organisation becomes absorbed or co-opted into the other</p>

(b) Between citizens and those with power (based on Arnstein, 1969)

		Mutuality (mutual dependence)	
		Low	High
Individual identity	High	<p><i>Informing</i></p> <p>citizens informed about decisions which have been taken by external agents.</p>	<p><i>Partnership</i></p> <p>citizens involved in compromise decisions between a range of partners</p>
	Low	<p><i>Informing/consultation/placation</i></p> <p>degrees of tokenism with citizens dependent on power holders for action</p>	<p><i>Manipulation/therapy</i></p> <p>non-participation with power-holders dictating to or 'educating' citizens almost as extensions of themselves</p>

Figure 2.3 Partnerships – an analytical framework combining the approaches of Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b), Bantham et al. (2003), Lister (2000) and Hastings (1999)



Chapter 3. The partnership space and survey

The specific partnership space chosen for analysis in the research is the network between four Catholic Church donors based in Europe and the US and the diocese of one Catholic province in Nigeria, West Africa. Nigeria has one of the largest populations of any African country (currently assumed to be 140 million people), and it is generally assumed that about 30% of the population is Christian, with approximately half being Catholic. The remainder are Muslim (estimated as 40%) or traditional (polytheist), although definitions can be cloudy as both Christians and Muslims may also hold traditionalist beliefs. Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, and religion is also related to ethnicity. Nigeria thereby provides an interesting context within which to explore relationships which occur within the Catholic aid chain family and the forces which have helped drive the nature of those relationships.

It was not logistically possible to examine all the relationships within the Catholic diocese in Nigeria and hence the research focussed on one Province (a collection of diocese), namely that of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP; [Figure 3.1](#)). AEP comprises six dioceses (Abuja, Lafia, Idah, Makurdi, Lokoja, and Otukpo) located more or less in the geographical centre of the country. Abuja is the Federal capital of Nigeria and Abuja diocese is the 'senior' of the six diocese; the Archdiocese. Each diocese is headed by a Bishop and the Bishop of the Arch diocese of Abuja is Archbishop ([Figure 3.2](#)). AEP is located in the centre of the country in Abuja, the Federal capital of Nigeria, and at the time of writing comprises six dioceses; Abuja, Lafia, Lokoja, Makurdi, Idah and Otukpo. There are a number of reasons for selecting AEP as the focus for the research:

1. AEP has relationships with all four donors.
2. AEP dioceses vary in history, size (physical), composition, Catholic population (as a proportion of the total), location and other characteristics which could well have a bearing on their partnership with donors. In particular they vary in terms of how long they have been working with donors.
3. AEP encompasses Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria, and as many international aid agencies have their headquarters in Abuja this should provide an advantage to AEP. The same could be said of potential links with Federal Government Ministries and agencies, many of which are also headquartered in Abuja.

The history of the Catholic Church in Nigeria is no different to the history of the Church anywhere in being founded by missionaries, in this case mostly from Europe and North America. Until the late 1960s the majority of priests and indeed Bishops in many dioceses were expatriates, but this has been changing rapidly and today the clergy and religious are largely Nigerian; almost all dioceses have a Nigerian Bishop. While the Church has a long institutional involvement in education and health care an interest in development as distinct from health and education dates from the 2nd Vatican Council (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7th 1965) which stressed that:

“In view of the increasingly close ties of mutual dependence today between all the inhabitants and peoples of the earth, the apt pursuit and efficacious attainment of the universal common good now require of the community of nations that it organize itself in a manner suited to its present responsibilities, especially toward the many parts of the world which are still suffering from unbearable want..... Already existing international and regional organizations are certainly well-deserving of the human race. These are the first efforts at laying the foundations on an international level for a community of all men to work for the solution to the serious problems of our times, to encourage progress everywhere, and to obviate wars of whatever kind. In all of these activities the Church takes joy in the spirit of true brotherhood flourishing between Christians and non-Christians as it strives to make ever more strenuous efforts to relieve abundant misery.”

There is also a call for structure within the Catholic Church aid chain accompanied by appropriate training of personnel:

“The procedure of collecting and distributing aid, without being inflexible and completely uniform, should nevertheless be carried on in an orderly fashion in dioceses, nations, and throughout the entire world. Wherever it seems convenient, this activity of Catholics should be carried on in unison with other Christian brothers. For the spirit of charity does not forbid, but on the contrary commands that charitable activity be carried out in a careful and orderly manner. Therefore, it is essential for those who intend to dedicate themselves to the services of the developing nations to be properly trained in appropriate institutes.”

Each Diocese has a Justice, Development and Peace Coordinator (JDPC) charged with organising all development activities in the diocese as well as a Health Coordinator. Given the increase in HIV/AIDS in Nigeria many diocese also have a HIV/AIDS Coordinator reporting to the Health Coordinator. While there are some funds generated locally, through collections and from government, the bulk of the project funding in many diocese still comes from outside the country, typically from one of the many Catholic donor organisations based in the global North.

Figure 3.1 Location of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province, Nigeria

1. Abuja
2. Lafia
3. Makurdi
4. Otukpo
5. Idah
6. Lokoja

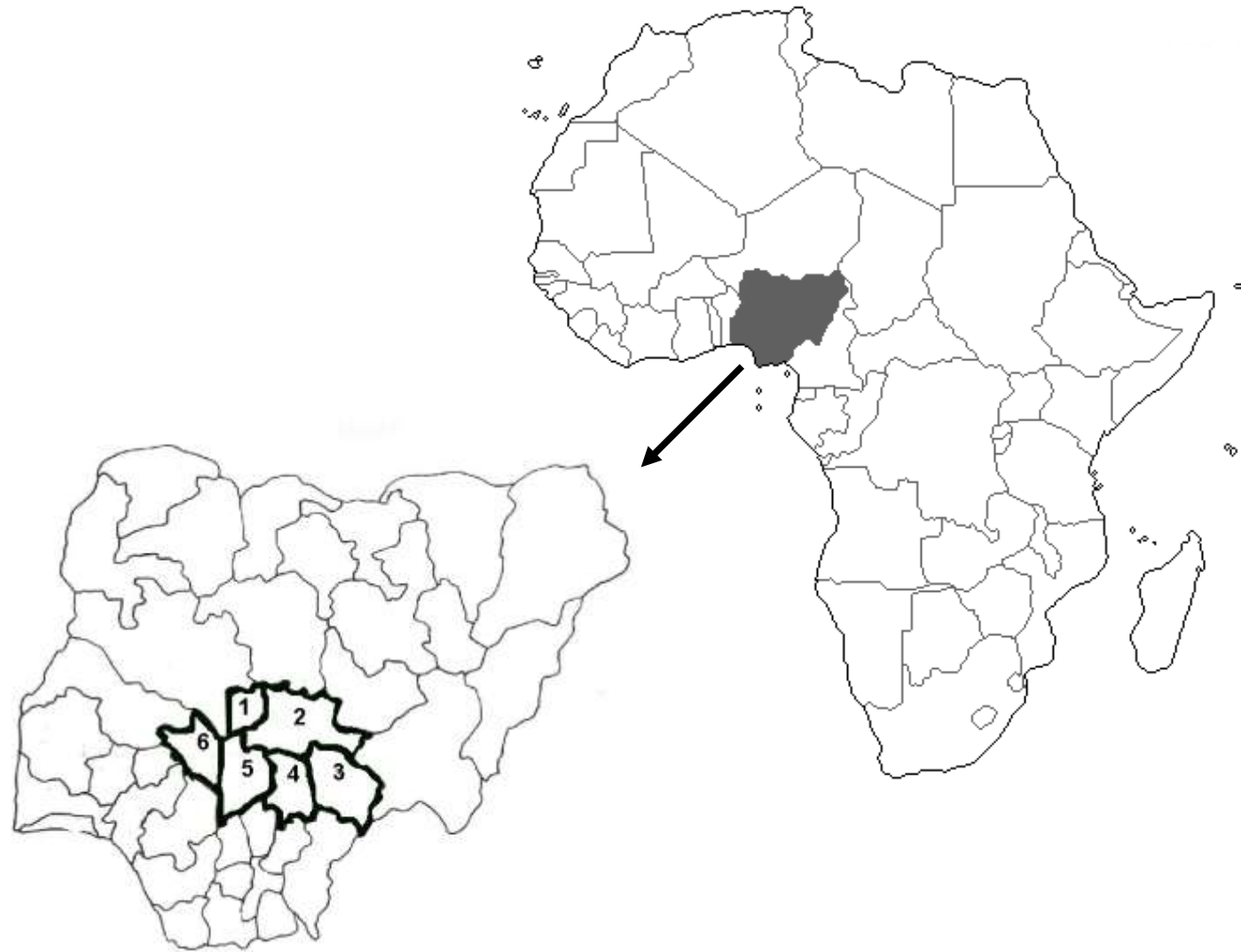
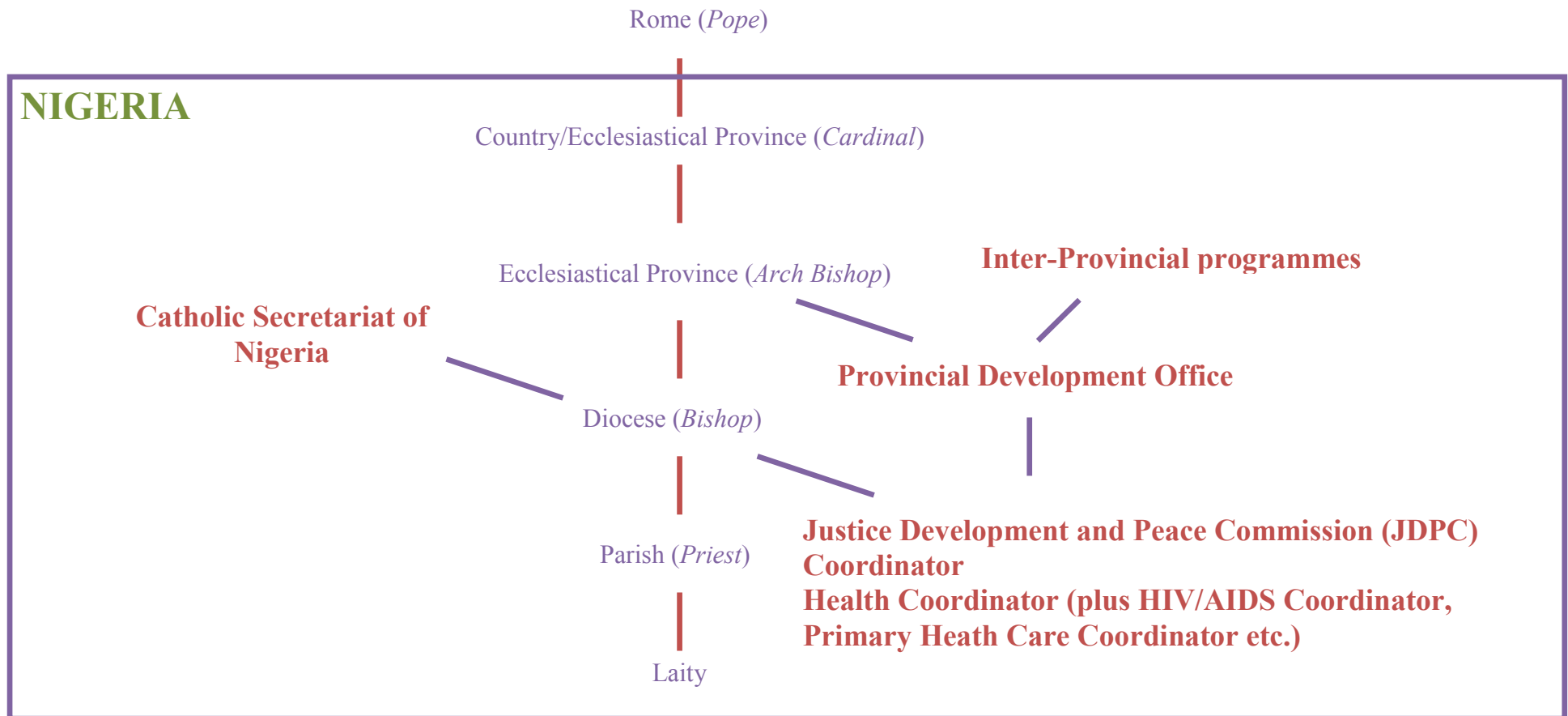


Figure 3.2. Catholic Church hierarchy and the variation on the theme in Nigeria

Structures in bold are those devoted, at least in part, to development issues in Nigeria.



The donors included in the research are all part of the Catholic Church structure but are quite different in terms of size and manner in which they operate.

- **Donor A** is the largest of the four in terms of resources and is based in the USA. This donor works by having in-country offices headed by a representative within each of the countries where it has programmes. The representative is a non-national of the host country and as well as being the day-to-day manager of the programmes in that country also acts as the representative of the Bishops Conference in the USA. Donor A bids for funding from the US government (USAID), but it has to compete with many other non-profit organisations and ‘for profit’ companies; the latter is what some Donor A respondents colourfully refer to as the ‘Beltway Bandits’. There is no government core funding, although there has been efforts by the government to encourage faith-based groups to apply for funds. The latter is much more focussed on making faith-based groups aware of what is available and helping them with applications rather than any preferential treatment.
- **Donor B** is based in England and Wales (UK) and like Donor A also has a presence in Nigeria, albeit much smaller than A. The presence amounts to an officer based in Jos, although there are plans to expand this presence. Donor A can apply for funding from its government aid agency, DFID, and has to prove that it has the capacity and ability to implement programmes.
- **Donor C** is from Germany, and is the second largest of the four in terms of available resources.
- **Donor D** is from Ireland and has a limited presence in AEP; in fact in only provides support to one of the diocese in that Province. However, it does provide an interesting example for a number of reasons. While it has no formal operational presence in Nigeria it does have an intern working out of Donor A’s office in Abuja.

There are umbrella groups to which these donors belong, and two are of especial importance here. First there is Caritas Internationalis (headquartered in the Vatican City), a federation of some 162 Catholic aid agencies (www.caritas.org). Many countries have a national Caritas agency which belongs to this federation. Donor D is in effect ‘Caritas Ireland’ while Donor A is ‘Caritas USA’. In England and Wales and Germany it is more complex. Donor B is a member of Caritas but there is a separate organisation called ‘Caritas – Social Action’ which acts as an umbrella for charities with a Catholic ethos in the UK. There is also a Caritas in Germany quite separate from Donor C. The European Caritas agencies are also federated into Caritas – Europa (www.caritas-europa.org/code/en/default.asp) which was created in 1971, Caritas Europa comprises 48 organisations that are active in 44 European countries. The Caritas umbrella is meant to help facilitate cooperation.

The second umbrella group, CIDSE (www.cidse.org), is much smaller than Caritas – Internationalis but is also an international alliance of Catholic aid agencies headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. The membership of CIDSE is mostly drawn from European Catholic Church aid agencies along with ‘Development and Peace’ from Canada. Donors B, C and D are members of CIDSE while Donor A used to be a

member but is no longer. Interestingly the ‘*Centre of Concern*’ (www.coc.org), an organisation which regards itself as being ecumenical and interfaith in outlook and based in the USA, is an associate member of CIDSE. Caritas is a formal part of the structure of the Church while CIDSE is more lay-based (in the words of respondent B9) and not part of the Church structure in a formal sense.

There are various ways in which development networks such as that of the Catholic Church can be explored (Bebbington and Kothari, 2006). Here it was decided to tease apart relationships via conversations with those engaged in the aid chain. Thus data collection was primarily via semi-structured interviews which were recorded for transcription. Interviews typically took two hours or so, and once transcribed the information was coded and classified under a number of themes which had emerged. Both researchers (Morse and McNamara) have extensive experience working with the AEP. McNamara was development coordinator for Idah diocese from 1970 to 2002 (over 30 years) and is currently the development coordinator for the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR). She has intimate knowledge of Church-based development in Nigeria and has long worked with a number of the donors included in the study. This provided the researchers with an ability to identify and access key informants as well as scope for much internal referencing as stories unfolded. Morse has been working in a development capacity for Idah Diocese since 1980; first on a full-time basis from 1980 to 1987 and then on a part-time basis (typically 2 months per year) between 1988 and 1999). He currently is a member of the MSHR development committee.

Thus the authors were in an ideal position to calibrate the stories being told during the interviews. Indeed given that both researchers were ‘insiders’ (albeit to different degrees) it was decided to run the process as action research, whereby insights that the authors managed to glean from respondents was shared with others so as to help facilitate change. As a result of this mode of operation partnerships were evolving during the actual process of the research. To some extent this was inevitable as McNamara in particular was known to almost all respondents, even if only by name and reputation, and thus an element of cross-questioning often occurred. In some cases the interview became more a debate over an event that had occurred and the reasons for it.

It was, of course, acknowledged that while the inside knowledge of the researchers with regard to AEP and indeed the Church-based aid chain provided advantages there would be a danger of having too much knowledge; that an element of bias would creep in. On balance it was decided that the advantages of being able to glean real rather than sanitised stories out-weighed the disadvantages.

The Bishop, Justice Development and Peace and Health Coordinator of each of the six dioceses were interviewed (Table 3.1). In some cases it was possible to also interview the HIV/AIDS and Primary Health Care Coordinators. The key actors/leaders in charge at AEP, the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) and others working at the Inter-Provincial levels were also interviewed. For the Catholic-based donors the personnel charged with coordinating the allocation of grants to Nigeria were interviewed (Table 3.2). In some cases more senior people within the donor organization were interviewed in order to achieve a better flavour of historical trends in the relationship. It was possible to interview respondents from all four donors and

CIDSE. Extending the interviews to cover Caritas agencies (beyond Donors B and C) was deemed impractical with the resources available. A number of Federal Government personnel were also interviewed (Table 3.3).

Table 3.1 AEP respondents interviewed in the research

This Table provides the position of the respondent within their respective diocese and their code (for anonymity).

AEP Diocese	Bishop	JDPC Coordinator	Health Coordinator	HIV/AIDS Coordinator	Health Secretary
Lafia	A23	A2	A6		
Makurdi	A9	A11	A10	A20	A4
Otukpo	A17	A18	A15/A16		
Idah	¹	³	A7	A21	
Lokoja	²	A12 ⁴	A13		
					Code
Provincial Coordinator (AEP)					A1
Project Coordinator of the Catholic Interprovincial Health project					A8
Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria					A19
Deputy Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria					A22

Blank spaces in the table represent individuals who could not be interviewed for a variety of reasons. In some cases (JDPC Coordinator, Idah and Bishop, Lokoja) no one was in post at the time of the study while in others (Bishop Idah, Lokoja JDPC Coordinator) the individual was unwell or inaccessible. Not all diocese have the position of ‘Health Secretary’, hence A4 was the only example available for interview.

All respondents are Nigerian. Four of the JDPC Coordinators interviewed are priests, and the Deputy Coordinator (Lokoja) is a male lay person. Two of the Health Coordinators are female (religious sisters; A3 and A6) while four are male (priests; A10, A15/A16, A7 and A13). A15 and A16 refer to the outgoing and incoming Health Coordinators for Otukpo Diocese. Both HIV/AIDS coordinators are female (religious sisters).

Notes

¹ Idah Bishop unwell at time of survey

² Lokoja Bishop deceased at time of survey

³ Idah JDPC Coordinator could not be interviewed as this post had recently been vacated by one of the researchers (McNamara) and her replacement had not yet been selected.

⁴ Lokoja JDPC Coordinator unwell as time of survey so his assistant was interviewed instead.

Table 3.2 Donor personnel interviewed in the research

Donor	Personnel interviewed
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country representative (based in Abuja; B1) • HIV/AIDS Programme Managers (B19 and B20) • Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (B9) • Councillor to the President of CRS (B8) • North East (US) Regional Director (B3) • Justice and Peace Promoter (US; B4) • Director of the Programme Quality Support Department (B5) • Senior Programme Director and Chief of Party form the Antiretroviral Therapy Consortium (B6)
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Healthcare Programme Accompanier (based in Jos, Plateau State; B21) • Programme Development and Funding Officer (B11) • Regional Manager for West Africa and the Great Lakes (B16) • Programme Officer for Nigeria (B17)
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers dealing with Nigeria spanning a 30 year period (B18) • Department Head, Katholische Zentralstelle (B25)
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Officer for the West Africa Programme (B22) • Programme Cycle Management Adviser (B12) • Coordinator for the Lenten Campaign (B13) • Programme Manager for Africa (B14)
CIDSE	Programme Cooperation and Peace Officer for Africa and Asia (B15)
USAID	Senior Advisor to the Centre Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (B2)
DFID	Programme Manager (Link to Faith-based groups; B10)
Irish Aid	Senior Development Specialist, Technical Section (B7)
BMZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor, Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations, Churches, political foundations (B23) • Advisor, Principles of Cooperation with Civil Society forces, Churches, political foundations (B24)

Table 3.3 Nigerian Federal Government personnel interviewed

Federal Ministry	Personnel interviewed
Health	Assistant Director, International Health Division, Health Planning and Research Department (C1)
Health	Consultant Special Grade 1, National AIDS and STD Control Programme, Department of Public Health (C5)
Health	Consultant Special Grade 1 (Research), Department of Health Planning and Research (C4)
Women Affairs	Assistant Director (C6)
Water Resources	Director, Dams and Reservoir Operations (C2) Deputy Director, Dams and Reservoir Resources (C3)

Chapter 4. Meaning of partnership

Both donors and their field partner respondents within the partnership space had very similar visions as to what partnership comprises. The following extended set of quotations with highlighting of key words provides a flavour as to what the field agency respondents felt were important in partnership. The quotes are divided into two sections, one set which stresses collaboration and another which stresses trust and respect. There is some overlap between these two categories.

(a) Collaboration, working together, cooperation and achievement

“But to me partnership means that look, we are collaborating... Yes, I use the word ‘collaboration’ for we have common interests in the sense that there is a need for people who have need on something..... And I am on the ground and I don’t have the resources to do it, and there are some people who have resources to do it, they’re in partnership, they agree with me, we will do these things for the people. So they are the ones, more or less they provide the money and I supervise the thing for them, and that is it for me, partnership, we are doing something common together for people. That means working in collaboration for the common good of society, if you want to put it like that.”

A23

“Well I think partnership for me it’s like making a covenant between one person and another or one group or another, promising now to be of help if you fulfil these conditions.”

A9

“You see the way I understand it, and as it involves the Church and the Bishop, it’s cooperation and the cooperation is not just at the level of financial support, it has to do with ideas too, exchange of ideas and using the ideas to work together for a common good or a group of people. So that’s how I look at it, it’s just like give and take.”

A17

“Well I think I should say partnership is, a collaborative effort by the end users trying to work together and trying to understand one another and trying to see how you could work together for a particular goal.”

A11

“Partnership is, for me, cooperation in a development process, cooperation in the process. And I put emphasis on process rather than project, and so two agencies coming together reason out a project, agreeing on certain terms of implementation, terms of accountability. And one agency, like in our case, being the implementers of the project, the other agency’s supporting with ideas and with fund, and then constantly checking on the agreement and implementation coming to the agreement. Seeing to the betterment of the people in one area or the other, whether it is the area of education or health or democracy or

whatever, which means the two agencies that come together to partner to do this.”

A17

“It helps us; it works because you achieve a goal. So it is collaborative, working together.”

A18

“For me partnership entails involvement of more than one person in the process of decision, in terms of planning, decision and implementation..... A mutual agreement to work together and that entails that they are involved together in taking decision, in planning and in implementing.”

A7

“I think for us here as a Church and as a mission who is involved in the provision of healthcare, we think that we know our needs and if we get people who are helping us to carry out what we want to do, that's what we understand about partnership. So for me partnership is like helping us to do what we want to do and are able to do.”

A10

“I think partnership is first of all having an interest, a common interest in an area and pooling your resources together to try to address that interest. And these resources may either be in terms of personnel, financial, and what is generally referred to as logistics. But it's all about complimenting the efforts of each of partners.”

A4

“Partnership is one goal for two persons or two organisations, one having one capacity and providing support to the other to implement a project.”

A12

“Well somebody that will collaborate with me, either in ideas, in human building, in material resources to achieve an objective goal.”

A1

“To me, partnership means working together; I think people or groups that have a common interest working together.”

A21

(b) Equality, trust and respect

“Partnership for us is to see ourselves as equals working together, rather than that of a beggar going to a donor for money, and if we're both working for the common good of the people as I see it. An equal stake.”

A13

“Partnership or maybe we first look at the ingredients that make partnership....trust... common mission and goal... support... equality... respect of each other’s independence. Relationship that is targeted at promoting a common goal by one or two organisations that have equal respect for each other, and that is such a relationship that will be characterised by mutual trust. One not having the feeling of a superior partner, feeling that all of us are equal partners, just that our roles are different. You are providing this goal, maybe bring the financial support, why have been mentioned the programme, but both of us have common goal of addressing a common problem.”

A5

“First and foremost the interpersonal relationship cannot be overemphasised when we are talking about partnership which means understanding need and our understanding of how we operate, and then the second one is in terms of work, how we see ourselves as partners, what are the issues we agreed and then come to a common project. I mean, to me that is very key; you don’t feel superior to me and I don’t feel superior to you, but we agree that we are equal and then we work together. Everything that is done is done complete.”

A1

“There has to be dialogue, you know... for mutual respect and sensitivity.”

A3

“We will have equal stake and you respect my views and I respect yours. You will be open to whatever changes or ideas, and there should be some level of trust and confidence, and some kind of confidentiality -a good working relationship.”

A6

“A relationship where each partner is making some contribution, the relationship that respects that each person’s contribution is worthwhile. So it can’t even be ranked, yours is better than mine, but both are good and relevant and essential. And partnership that is, also could be a relationship that is willing to define that relationship from time-to-time, so it’s not cast in stone but things may happen that we have to redefine. Like my relationship with you today can change by tomorrow based on our experiences. We can either strengthen the relationship or quit the relationship, or just agree to keep the thing running for the benefit of others. OK, so I think that is not an end in itself, it’s not the relationship that is an end in itself, it’s a relationship that aims to improve other peoples’ lives.”

A8

These quotations stress words such as ‘collaboration’ and ‘cooperation’ with the aim of getting things done, i.e. tangible achievement, but there are also calls for mutual respect. The perspective of the donors was very similar to those of the field personnel, and the following extended quotes from respondents belonging to just one

of the donors sums up the views, albeit expressed in different ways, of all the donor respondents interviewed.

“Because partnership should be between [Donor B]’s supporters here in this country and the people in Nigeria, and we are in the middle and our responsibility is to bridge that....., to me and to us [Donor B] participates in adult-to-adult relationships where we have a principle, if you want, of co-responsibility on what we are doing. Where we as [Donor B] take, together with our partners wherever, the responsibility for what we are doing, that we both believe in it, that we’re both in it, that we both have roles and responsibilities in that work and that we both take the blame or the credit for the failures and the successes.....I suppose in the sense of how [Donor B] works, I think there is something about being there for the long-haul and that kind of equality of you having something or the partners having something, so kind of walking that route together, accompanying each other down the road, developing yourselves and your partners. Because I think, certainly a partnership takes time to develop so you need to really be able to see the benefits, you need to obviously be willing to work alongside your partner for sometime.... I think there's complimentarity and I think also you have to have a lot of patience around the whole thing. Just have that kind of openness as well, I think openness is quite key, obviously having a mutual purpose; you need to be in there for the same kind of thing otherwise it's not really going to work. It's openness, trust and those kinds of things.”

B16

“For me, partnership would be about a relation between equals really, that's how it ought to work..... in reality sometimes it's not like that, but for me, partnership is very much about co-responsibility and joint ownership rather than what has been often in the past also, it's something about mutual trust, and also a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities and saying OK I expect this from you and what do you expect from me in return, and seeing them co-responsible for the outcome and output. And again, I think if I take [Donor B], I think our partnerships have been very strong in terms of mutual trust, and so it's quite effective. But sometimes I think they were less clear about roles and responsibility and mutual expectation and sometimes we were kind of saying to partners OK we give you these funds, but we were not involved in working with them around what the project was about. So for me, it's about joint responsibility, joint ownership, also joint mutual trust and really understanding what most of us would expect from one another and be clear about it. In practice sometimes that's not the case, but we feel that, that's what partnership would mean for me.”

B11

“I think for me I'll just say one word, equality, because you each value each other's contribution into anything that you are doing. It's not about me doing it alone, but together we are transparent.”

B21

“it could be a principle, it could be an equal, equal rights, cooperation is always partnership, in the sense if some autonomous or semi-autonomous or even conflicting partners, it means if they act together for the same purpose and if they see that the comparative benefit is even more, then they are able to work together.”

B25

In perspective these quotes show a marked degree of uniformity. There is an emphasis on collaboration for achievement but also a relationship based upon trust, openness and respect, and donor B in particular stresses that they are in this for the “*long haul*” rather than it being a short-term relationship. Given that involved personnel share the same social teaching and set of ethics this is perhaps not surprising. Also, it is important to note that an extensive discourse has long been taking place between all of these agencies and the same words and phrases would be shared through documentation, letters, conversations and workshops. Indeed partnership has been in the ‘development air’ for some time and would be expected to permeate the thinking of many of those interviewed for this project. All groups also have a sense of ‘place’ (not geographical space but social/hierarchical space) within the chain and their relative advantages and disadvantages. Together this interaction would explain the prevalence of the terms collaboration, dialogue, complementarity, co-responsibility, trust and respect. Indeed these same terms and words also appear in definitions employed by government aid agency respondents.

“The key words are the idea of a kind of a dynamic two-way relationship based on dialogue. The enabling of influence and contribution to the identification of programme priorities, strong downward accountable relationships with communities at grass root level, a focus on building execution and capacity of partners, local ownership and capacity to influence public policies..... focus on mutual learning and dialogue to strengthen acceptance as a whole.....the characteristics of partnership are long-term and sustained relationship based on common values and approaches, a clear sense of equality based on respect of contributions and responsibilities, mutual accountability downwards towards the communities as well as upwards towards the donors/funders.”

B7

“No subordination.... Exchange of argument... Open-minded..... every side should follow their interest without losing the view on the interest of the other side..... should be a cooperation at higher level.”

B23/B24

There is broad agreement between all respondents as to what partnership should be. In the following two chapters the reality of these visions will be explored. Do the realities match these words or are all involved simply masking over a “social pathology”, as Burbules would put it? Indeed is this commonality in perspective over what partnership means also a symptom of a desire for all to sing from the same hymn sheet? **Chapter 5** will consider the realisation of partnership within Nigeria while **Chapter 6** will examine its realisation amongst the Catholic Church donors and their respective international aid agencies.

Chapter 5. Partnership: reality or pretence?

It is in the realisation rather than in the expressed meaning of partnership as discussed in Chapter 2 that there often tends to be patchiness. The key question is whether rhetoric matches reality, or do all parties act together to use the same language yet acquiesce to the underlying difference in power?

During the research it was clear that the operational presence of Donor A in Nigeria is the source of much tension, and this in turn is allied with its functionality as a contractor for USAID. In effect it is this combination that some of the Nigerian respondents saw as a threat to partnership given that in their eyes Donor A represented a parallel structure to Nigerian Church institutions at National and Provincial levels. For the CSN and Province this has resulted in what can only be described as a tortured relationship, and therefore it is with Donor A and its relationships with others that provides the best entre into partnerships within the Church-based aid chain.

Respondents at all levels of the Church in Nigeria often compared Donor A to the other Catholic donors they have experienced, and some of the wording was robust. The following quotations from three Nigerian respondents illustrate various issues.

“But, and this is a big but, [Donor A] operates very differently from [Donor C]. Even though in both cases they are using largely funds from government, the impact of government policies on [Donor A] is much, much heavier than it is on [Donor C]. Secondly, precisely because there's a whole lot of American government bureaucracy that they have to comply with, they always have this system of setting up big offices out in the field. So they have a big office here in Abuja, which chops [= eats] quite a lot of money, we look at it and we say for goodness sakes, the things they are doing there, those are the things we normally take in our stride in the JDPC office, but we are having... even the rent for the house of the country representative, and then they also end up bringing in a lot of expatriate staff which we are not too sure really are necessary. We are watching the development and we have already given notice that we would want to have a meeting to evaluate what has happened in the last five years. And the purpose of the evaluation is to give us an opportunity to document what we see and even to make our own strong suggestion as regards how we think things should be run in Nigeria..... You know, you don't need to bring a whole staff of people here to help distribute money that can be sent by bank draft.”

A14

“And we are now telling [Donor A] that wait a minute, you have set up parallel structures to our justice and peace infrastructures, we don't want any one to come and set up parallel structures. And [Donor A] says this is how we function, and we say we don't want you to function this way. If you are a Church agency recognise that there is a Church in Nigeria, and that the Church in Nigeria has structures. If the structures are not capable, then empower those structures, help train people, help empower them, but don't set up a parallel structure. Meaning that we want to

function pretty much like we do function with [Donor C]; [Donor C] is the largest donor that we have.”

A19

“Maybe the only thing I can say about the other donors, for instance [Donor A] as it is in Nigeria, they don’t recognise the provincial structure. What I mean by that is that I agree that they have their money with development organisations, but for instance I give you an example, [Donor C], they feel more comfortable working with the province because this is a structure that is put in place by the CBC, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. So when they come, first and foremost they meet with us at the provincial level to discuss what are our priorities. [Donor A] does not do that, they come and they choose the diocese that they want to work with, they don’t care.... they have not been to this office..... Because if [Donor A] approves a project for you, like their resources, the material, everything will have to be bought by [Donor A]. So there’s no trust..... I’ve not seen any of them [Donor A personnel] in this office, they have not even called for us or even invited us.”

A1

There is a rich set of issues expressed or implied in these quotes, but there is an underlying clash with the visions of partnership as espoused in the previous chapter. Donor A is perceived to be going over the heads of local structures in terms of deriving its programmes and selecting partners at diocesan level resulting in a feeling of mistrust and lack of respect. There are also undertones of unease arising from the fact that donor A brings in expatriates to run its local structure. Notice how this is sharply contrasted with the *modus operandi* of Donor C which is considered by some as an exemplar of how a Catholic donor should function. Donor C is perceived as being more ‘hands off’ and supportive of local structures rather than trying to bypass them. However, it is important to note that these views were largely restricted to respondents based in the CSN and Province, operating very much out of the hierarchical model of the Catholic Church. As one respondent from Donor D neatly expressed it:

“I suppose there’s nowhere more political than the Catholic Church when you get to relationships like that, and it’s probably the only political party that’s been around for two thousand years. It’s survived several coup attempts.”

B14

For this respondent such ‘parallelization’ of structures at a national or provincial level was not regarded as a problem and for the most part the views of diocesan personnel regarding Donor A are positive, as indeed they tend to be for all donors. None of the diocesan-level respondents echoed anything like the concerns raised at higher strata in the Church, although some were aware that these views were being expressed by others. The following quotations illustrate this sense of a positive relationship with Catholic Church-based donors in general:

“Generally I think the experience with [Donor B] has been a good one, I think that has been a nice relationship..... [Donor C] has been assisting

most particularly in putting up structures and in the supply of maybe some equipment and I think the relationship has been good, I think..... [Donor A] is a wonderful experience. Wonderful positively, not negatively, wonderful. I don't know, but what it was, because [Donor A] is one of those organisations that I personally relate with. But their experiences, our relationship with them is quite wonderful, is what you can actually call a mutual collaborative relationship because, it is not like the experience with some other donors not on this list, for some people there is some elements of a master-servant relationship. But with [Donor A] it's unusual collaboration, mutual in the sense that we need to assist you do this one, and they provide you, both technical assistance, financial assistance and which of our assistance that is within the scope of what they can take. We live with them as partners and not like master-servant so to speak."

A4

"[Donor C] is good at cooperating, they don't just pose ideas, they come and seek your opinion, seek your view, synthesise it together and then we both talk. They give you room for a lot of elasticity to adjust and adjust to particular needs at the time, they're quite good on that."

A13

After all, the dioceses are working directly with Donor A and if their relationship fulfils the keywords set out in the definition as both partner see it then it perhaps matters not that Donor A may be bypassing the Province and CSN. Indeed no diocesan respondent expressed a concern about such bypassing or indeed whether it could impact negatively on the sustainability of the Catholic Church development structures in Nigeria. On the other hand could it be that the diocesan respondents are more aware of the need to talk the right talk with regard to Donor A given that they are the ones receiving, or hoping to receive, grants? Or, are CSN and Province more able to be critical of Donor A precisely because they are being bypassed? In effect they have nothing else to lose while the diocese could lose much funding. It has to be said that while the 'bypassing' issue may not have emerged at diocesan level Donor A did not escape criticism even if it was considerably muted. For example, there were comments over the pay of Nigerian staff in Donor A relative to those employed within the Church structures in Nigeria.

"I'm using [Donor A] as an example because they are here in Nigeria; their office is here in Abuja. So people who are working in [Donor A] are my contemporaries, my colleagues, they are living here in Abuja... And so as such we should know how much they are paid so that we begin to measure adequately if those of us who are implementing a [Donor A] project, will be paid as much as [Donor A] staff as long as the project lasts."

A5

"[Donor A] poaches staff.....when we have qualified staff and they see that these guys are working well, then we can't keep the staff, [Donor A] is able to pay three times more than what we can pay so they take our staff. And we say now rather than do that, why don't you subsidise our

salary so that we can keep the staff for our work for justice and peace, which is what [Donor C] does? [Donor C] right now sponsors up to ten of our staff.....Because we cannot compete with [Donor C], we cannot compete with [Donor A], if [Donor C] want to come and set up an office here, then we could as well hand over justice and peace work to [Donor C], because we cannot compete with them.”

A19

Both quotations are related; Donor A can pay higher salaries and hence “*poach*” staff from the Church-based organizations. This may cause problems in the future if well-qualified Nigerians are understandably attracted to the employment of donors at the expense of the dioceses, especially when it is the former who may have paid for expensive courses and provided work experience initially. Another concern at diocesan level is centred on the liquidation of funds. Donor A demands that every quarter (or even monthly) an auditor must check the entire project accounts held by the diocese. Understandably this places a significant burden on diocesan staff, much more so than their dealings with the other donors, but (in truth) while it may be resisted at first respondents also pointed out that as they became used to the system and appreciate its benefits and rigour. For example, the following quote is from respondent A5.

“so with [Donor A] there is an inbuilt system, every month there is a format of liquidation which every partner is expected to follow..... It’s difficult but the Caritas officer is coping with things. It’s quite cumbersome, quite staunch and like I said, it’s a system inbuilt within itself that you have to follow, and it’s automatic. As long as you follow the system and the formula, it gives you results. So once we lock on to that formula, you do the liquidation.... Initially I found it very disturbing, but as we get familiar with it, it’s becoming much easier. And one thing that it will not take away from us is it helps you to be much more accountable and it helps you to be much more organised. Because before this system was introduced, I’m not as organised as I am now because I need to insist, when I delegate responsibility, they must account to the last kobo now, and I must choose the evidence of the expenditure carried out. But before, one could easily explain away certain things to me and it’s left to my judgment to say OK I accept this, and it’s all over. But now it’s not like that. If you are spending it and it’s the least amount of money, you must account for it, because at the end of the day [Donor A] will be demanding that off me too. So I need to enforce it on these people and everybody is becoming more accountable... so to a large extent I see it as something that has helped us, that I have to note to [Donor A] this, but I see that as something that has helped us in our organisation. Because I can now work with other organisations that demand this kind of procedure, and I will not be found wanting. But when we started it was much more difficult. [Donor C] is much more relaxed, the reports we give are largely narrative and little of financial, and they don’t query much. But [Donor A] queries to the last kobo.”

A5

In this quotation there is an initial sense of burden and frustration yet there is also a gradual acceptance that the donor has a right to make this demand. It must be remembered that at diocesan level there may be few staff employed to help support JDPC and Health Coordinators, so the burden is large. Nonetheless this has resulted in respondents showing an appreciation of attitudes which encourage and value systems that lead to greater accountability. However, one can question who the accountability is being directed at? Is it Donor A or is it the respondents or perhaps both? After all, better accounting is not necessarily the same thing as achieving the aims and objectives of a project which has the best impact for beneficiaries. In fairness, this perceived drive by Donor A to monitor what is happening at diocesan level with the resources they provide reverberates through a number of responses beyond the matter of liquidation.

“They [Donor A] are always on it, every little thing they give you; they are on the ground to see what is happening. Because from time to time (I don’t know if they call them) the programme managers or whatever, come around to check and they go down to the beneficiaries. Like if it is in the parish they go to meet the parish, talk with the parish Priest and those who are involved in the [project] and they attend sometimes their meetings. It’s good but it is not just their project, we are the Health Coordinatorsif when you give me your money it’s good for you to know what I have done with it, but at the same time you should know it’s not just your money I’m collecting. And as you need my time, others also need my time. And if I am to spend my time running around, in fact other things will suffer. I feel they don’t give you time to even use your initiative..... They don’t trust you to some level to say let them allow you to use your initiative and even arrive at some things when they are on the ground.... And [Donor C] does not follow us like this and every year they get results and when they come they are pleased with the work you are doing, so why do you have to be on the ground?”

A6

Note again how Donor A suffers from comparison with the other donors that do not insist on regular liquidation or checking. As respondent A6 states - Donor C does not do this so why should Donor A? Both are Catholic-Church based and both receive significant funding from their governments; so why is there a difference? No doubt the nuances of different government demands imposed on the donors can be tortuous to explain and it is understandable that diocesan respondents would have difficulty appreciating how these can generate such significant operational differences in Nigeria. However, it has to be said that differing demands from respective government aid agencies are not the only factors at play here. The agencies do also have quite different *modus operandi* as a result of choice and not imposition.

Interestingly Donor B is beginning to traverse a very similar path to that of Donor A in terms of establishing an in-country presence. The idea is not to be operational but to work through the Provincial structures. In that sense the path of Donor B would be different to that of Donor A which tends to work directly with diocese rather than through provinces. As one respondent from Donor B put it:

“At [Donor B], we are decentralising and we’re still saying we’re not operational. What we say now is that we are co-operational, working with people..... and with that, I don’t see, we’re not at all moving into [Donor A] approach... And big offices and lots of staff and OK, also having lots of local staff and lots of ex-pats, I mean in key roles they [Donor A] still have ex-pats which is always an issue. So we’re not moving at all in that direction, but we are also realising that we need some level of in-country presence if we want to support partners in a more day-to-day basis rather than having the Programme Officer going there three times a year and being there for a couple of weeks..... it could be misunderstood by the Bishops, and I think we have to be very clear with the Bishop’s Conference about how we go because there’s always this kind of short cut of [Donor A], we don’t want another in-country... And not having these parallel structures. And we’re really trying in terms of the health sector to work with the structures that already exist with diocesan health coordinators, with the Health Committee of CSN. And that’s really a concern to us that we don’t build up structures and start recruiting lots of staff in a way that is not sustainable, maybe for us but not for the Church. But I think it’s a fine line.”

B11

Donor B also funds staff working at CSN so they do take more of a hybrid approach than the starker contrast presented by Donors A and C. Even so an enhancement of its in-country presence must be seen as a risk given the criticism which has befallen Donor A.

Criticism, of course, is not one-way and the question can be asked as to what the donors think of their relationships with the field agencies? Do they genuinely see them as partnerships? Interestingly, there were some mixed views about this.

“I think sometimes we’re still seen as donors rather than partners... I mean this whole funding issue, it’s really biased relations. It’s not just with partners, I think it’s really everywhere when there is this kind of funding element, and that’s why it’s quite good when partners feel in a better position in terms of... when they have quite a diversified portfolio in terms of how they deal with different agencies, then they are much more willing to say actually I don’t want to work with you on this and that.When a partner is very dependent on [Donor B] funds, and then it is sometimes quite difficult to say we’re equals in this relationship. And again, it depends a lot on Programme Officers and how they deal with partners, and I think [Donor B] has quite good Programme Officers in terms of the relations they build because it tends to be quite solid. But sometimes I still have the feeling that, yes, partners are telling us what they think we would like to hear rather than what they really are thinking about the partnership.”

B11

This is a comment very much in tune with the Burbules perspective of power as a social pathology with field agencies playing a game of compliance and partnership without really meaning it. Respondent B21 (also from Donor B) made the additional

point that in his view the field agencies were not always as transparent as they should be with regard to who is funding them. The implication is that some of the partners receive funding from a number of sources but Donor B would like to be aware of this. Interestingly a respondent from Donor D made the following related point:

“We definitely encourage all our partners to have more than one funder. In fact if they only have us as a funder, that puts in question our long-term partnership, to be honest. We would either really encourage building the capacity of the partner to get other funders or we would have to really consider the strength of that partner.”

B12

Thus there is something of a tension here. On the one hand receiving funds from a variety of sources could be seen as good for partnership because it suggests that the field agency is both successful and resourceful and these attributes help sustainability, but on the other hand the field agency may opt to hide such success with an assumption that it could limit their chances of obtaining additional funding. Respondent B12 suggests that the former should be the case, but it is not hard to imagine the latter occurring.

While the establishment of parallel structures by Donor A and its close monitoring of projects on the ground through routine liquidation and field visits may be viewed as an exercise of power, another angle on this issue is provided by the perceptions of those involved in the setting of priorities. Is there evidence of active listening on the part of both donors and partners in Nigeria as to what the other is saying? Was there evidence of a genuine discourse before projects even began? One way of exploring this is to see whether diocesan respondents felt that they had an influence over what the donors prioritised. Views were, unsurprisingly, quite mixed

“We set out priorities but sometimes based on their own conditions, we have to marry that..... Yes, we have to compromise that.”

A9

“I believe strongly, and they [the donors] too, that they cannot put any project on us if we don't see the need for it. So our priorities are their priorities as well. So when we want to do something and we approach them, if they see the need to collaborate with us, to assist us, to carry on that programme, they do. If they bring a programme that we think is not relevant to us and to our people we say no, we don't need this one for now, maybe later.”

A11

“They can set priorities too..... Yes and they have their own focus and when they send money to you and you're partnering with them, they want you to spend the money on this, this, we have this to give you but not for that, to do this, their priorities..... We had another four options, so they picked the one they wanted at that particular time..... Our number one was the facilities for the youth, but they wanted home-based care.”

A15/A16

“We're trying to be proactive. Because if we react to what they give us, they've already boxed us in to what we have, but we should stay clear and first of all develop a wide spectrum of issues and then we ask them where do you think you can fit in? Before they didn't involve us; but in the last five years they're now sort of involving us in the policy which they will use for another five years.”

A19

“Not long ago we had been invited to develop a strategic HIV AIDS plan for [Donor A]. Whatever is the result of that has not been defined by [Donor A]'s Abuja office, it is we who came out with the plan, we developed the priorities, and I think this is treating somebody else as an equal.”

A4

“[Donor C] is good at cooperating, they don't just pose ideas, they come and seek your opinion, seek your view, synthesise it together and then we both talk...and they give you room for a lot of elasticity to adjust and adjust to particular needs at the time, they're quite good on that.”

A13

These quotations have a rich mix of views and wording, with mixed feelings of dominance from the donor (they set the priorities) to cooperation, sharing and equality. At least some respondents felt that donors did listen to the voice of the diocese and the practice of the donor was influenced by this discourse. There is also an expressed sense of freedom; that the diocese was not pushed to take on projects that it did not want. Respondent A19 sums it up with the statement that CSN seeks to proactively set priorities rather than being ‘boxed’ into the demands of the donors. However, the donors do have a wide range of choice in terms of allocating resources. Dioceses in AEP and indeed Nigeria, West Africa and elsewhere compete for these resources with demand far outstripping availability. Thus donors can, and indeed do, say no to many proposals they receive. In some dioceses more negative feelings with regard to their discourse with donors were influenced by past experiences that may have led to the diocese becoming ‘blacklisted’ (their term) even if the reasons may be obscure for the current incumbents.

“To be frank, I hope this is a good enough for us to talk to be frank with ourselves. In this province [Donor A] have been funding health, but not in [our diocese]. I would just notice there's something that happened here in the province with huge money, but [our diocese] is blacklisted. Nothing, they haven't done anything for health. But why is [our diocese] blacklisted?..... they haven't given a kobo to health. But they are doing a project now for health in the province, but [our diocese] is not included. Something, something happened.”

A13

The sense of frustration is quite palpable here. Why was the diocese ‘blacklisted’? What happened to cause this? Respondent A13 was a new appointment to the post of Health Coordinator and was obviously not *au fait* with something that might have

happened some time prior to his arrival. The bottom line is that donors can, obviously, be selective and for dioceses that do not use the resources in the way which the donor stipulates there is the danger that no further resources will follow. While discourse between donors and dioceses does take place there is a perception amongst some respondents that an ultimate sanction exists for not obeying the rules. A diocese can lose out but what are the sanctions on the donors if they do something wrong?

One other outcome of this choice over who to fund and to what extent is that patchiness emerges between dioceses as a result of differences in experience and capacity. Some have done well in attracting funds while others have not done so well. Relationships between the dioceses that make up AEP while cordial do not seem to extend into practical help when it comes to accessing funds and managing projects. Each diocese maintains its independence but money really does tend to follow money. The example given above explains an inequality arising out of 'black listing' for a previous mistake, but this is not the only possible cause. The frustration from a JDPC Coordinator of a young diocese is just as palpable as that of respondent A13 above:

“Our diocese is supposed to be a young diocese, but I’m afraid to say young in the sense that it is four years now, and then I’m unable to meet up with people who have the right connections for anything to come to [our] diocese. So it has been really very, very difficult..... No, nothing, nothing, nothing. Apart from this car, a single car as you can see, donated by [Donor C], nothing again.”

A2

Similar to this was the frustration felt by a Health Coordinator in an older diocese but one which was struggling to attract funding for its projects.

“Well we have been trying to get in touch with [Donor B] and it’s very difficult. We travelled down and talked with their desk manager at Jos. He said no..... We wrote to their head office [in London] to give a breakdown of our activity, together with our thoughts, everything. But they wrote and said they are not interested in partnering with the diocese.”

A15

At the time of the research the Health Coordinator of this diocese was a priest with no experience of running health care projects or indeed any training in health-related matters. He was clearly struggling to attract donor interest, but was not receiving any support from senior colleagues in other more successful diocese. He felt he was very much on his own.

Some of the patchiness can be attributed to historical factors. A good example is that of Donor D where even at the time of interviewing in the early part of the 21st century its relationships with a particular diocese had much to do with the history of a Irish missionary presence.

“You know, if you look even at some of the local Church partners we’d have, inevitably in many cases there would have been an Irish missionary there or an Irish Bishop there in the past or Sisters there.”

B13

Missionaries can access funds from parishes and agencies ‘back home’ and thereby begin to build capacity. Money follows money so by the time that missionary leaves there will be structures and experienced personnel in place as well as a good track record of achievement. Indeed given that funding is always limited some degree of inequality seems inevitable as donors can pick and choose between applications.

“Donor B has not entered into new partnerships since 1999, because we are constrained by funds. The allocation of funds to the Nigeria project has not expanded and that is why we are talking about looking for other ways of supporting the work that we are doing rather than from the Donor B fund alone. So you cannot be in every project and we cannot be in every diocese.”

B21

Respondent B21 goes on to make the point that meetings have been held between the donor and the various dioceses etc. where it was made clear why they were selecting certain dioceses to work with and not others. Of course this does not necessarily mean that unsuccessful diocese attending such meetings would be consoled or necessarily agree with the rationale.

The Province is meant to provide a structure to help alleviate such problems of inequality between dioceses arising from their newness and inexperience and allow space for a sharing of insights. However, inevitably there are limits as to what can be achieved. Thus patchiness in relationships between donors and field agencies has to be viewed in the wider context of relationships within the Church; it is but one element of a bigger picture. It would seem that there is scope for more coordination within the country to help alleviate such patchiness and this has not been lost on AEP respondents. For example:

“Basically yes, to be frank, to be blunt about it, when it comes to approaching donors, we approach donors that have informed us that they are ready to give us something really. And one of the jobs of people like [named individual] in those days and the present Chairperson and so on, is to try and keep track of the literature coming from these people. Because each of them have some kind of policies that they churn out, and from there you try to see which are those ones that I am prepared too. Take any good case now, now everybody is talking of HIV AIDS as if that is the only problem left in the world. And they are flooding us with all kinds of NGOs....., offering us promises of all kinds of monies. And they're giving us and we're having, you can spend the whole time just filling all these big, big forms, all these write forms in order to be able to access so-called funds for this and funds for that. And one comes and brings their own, another one comes and brings their own, and I said listen, HIV AIDS is one disease and it's affecting the same person, whether the money comes from global fund or from President Bush initiative or from

whatever, it's still passing through the same system to arrive at the same people. But you are all asking us to keep learning new dances and dance different dances every day for all of you. Even within the Church we have made this point now too, to [Donor C], to [Donor B], to [Donor A], we have to sit down now, I told them, I said we are going to have to sit down and let's get a common approach. So when it comes to who decides where you get it from, we really don't decide now, we decide very little. We decide on what basis that you put somebody in charge..... I'm not the one who is going to identify who has money for this; it's the person I put in charge who is reading the literature. Well generally of course you continue with your traditional, the new, word is partners. You know you continue with your traditional partners, but every now and again new partners present themselves.”

A14

“With [Donor C], with [Donor D], with [Donor B] and so on, and we actually demand to know what they are doing in each place. We say, for example, we don't just want to receive from [Donor C] a paper which says we spend five million Euros in Nigeria in 2005; we want to see where you spent what, what project.... Right now we try to develop a social development policy nationally. Now when we do have a national social development policy it means any agency that is coming will now sign an MOU based on that policy. That will outline priority areas, what we consider our priority areas, what we consider our critical course in times of partnership relationship, what we consider from point of view of structures and so on. For example, we are building up the capacity, and so we wouldn't want a situation where [Donor B] comes and sets up an office of fifty staff. Part of the policy we're developing is that no, we have the justice and peace structures and Caritas in Nigeria, work through them.”

A19

Clearly there is a desire to try and introduce more coordination as to which diocese and projects are funded but successful diocese still have an incentive to go it alone. After all, they have the track record of success that donors find attractive. Thus there is a tension between on the one hand the desire of funders to support projects in dioceses which have a good track record of success and on the other hand a perceived need at national and Provincial levels to make sure that newer diocese or those that once had a bad experience with donors are given a chance to secure funding.

So what do these relationships say about whether the partnership between donors and the Church in Nigeria is real? There is much patchiness over space and time spanning on the one hand delight with the relationship and a sense of partnership between at least some dioceses and donors, while at the same time others are not so positive. The patchiness is driven by a number of factors, including history and the *modus operandi* of the donors, and is magnified by the hierarchical structure of the Church which allows entry by a donor at any level. Given the complexity of the Church structures and its rich history in a country such as Nigeria it is perhaps understandable that patchiness will almost inevitably happen, but at the same time it is also not difficult to imagine some relatively simple solutions to the problems that have been encountered.

If nothing else then more dialogue would have helped so all can see why certain decisions had to be taken. One of the 'externalities' which operate on this system is government, both in Nigeria and indeed in the countries from where the donors obtain at least some of their funding. That is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 6. The Church and state aid

An important question at this juncture surrounds the involvement of the Church donors with their respective government agencies, as this was a factor in the creation of patchiness in relationship between Catholic Church-based donors and their field partners. Church agencies do not exist in a vacuum and have to obey the laws of the land as well as follow the conditions set down by government agencies if they wish to obtain funding. Indeed all four of the Church donors obtain funding from their respective government aid agencies but the form of this relationship does vary between them. How do these conditions influence the room for manoeuvre each Church donor has with its AEP partners?

Taking the case of Donor A first it receives funding from USAID (the United States government aid agency). Talking with representatives from both sides does provide a sense of a more funder-contractor relationship at play. Donor A has to compete for trenches of state funds with other non-profit making agencies as well as with the private sector (the wonderfully named ‘Beltway Bandits’) and is not guaranteed any ‘core’ support. That said, Donor A does have advantages in terms of its long history and strong in-country presence in the places where it works and as a result its bids are competitive. Increasingly there is little scope for unsolicited applications.

“We have to compete for our stuff..... We never, we rarely, I mean you might choose an unsolicited thing, but those things, those are very, very rare these days. And maybe twenty years ago you could go to the USAID mission and give them an unsolicited proposal, but now, for everything you have to compete.”

B5

As with any contract-contractor relationship the winning bidder has to follow the terms and conditions that are set down. Give that the size of the funding from the US government is substantial this almost inevitably creates tensions in terms of the independence of the Catholic Church donor:

“But we don’t want to be dependent on the US government and we certainly want to guard our independence..... Well we always like to be able to walk away from funding if it doesn’t suit us, and for years that’s what we did with HIV AIDS because of our identity and the position of the Church, we couldn’t. And even a few years ago we walked away from that huge grant..... But it was a big HIV AIDS prevention grant in the transport corridors in East Africa, Kenya and so on. And we are sure if we had gone in with a group of others we would have gotten it, but we walked away from it. So yes, you don’t want to be getting all your money from the US government. But I think we should take US government funding because Catholics and others who support, who are likeminded people pay taxes too, but those are tax dollars, so why shouldn’t we get our fair share and service those who are in need.”

B5

Also, there are complications in terms of discourse between the two. Once a contract has been awarded there is some scope for discussion as to how the project should best

be implemented, although there are limits to this flexibility. Prior to a bid being successful the discourse between USAID and the donor has to be far more constrained and focussed as there are legal ramifications. As one respondent put it:

“Now they [USAID] were very strict about it because they don’t want to end up in a court where organisation X said they gave unfair advantage to organisation D because you answered these questions but you didn't answer ours. So like everybody has to send their questions in and they give the answer so everybody sees the answers, and then we all have a level playing field. Because otherwise there is a lot of concern about favouritism and so on and so forth, so that's part of the issues that are being dealt with..... In the grant making process they have to be very careful because even here, even in the commercial sector where organizations are bidding, sometimes you see cases where they’ll say well we are, they're like set aside for like small all-female headed minority companies to give them a chance, so that it’s not always the big boys who are getting the resources. And if the big boys get the resources, then they get it fairly and not because they were able to go in and talk to somebody. So there's a lot of that concern so that the playing field in terms of access to resources be fair. And yes, I agree with that, I wouldn't want, if you have a female head of a company, a woman-owned company, you can’t get anything because everything is wired. So they have to, I’m not saying it works perfectly but you have to have some criteria to make sure that access to resources is fair.”

B5

Thus given the nature of the bidding process USAID cannot be influenced by any one potential bidder as others may complain if that bidder happens to be successful. Having said that there is some evidence that groups such as Donor A do have an influence upon the thinking of USAID:

“We’re always looking for opportunities to get unsolicited grants where, you go in and talk with the people that hold those purse strings and you say, here are some of our competencies, these are some of the ideas that we have to move forward an agenda of whatever that happens to be. What would you guys feel about funding, \$2 or \$3 million worth for the next three years, what would your interests be? And you start a negotiation and then, low and behold, six months later there's a request for a proposal out there that is pretty much based on your dialogue..... somebody had a dialogue and you can tell that this request for a proposal was really written with them in mind because it really plays to their strings here.”

B6

Thus an ongoing dialogue can help influence the nature of calls for bids, but there are other and broader points of influence. Indeed at this point during an interview with respondents B5 and B6 they stressed how they try and influence US government thinking on a range of issues. The following quotations immediately followed each other:

“But it’s not through the grant making mechanism that we have our inter-discussions and ideas or substantive discussions there are other ways that we share knowledge and learning and develop strategy or input into USAID’s strategy. There are other ways that we do it, it’s not through the acquisition of the funds.”

B5

“At the field and in the country levels, it happens through working groups here in the US, I think, more often than not. So there's the HIV AIDS working group, there's a child survival working group, there's an HIV AIDS and agricultural cross-sartorial working group, and these comprise people from various organizations. Like the HIV AIDS agriculture group, where it's Care's and it's Save the Children's and it's World Vision and there's number of organisations. And more often than not someone from USA Aid Global Health will come and sit in the meeting as an ex- officio member to give input from what the US government's current thinking is around say nutrition and how we can get better nutrition through agriculture in order to influence how people with HIV AIDS live. So they might come in and present. But then on the other hand, we also get to give our information through that person back up in to the agency so that it can help change the perspective in the Global Health Department.”

B6

“And actually right now, the US government have been talking about fragile states and peace building work, we've been doing this work now for quite a while, for the last ten years we've been doing peace building. And some of it has been at high level like in Haiti, helping the Bishops' Conference when one of the Ministers asked for support, so we would help in the Bishops Conference, and then a lot of it at the community level. And so we feel that we have something to say to the US government about fragile states and peace building and so on. So there's actually a meeting that X and Y have called, two departments, one person from mine and another from another department, where we're going to talk about what our experience has been, what do we have to say, with who do we share this stuff with in the US government, because we feel they don't really know what they're talking about and we have on the ground experience. So we're going to have this discussion and either we'll set up a meeting with somebody or the next time there's like an international discussion we'll have people go or else, the US government might call a meeting and we will go so that we feed back to them saying look, this is our thinking on this matter.”

B5

“Well yes, I'd say it's lobbying, we educate, yes.”

B6

“We are voters and so we have an opinion, I think.”

B5

“And we represent sixty-five million Catholics in the US.”

B6

Thus there is a sustained and representational aspect to the interaction with US government agencies that does go beyond a limited contract-contractor relationship. Donor A sees itself as representing the voices of 65 million Catholics in the USA who are, after all, voters. Advocacy is important to Donor A even if it has to be tempered by occasionally being seen as a contractor. Indeed while the relationship with USAID seems to have a very client-contractor flavour it is interesting to note that Donor A wishes to use the term ‘grant’ rather than ‘contract’ even if it is difficult for an outsider to discern the difference.

“Well I think we don’t have many contracts, we don’t really like contracts, we prefer cooperative agreements or grants, and most of funding instruments are through these two, corporate agreements or grant. And there we can go in and discuss, we have what is like a hundred percent line item flexibility so you can move monies around.”

B5

Is the relationship between Donor A and the US government agencies really a partnership? Well despite being keen to use the term ‘grant’ rather than ‘contract’ from the perspective of Donor A it certainly does not appear to be so:

“I don’t think that we see eye-to-eye with the US government on what is important, so to that extent I would say it’s not really a partnership. We do try to come to some agreement on certain things such as HIV AIDS or food resources or child survival grants but they have their notion as to what is critical, as to where they want to prioritise and put their resources. And sometimes we can influence it, sometimes not. With HIV AIDS money, a lot of people have been lobbying the government for years or advocating that the US government should make available these resources, and eventually they did. The President’s Fund for 15 million was agreed. But that took years of work, and then when it came out, it was very difficult. We’ve had just an implementation, a lot of challenges. So, presumably if you are in true partnership you would have worked out all these things. But then the government has to take into consideration the interests and the issues of many stakeholders, so we’re just one. So in an ideal world, if they enter into a true partnerships with us, well then maybe what about these universities over here and what about these foreign companies who are in the development business even though for-profit, or what about these Church people over here. So I mean to be realistic, I don’t know whether I expect that they’ll be a true partnership, unless the government was to divide up its money, maybe the [Donor B] example of saying OK, we’ll give you a block grant?”

B5

This is a candid assessment of the relationship with the US government agencies and perhaps just a hint of envy with the block grants received by Donor B (more about that later). Interestingly USAID are much more willing to apply the term ‘partner’ to its relationship with Donor A although the meaning of the term is perhaps more one-

dimensional than that described in Chapter 6 between AEP and the Catholic Church Donors. The following comments from a respondent in USAID illustrate this sense of partnership:

“[Donor A] is, I believe, they're our largest partner..... everyone follows the same rules, there are no special rules for faith-based organisations..... It can be a euphemism for funding. I believe it's totally appropriate because we really, as an agency, don't do... we don't do the work on the ground or we don't implement ourselves, we manage ourselves, so we're always looking for partners to do this and so naturally they've been making a great fit..... To me it [partner] means implementer, but you can't implement obviously without a structure and funding, and that's what we provide and an objective.....there are contracts, and assistance. Most of our faith-based groups compete for assistance and therefore we wouldn't use contracting terms, we'd use the partnership-type terms.”

B2

Researcher: *But contractor would be just as applicable?*

“It would be but when you say that term inside this building it breaks the bones for a totally different category and therefore we're talking different languages..... I mean the baseline of this is simply they're meeting our objective and we have a mutually developed work plan and their job is to implement that work plan. So the only next thing we can look at is what kind of activities could they be doing, and they could run the gamut of their organisation, everything from food aid, food security, to HIV AID orphans as you described, to democracy programmes..... they [Donor A] have clearly defined roles where they are meeting objectives of the US government.in exchange for your funding you agree to do things that the US government needs. You would always be holding to the rules that you've agreed to. So in that case the US government is in control because it's their funding that's being worked with here.”

B2

The view that ‘partner’ is the same as ‘implementer’ is intriguing along with the obvious unease at applying the term ‘contractor’ to faith-based groups. However, while there may be a preference for use of the term ‘partner’ it’s difficult to see how this is any different from a client-contractor relationship. The use of the term ‘partner’ does seem to be more due to an aversion to ‘contractor’ when dealing with certain groups than it is to a nuanced difference in process. Indeed from the USAID side there are no especial concerns with regard to engaging with faith-based groups such as Donor A, and it would appear that the *de facto* client-contractor form of the relationship provides clarity as to who is doing what and indeed where the power in the relationship rests.

“I can't think of any particular problems that are unique to faith-based, mostly because we have so much experience working with them... faith-based groups are some of our most valued partners. So I can't think of any, any other negative environment on that end..... the fact that they are

meeting US government objectives makes it fairly cut and dried as to what the parameters are of the relationship..... we will always be in control of US tax payer money, I mean they have to, they have to do a lot of monitoring and evaluation of the programme so that they can prove that this accomplished what they said it was going to accomplish.”

B2

Thus whatever the words being employed to describe the relationship it is clear that control rests with the US government agency; they have the resource and dictate how it is to be used even if there may be some flexibility over means of implementation.

By way of almost complete contrast to the contractor-client relationship Donor A has with its government agencies Donor B receives block funding from its government aid agency (DFID) over 5 year slots. From the perspective of DFID this block funding provides a great deal of freedom for partners who they feel are working for the same goals as DFID:

“It’s quite untied; it’s very, very flexible. For all that, for the specific it’s not flexible at all. For the long-term strategic funding what we do is a competitive process where we look at different organisations and those we select is because of what they are going to be contributing to international development, we feel that they’re contributing to the same goals as DFID. We provide them the money which they don’t actually have to account for specifically how they spend it, they don’t have to say we will use that money for training in Ghana.....It’s undesignated, but they do have to say every year this is what we have achieved..... they say we have spent the whole amount of money and we’ve achieved this, and we identify three to five high level strategic objectives. So for instance, with [Donor B], that’s a good one, we have one which is building up the capacity of civil society in the south, so that’s a very broad objective. Another one is building up the, now I’m not quite sure how they phrase it, it’s either ecumenical societies across the world or it can even be Catholic, it might just be Catholic civil society organisations.”

B10

There does seem to be much flexibility here and while DFID may specify broad “high level strategic” objectives these are so broad that it is hard to imagine a great deal of disagreement with Donor B. Having said that Donor B does have to make a case for this support and do have to show how they are meeting the same objectives as DFID. Also, Donor B has to explain on a regular basis how the resources provided by DFID have been employed. It is not as if there is no oversight or control. Interestingly DFID have moved away from the sort of client-contractor style of relationship with groups such as Donor B, and this is a fairly recent development.

“Up until 2000, or a bit less, ‘99, it was very much a contractual relationship. We provided money for organisations to do things. It wasn’t really about understanding working together and consultation and negotiation and all those sorts of things, it was contractual. And in fact the department was called the NGO Unit and it was based in Scotland within the procurements, our contractual department which was pretty

clear where it sat. When Claire Short took over she wanted us really to understand a bit more about civil society and expand the way we thought about civil society. And the first indication was we changed from NGO to Civil Society, because she wanted us not to just focus on the traditional development organisations, but also to think about trade unions, faith groups, professional groups, everyone else. So we moved up, we expanded our understanding of the whole sector and we also tried to... know more and we did, we moved from just purely looking at it as a contractual funding relationship to much more about what I've been saying before, trying to understand the role of civil society and also trying to get DFID to actually talk with, and talk with civil society, so when we have our policy developments we have consultations with civil society. And that increased dramatically, in the past we didn't really consult very much, but now any policy that is developed, we have a comprehensive consultation process with civil society."

B10

Here there is a strong sense of a 'top down' instruction from a senior politician rather than a view which emerged organically within DFID, but the outcome was to replace a client-contractor model with a more flexible block grant. However, this politician was imbued with a strong social sense and an understanding of civil society and the need for wider participation in that society. By way of contrast in the USA a desire to foster more engagement with faith-based groups was engendered by setting up a unit within USAID rather than coaxing USAID to change the way it operated.

In the UK faith-based development groups are seen by DFID as having a longevity and set of values that provides a distinct advantage.

"When you come to the specific traditional development organisations, it might not be that easy to say Action Aid work is distinctly different to [Donor B]. However, if you're looking at a wide range of civil society organisations, we certainly recognise that faith groups are distinct within the civil society and that there is no doubt about that. They're based on values which they feel are different to the values of other civil society organisations, other civil society organisations don't always agree but they say they're based on different values. For instance, the Buddhist organisations in Sri Lanka where I've worked a lot are based on Buddhist precepts which in many ways are completely against the concept of kind of economic growth and things like that; so that, they can be based on very different concepts and values. They have a considerate, much, much higher level of legitimacy in developing countries, not only in the UK, not anymore actually, strangely now, I was just talking to the Home Office a few days ago and there was a public attitude survey about where people turn to in times of trouble in the UK, and faith groups are one percent, right at the bottom. You know, the Citizens Advice Bureau... well friends and family are at the top by miles; and then the Citizens Advice Bureau is the highest of institutions. Local councillors are quite high, faith groups are very low, and twenty years ago it was the other way around. And that's the UK. Because it's the total opposite in developing countries, study after study has show faith groups are the first organisation people

go to in most developing countries. And on most of the things that we've ever seen, they are the most trusted organisations in developing countries. So they're trusted, they're organisations people turn to so that gives them a completely different level of legitimacy, and then there's the kind of transient aspect..... a lot of civil society organisations, if not most, are transient that is they come and they go, that is just reality. Faith groups aren't transient..... I can always remember again, working in Africa, I was working with lots of development people when we'd have our three-year plans, and then you'd go to the Church mission and talk to them and they'd have their forty-five year plan. It was just a completely different way of working, which gives colossal legitimacy and stability. So we recognise that and other aspects. Their values are different, legitimacy, the transient... oh I know, within faith groups there is already, well in many faith groups there is already an international community, which is there, and they're beyond boundaries. There are certain development organisations that have that, but faith groups, many faith groups, it's there already. And also faith groups have an ability to get resources not through international donors but from the community which traditional development organisations can't; some can but it's unusual. So we recognise that there is a distinctiveness about faith groups."

B10

Faith-based groups are also perceived to have weaknesses as well as strengths:

"Some faith groups can exacerbate differences with communities, there's no doubt about that. Some faith groups, well as with all civil society organisations can be representative of certain elites and they might not be working for the poor. And the values which I was saying before, the values can be different to the values that we're pushing or supporting. We do have differences on certain issues, and be it contraception, women's education in certain countries with certain religions, there's a range of things.... What we said, and it's true, is that we express our differences, and we've done that on the use of condoms, on women's education, but then we endeavour to work where we can. And [Donor B] is a good example, in that we do work with [Donor B] on HIV work, and there's a lot of work.... I can't quite remember the wording but it's something along the lines of [Donor B] will endeavour to bring Catholic communities into work on HIV prevention and looking after people with HIV. So we express and we discuss and we argue about condoms but there are lots of other areas of work where not only can [Donor B] do some work, but actually there're probably areas of work where [Donor B] can do more than anyone else, in raising issues within the Catholic Church. And [Donor B] is a good example of that, there's been a lot of discussion about [Donor B] within the Catholic Church, we've been getting lots of protest from rightwing Catholics saying [Donor B] are too much in favour of condoms..... They thought that we had been secretly agreeing things with [Donor B], so that we had kind of freedom of information saying where all the information is about where you agreed this or that with [Donor B]. And we wrote back and said look, here is all the information,

we had the discussion and we agreed there isn't a problem. But they didn't believe it."

B10

The perception of partnership at DFID also appears to be far more nuanced than that of USAID although there is the same recognition of inequality as a result of the relatively limited resources that are available.

"Well there's dozens of different types of partnerships. From our project, from organisations that we don't provide any money to, there is a certain level of partnership in that we are willing to consult, listen to views and assess those views, that is if there is nothing else it is consult, we can't go any further than that because decisions are made by Ministers who are accountable to Parliament etc, but they do take the views through consultation. So there is some form of partnership there, it's not an even partnership but it is a partnership. Then we do provide funding to organisations. At the moment we provide funding if the partnership grows to a certain extent, we expect something and they also expect something. On the project-based funding, what they get is, again, it's not an equal partnership but there is something, we provide feedback, we will to a certain extent try and share their knowledge and experience across DFID. We're not great at that, but we try and do something so there's some partnership there. But then we move up higher to the strategic funding agreements with the more strategic organisations like [Donor B] and Christian Aid, a group of about twenty-five of them, and those are actually called Partnership Programme Agreements, and they are a partnership. Again, it's still uneven, we're an organisation of three billion pounds a year, and the organisations, I don't know, over a hundred million or so. So it's not an equal partnership, but it is a partnership..... It's not contractual because they're not contracts, but there are arrangements. And we've been moving towards this, the way we actually run the arrangements now is that we have an outcome, say building up civil society around the world, we describe that outcome and then we actually do state on many, not all of them, on many of these agreements we actually state [Donor B] will do this, DFID will do this. So we are trying to outline clearly what the partnership is. It's not even because you're going to have, [Donor B] building up the capacity of civil society in twenty-five countries around the world... But we do try and identify the partnership. So we recognise that there is a level of partnership with all of these organisations, but it's uneven and it's important to try and work out what are the partners..... So [Donor B], Christian Aid, CIIR, Islamic Relief, World Vision and Aga Khan Foundation, I would view our work with those as serious long-term partnerships. We then work with another twenty smaller organisations. Yes, I do regard them as partnerships, but they are very much more uneven partnerships. We provide specific money for very specific outputs, and there is some sort of partnership but it's much, much weaker. I'm trying to think of an example here, something like COURT; it's a small Christian organisation in Coventry. They're unlikely to be able to call on us and say can you arrange a meeting with

the Trade Department here in London, whereas if [Donor B] phoned us up, we'd be able to organise that and we would."

B10

Interestingly for this respondent a partnership can still be based upon a fundamentally uneven relationship, even if the 'unevenness' does vary across the range of relationships in which DFID is engaged. This is somewhat at odds with ideas in Chapter 2, but is a candid assessment nonetheless given that DFID has the resource and Donor B bids for some of that resource. Do DFID believe that Donor B regards them as a partner?

"I don't know actually, that would be interesting to find out. One hopes they do view us as a partner, but also we are a target, they are just definitely trying to influence us. We accept that we're trying to influence them, but they're a partner as well. But it might not quite be the same the other way around because one of their main purposes is to influence how we work. We endeavour to be clear about the disagreements and carry on working where we can. We do fall out with organisations quite often and there has been some strong words passed backwards and forwards, but that hasn't ended any partnerships that I know of. No, I can't think of any."

B10

It is encouraging to see that the interactions between DFID and its 'partners' can become heated but the relationship can survive that experience. What does Donor B think of its relationship with DFID? One answer to this question is as follows:

"Do we see DFID as a donor or as a partner? And of course, again, we do want the funds to come to [Donor B] at the end of the day. But I think increasingly in terms of this mutual trust, it's something that has been built over the last six years and I think now there is this level of mutual trust in them and being quite open and flexible about what they do with this money or what do you think is fair. And perhaps there's less of the kind joint ownership or co-responsibility because the level of dialogue is still perhaps not regular enough in order to enable that, but I think there is an increase in common learning at DFID... and that applies to other donors like Comic Relief, for instance, they are more and more interested in discussing what is the learning that we're getting from programmes that they are funding rather than just the financial.... They are more interested in saying OK, what are you learning from the programme in terms of HIV and AIDS approaches? And again, in Congo where we have this peace building, DFID is quite keen to get from us what's really happening on the ground, because very often you have people who tend to stay in the capital, in Kinshasa, and they don't know what's happening in the provinces. And on our side, we're quite interested to know from them the kind of big picture of the political issues and how they are working with the government. And so I think, yes ... we call DFID our partner and it's a partnership agreement. Probably we won't get to joint ownership of programmes but we're moving in that direction. Again, with the EU for instance it's really a donor relation. Although in Nigeria, the person who

is in here, he came from the NGO sector and he's very open, but he's very much a donor."

B11

There is a sense from Donor B that while they clearly want resources from DFID there is also an appreciation of a wider discourse and an opportunity to learn from each other. There is a richness here that does indeed seem to underline a sense of partnership between the two organisations. This was less apparent within the USAID-Donor A relationship where discourse was more tram-lined by the parameters of a particular contract and how it should be implemented. The language of the descriptions of these two relationships is quite different.

Donor D receives some of its funding from Irish Aid; the Irish equivalent of DFID and USAID. Ireland, of course, is a country where some 87% of the population declare themselves to be Catholic (2006 Census; www.cso.ie/census/census2006results/volume_13/volume_13_religion.pdf) and thus Donor D could be considered, at least in theory, to have the potential for a stronger partnership with the state aid agency than in the US or the UK. After all Donor D should be seen as representative of almost the entire population of Ireland while Donors A and B represent minorities. Indeed, this is a point not lost on Donor D:

"I suppose we would see ourselves as fundamentally different to [Donor A] even though we're in the same umbrella grouping. It's like [Donor D] as an ecclesiastical organisation in Ireland, we're in a pretty unique position, even if you compare it with [Donor B] There are four million Catholics in the UK and only one million of those are practicing Catholics, and they're the one million people on whom [Donor B] focuses its work and they're the people from whom they get their public income. Here in Ireland it's not particularly special to be a Catholic, whereas it is in the UK. Until recently Catholicism accounted for ninety-five percent of the population."

B14

In addition to this theorised difference in power based upon representation there is also a sense of Donor D perceiving itself as being quite different from its sister agency, Donor A, in operational terms.

"Although we benchmark ourselves with [Donor A], the exchange might not be quite as strong because as an organisation we would function quite differently in our programming particularly, because we're not an implementing agency. So the learning on the implementing side, while interesting, we can't turn it around into what we do. Because our partnership approach is different to Donor A's approach in that we don't actually in-country implement programmes ourselves, it just makes a completely different environment in which we plan our programmes and plan our work. That's another reason why we would more likely engage with a dialogue with [Donor B] rather than [Donor A], because they have that similar approach."

B12

Here there is a sense of being more likely to engage with Donor B compared with Donor A not just because Donor B is closer in a geographical sense but also because they share a similar operational philosophy. Donor A is viewed as an ‘implementer’ in the countries in which they work while Donor D prefers to work through local structures as indeed does Donor B. Having said that, Donor D does have a relationship with Donor A as explained by respondent B14:

“It was a global relationship that was set up a few years ago, and one of the reasons that it was interesting for [Donor A] was because we had access to European Union food security. And [Donor A], though a partnership-based organisation, tends to be very operational in their approach. Now they have a strong field presence... I don't think they have any countries in which they operate where they don't have a field presence. So the quid pro quo was that we would access European Union food security money and we would place interns in their offices. And the area interns that we would be placing could effectively manage the food security money that came from the European Union, so we had somebody in Liberia doing that and somebody in Pakistan and somebody in Burkina Faso. That was very much the arrangement then, and then the EU kind of said well look, they're not really a European organisation. So we had to revisit our whole review of the joint agreement. So [Donor A] having a heavy operational presence, their concept of partnership would probably be a bit different to ours in terms of they're coming from a strongly implementing focus, whereas we tend to go more of the partnership route and let the partner do the implementing.”

B14

There is an interesting exchange here. On the one hand Donor D utilises the in-country presence of Donor A as a way of placing its interns and no doubt this provides other advantages as well such as an avenue for feedback from its partners and in exchange Donor D accesses EU project funds which Donor A does not have access to. The intern does not implement projects but is there to learn and act as a catalyst for exchange of ideas and insights.

With regard to Irish Aid (the government aid agency) the views of Donor D resonates quite strongly with that of Donor B in the UK and its relationship with DFID.

“We've always had a very, very strong relationship with the Irish government and when you visited in 2004 we were in the middle of a three-year period of significant increase in funding from them. Over the period of 2003 to 2005 we received €34.5 million from them... .. it was an increase on what we had been receiving from them before, it was almost a doubling really per annum of what we were receiving.”

B14

“We have quite a good working relationship with Irish Aid and they have a lot of well-qualified people who do lots of thinking just as we do. There's lots of people who are behind what Irish Aid does and we will always look at what they're doing and we know, things that they feel are important and obviously that influences our thinking. And we do have high regard for

what they come up with, what they feel is important. And I think what we need to do is marry the external environment, which includes Irish Aid, with our internal environment which includes our partners, so it's that balancing game. And I would say that while we very much appreciate Irish Aid's leeway in terms of letting the maths run along our strategic plan, we do look outside of where we are in order to inform our strategic plan. So there is that learning and understanding and taking in and taking things onboard as they come in to our internal environment, which in this case is through the partners."

B12

The terms "strong" and "good" which were used to describe the working relationship with Irish Aid is encouraging and there is a sense here of discourse even if limited. However, in a slightly more negative vein there is the following:

"There is a discourse but the discourse tends to be related to, let's say, something like Multi Annual Programmes (MAPS). There isn't a broader discourse... so when we make our MAPS II submission we set out our philosophy, set out our stall, we say well this is our strategic plan and this is where we see things going. And then there will be a bit of discourse around that, but there isn't a kind of discourse talking about development in general...there isn't a debate on development in Ireland that's not related to a particular funding scheme, in my experience anyway. There will have been, for example, recently the DCI (Development Cooperation Ireland now Irish Aid), pushed work on gender-based violence, so there was discourse around that... But that was on a particular issue. There was a discourse around HIV AIDS promoted with the HAPS (HIV/AIDS Annual Programmes), and that I suppose there was a relatively general discourse around where development should be going, well again it was around the MAPS ...from time to time we made submissions to the white paper, for example, and I suppose there's been that level of discourse already. There has been a discussion, for example, quite recently through the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs around aid to Ethiopia and Uganda, and we would have participated in that. But I suppose there isn't a formal form in which to do that."

B14

Therefore from the point of view of Donor D the discourse which takes place is very much centred on specific programmes rather than being broader in nature. There is some faint resonance (and frustration?) here with the more limited discourse expressed between USAID and Donor A, although the relationship is not of the same client-contractor ilk. It certainly does not appear as if the larger representation of Donor D gives it an especial place in the thinking of Irish Aid.

Donor D also has an advantage of having a Belfast office which enables it to seek funding from DFID. However, they appear to have had little success to date with funding and have not been able to develop the type of discourse which exists between its sister Donor B and DFID.

“We don't have yet the kind of lobbying relationship with DFID that we would like to have, I suppose we've felt relatively small compared to the main players like SCIAF (Scotland) and Oxfam and Christian Aid. So our tendency there has been more to rely or concentrate on the funding side of things..... if you look at our office in Belfast, we'd have one person working on co-financing and managing a number of different funds, but our size compared to UK-based agencies would be small.”

B13 and B14

Interestingly there seems to have been little effort on the part of the three Catholic Church based donors in Northern Ireland (Donor D), England/Wales (Donor B) and Scotland (SCIAF) to coordinate bids to DFID. One would have thought that this was an obvious route as it would provide a stronger sense of representation. Respondent B14 provided one possible reason for this:

“Well I suppose there are a couple of practical reasons for that. The reality is that from our point of view, there's plenty of relatively easy money available from Irish Aid, whereas you have to jump through so many hoops to get money from the EU or to get money from Comic Relief or even DFID. And it's not that it was kind of easy money from Irish Aid and it's normal as well that there's a lot of work involved in doing it and there are a lot of issues around accepting it and the whole independence and so on would be adjusted. But I suppose we have a strong relationship there and we can acquire, let's say over the next five years we could get €15 million a year from Irish Aid for a relatively lower amount of work than we would need to put in to getting about €2 million a year from DFID. But at the same time we're very conscious that we need to diversify our funding base and we will be going after DFID again in the future..... We've had an excruciating experience with the European Union over a multi-country programme in Central America which was really, in terms of the effort to acquire it and it took two or three years to acquire the money, and then the amount of hours we had to put into managing the relationship and doing the reporting side, which was driving us nuts. Whereas we can receive this money from Irish Aid and it's a well-established and cordial relationship and we meet them a few times a year and we give in our report. And I suppose the discourse then happens on the report..... it would be unthinkable that the Irish government wouldn't fund [Donor D], but it doesn't matter to the UK.”

B14

It would seem that Donor B and Donor D's separate relationships with their respective government aid agencies do not facilitate a partnership between these two donors. The respondent is implying a trade-off between what can be gained and the effort involved. Donor D does seem to be able to obtain resources from Irish Aid with less effort than it would have to put into working with Donor B to lever funds from DFID. The phrase at the end of the response that it would be “unthinkable” for Irish Aid not to support Donor D is a telling one and does seem to suggest that the greater representation of the Irish population does provide an advantage. A similar sense of advantage was not evidenced with Donors A and B. However, does Donor D regard their relationship with the Irish Government aid agencies as a partnership?

“The government see us, I think, as an implementing partner and as one component in their overall aid programme. And you have to consider that they're considering us in that context. So I don't know the extent to which it's a relationship of equals in that respect, we see it as extremely important that the dialogue with Irish Aid continues and at the appropriate level, we want that to continue as well. And we want more of a discourse and we want to be able to put forward ideas and so on into influence of course, and to make suggestions as to what their new priority countries should be and so where the aid should be going. There's this whole debate about civil military cooperation and where that should be going in the future, where Ireland's foreign policy in general should be going. I think we're very lucky at the moment in that our development policy is not subjugated to the foreign policy to the extent that it is in other countries, We'd be very happy to see that and we'd like to see that continuing. But as for seeing us as partners, yes, I suppose we're partners, but I think there's Machiavellian flavour to the partnership rather than as a partnership of equals. I think that has been one of the positive results of the MAPS relationship, for that has moved the relationship on, as I did say earlier, most of the discourse takes place around funding but the discourse has slightly changed as well, because before we used to be talking about individual projects.”

B14

The phrase “*Machiavellian flavour*” to the relationship is telling. Indeed there are echoes here of the views of Donor B and its relationship with DFID, albeit stated somewhat more starkly, but still this feeling that discourse is centred on specific projects and programmes. At the end of the day there is still the inevitable polarity that comes from one organisation having the funds while the other is seeking them. Also, of course, the government agencies have to act for the population as a whole and not just one segment of the population even if it is in the majority in religious terms. There are other majorities besides those based on religion after all. A discussion over the meaning of partnership generated a very candid response from respondent B14

“I think equality or should I say mutual respect before equality. And I think equality, it would probably be a bit naive, certainly between Irish Aid and us and between ourselves and our partners because there's so much baggage associated with the fact that one of us has the cheque book and the other doesn't.“

B14

Again it comes down to who has the resource and who doesn't, and this generates “baggage” in the relationship. It seems hard for any relationship to move beyond this.

Irish Aid is a part of the Department of Foreign Affairs. At the time of the research Donor D was their largest ‘Church-based’ partner. However, the respondent from Irish Aid was somewhat critical of what they perceived as a lack of radical thinking in Donor D. This is somewhat ironical considering some of the views expressed by Donor D that they would welcome a wider discourse with Irish Aid.

“If any organisation has a little bit more energy and vision, I would say it would be Christian Aid Ireland... Even though I think it has very severe capacity constraints and it was very dependent on a very small number of people, which it has subsequently lost, and that may affect it. But I suppose if you look at the growth patterns of organisations like [Donor D] over the last few years, they’ve been more or less matched, or rather they’ve been outpaced by Concern, but they’re keeping pace in another sense, all of the time... I think there’s a question over the prophetic voice, if you like, of an organisation like [Donor D] and where its prophetic voice is in relation to that. And that’s not to say that I have some narrow view that condoms are the answer to the HIV epidemic, but at the same time, I think that whole kind of fundamentalist move particularly in African countries around that, which actually is much more influenced by other Christian sects outside of the Catholic Church, around condom use is very, very harmful. And I think that it’s up to organisations like [Donor D] to highlight something like that and have the courage to say OK... it’s not even the condom itself, but it’s the whole ideology that goes around what that says, that if a woman is locked into a marriage where her husband is HIV AID positive she has no right to ask for protection. There’s a whole ideology that goes with lack of condom use, that to me, goes much beyond the actual rubber piece in your hand. So they’re examples to me of where you expect to use the language, a prophetic voice.”

B7

There was also no sense that Donor D was somehow special just because it was a part of the Catholic Church in a predominantly Catholic country. Neither was there a sense of Donor D being perhaps radical or sufficiently cutting edge in dealing with important issues, but the promotion of condom use is a difficult one for the Church

“We think we relate with [Donor D] as we relate with Concern, there are a number of big players on the development scene. Concern is one, [Donor D] is the other, Goal is another and these three are substantial partners for that reason.”

B7

Moreover there is a suggestion of Donor D having power:

“They’re still very clear with us that they see it as a funding relationship and that their broader relationship with Irish Aid will be managed outside of that..... You always have to understand the political clout that these guys have and the way they operate. So, you know, if something bothers [Donor D], then the Director will pick up the phone to the Director General here..... I think [Donor D] would acknowledge that they didn’t really take advantage of MAPS in the way that they were supposed to.”

B7

The ability of Donor D to “pick up the phone” and talk with the Director of Irish Aid is quite telling and perhaps was the closest (if not only) indication of the heightened

power which Donor D has within a predominantly Catholic country that emerged during the interviews. Indeed the lack of a dialogue with Donor D is also acknowledged to be partly a fault of Irish Aid itself:

“I think their partnership with us is probably hampered by our ability to conduct an ongoing dialogue, which I think is hampered by the fact that we don't have staff with a lot of development experience..... But then on the other hand, we have certainly had situations with them [Donor D] where the dialogue has been hampered by their fairly clear kind of position when they were not agreeable to something.”

B7

Here there is an indication of a limitation imposed by capacity. Staff in Irish Aid are rotated and the result is that sometimes there will be a lack of first hand development experience amongst staff charged with working with Donor D and others like it. The respondent felt that this lack of experience would restrict discourse. It is also important to note that the response given above was connected to a programme focussed on gender-based violence. The respondent from Irish Aid thought that Donor D had signed up to the tenets of the programme but only to find out later that they had not. This seems to have been an unfortunate incident which momentarily eroded trust on the part of the respondent in their relationship with Donor D.

“Sometimes I wonder do they have a huge amount of respect for us?..... I'm sure there are loads of frustrations on their side and I know we are very hamstrung by capacity here, there's no question about that. But at the same time, they have their own issues which they have to recognise. But yes, I would certainly say that there's probably more respect on our side for them than there is on their side, yes.”

B7

The disagreement between Donor D and Irish Aid illustrates the importance of trust within a relationship. Clearly the respondent felt that they suffered a betrayal of trust from Donor D which resulted in some unpleasantness and a lingering feeling that maybe Donor D is not reciprocating respect. This appears to contrast with the view from Donor D that they feel they have a good working relationship with Irish Aid. It illustrates the importance of individual relationships and experiences within institutional partnerships. After all, it is people who do the relating!

The final relationship to be discussed is between Donor C and its government aid agency, BMZ of Germany. While Donor A has a contractor relationship with USAID and Donors B and D have rolling programmes of more or less core funding from their governments (DFID and Irish Aid respectively) the link between Donor C and BMZ provides the most extreme example of those discussed here in that by law BMZ has to fund Donor C. In the case of Donors A, B and D there is no legally binding requirement for the government to fund them, and their ability to attract funding depends upon their ability to bid for funding. However, while Donors B and D have to bid for blocks of funding, they do have latitude as to what they do with that money and there does seem to be a discourse not just about how programmes are to be implemented but also on wider matters of approach. Donor A has to compete for each project/programme along with all the other commercial, public and charitable

organisations. All three donors have competitive advantages, to be sure, but there are no guarantees that they will get the money. By way of contrast, Donor C is guaranteed funding each year. BMZ can only seek to influence what Donor C does with that funding:

“Eighty percent of the budget which we channel through them is decided on their own. On their own but based on these guidelines and based on a programme which they submit every year to us and we talk about it and we decide on it at the administrative end, and of course a discussion and so on but more or less for eighty percent, they are responsible on an agreed basis, on agreed principles..... we don't interfere and we don't say [Donor C] give ten percent to Sudan or whatever..... Most organisations inform us what projects they want to implement..... General information on projects, the amounts of funds, and often our office and our embassies get this list too. If we want we can reply to the information of course..... This is also a sort of partnership, we more or less discuss, we don't give the directive, we normally don't say [Donor C], you shouldn't do that, you should not do that, you must not do that. We would start discussing process, we would hear their arguments, they would hear our arguments and then we would try to come to a conclusion. This is how this partnership normally works. And this is different from state to state cooperation, there we can say this is that, you should do this and this, and we are working together according to a partner, a concept, a country concept, and all these measures should fit in to the partner concept. And this is very different from our partnership with civil society organisations..... in the guidance we have, we are entitled to say no, but we don't like that because we prefer the discussions and the principles.”

B23/B24

Thus for 80% of the funding Donor C has effective control over what it does with the money although it does have to make clear its intentions and BMZ does have some oversight. Even for the remaining 20% BMZ can only provide “hints”. Having said that, if there is a disagreement between what Donor C wishes to do with money from BMZ there is a discourse and ultimately BMZ can request that a project be changed or funded from Donor C’s own resources rather than from the block grant. However, such situations appear to be rare:

“In the time I have worked in the section, there have been places where we really struggled about projects and then sometimes they changed the contents of it, but normally we could come to a conclusion that we could say OK, this is the concept we would also follow and you should, you can implement it. And I think those organisations withdraw projects, it's more or less an exceptional case but it has happened. But we didn't really say you must not, it was more or less that we came to a conclusion that they should withdraw the proposal.”

B23/B24

Of the four relationships between state and Catholic Church-based donor discussed here this one superficially appears to be loaded in favour of the donor. BMZ can bring some influence to bear and in rare cases they can request that a proposal be withdrawn

but by and large it seems that all Donor C has to do is inform BMZ of what they intend to do with the funding. Does this mean that BMZ has a partnership with Donor C? The answer to this question was short indeed:

“To a large extent.”

B23/B24

Explanation as to why partnership was not a hundred percent then went off the record and cannot be reported here, and this in itself is telling. Suffice it to say that there are important caveats as to why the partnership is not a hundred percent. This was the only response to the question of partnership from any respondent in the research that went ‘off record’. However once back ‘on record’ there were some echoes with the Irish Aid criticism of Donor C in terms of whether that agency is doing enough.

“ I think that they are also always asking for much more money from the government, and I think to be realistic an agency should also look in their own activities and say are we doing enough not only as agency, for example, also as Churches.”

B23/B24

When asked whether they think Donor C regards them (BMZ) as a partner:

“I think they respect our work..... They feel that their work is acknowledged and supported by partnership..... I think there are a lot of positive responses..... I know there's a lot of dialogue from colleagues who say they had a very nice talk with [Donor C], very interesting and information comes along.”

B23/B24

With regard to the views of Donor C when asked whether they see this relationship with BMZ as a partnership the following response was received:

“They [BMZ] are the principles; we are the agents. That we agree on.....We do not have the freedom to do what we want, we have to justify and we have to do the programming and they decide on that.....I would see that as they [BMZ] are the principles, they define at the very end, and let us say the conditions of the play, how much, they define the framework and the conditions and let us say we do it in a very German way. We are less principle-led than the British..... They are the principles, we are the agents, we have the following guidelines and within this defined field of cooperation everybody knows his/her duties and his/her rights. If this is not clear, somebody can play soccer the other one would play handball or chess. That must be very clear, we must be very clear of the rules and what is the role that they agree on up to the sense of a common culture.”

B25

The chosen terms ‘principle’ and ‘agent’ rather than ‘partners’ seem to have a resonance with the ‘client – contractor’ language employed in the relationship between Donor A and USAID. Asked whether this principle-agent relationship with BMZ is a partnership the answer from respondent B25 was an emphatic yes. Although

Donor C also works alongside the Protestant churches in influencing government policy and in particular the amount of money allocated to the Churches and B25 also sees that relationship as a partnership. However, while the relationship between Donor C and BMZ on the one hand gives a great deal of freedom to Donor C, within limits, there is still this use of principle-agent terminology but in fairness that could just be a function of the interview being conducted in English. The conditions for the funding set out limits to what can be done and within those limits Donor C has to explain to BMZ on what it intends using the money. For the most part there is no problem, but occasionally there is a dispute and this is resolved through discussion. Ultimately Donor C has to back down, either by funding the project itself or by changing the project.

The relationships between the Catholic Church donors and their government agencies while obviously important are not the only ones relevant here. Also of importance is the relationship between the AEP, CSN etc and the Nigerian government agencies. While Nigeria is one country, of course, these relationships are arguably far more complex than those discussed above for a variety of reasons. Nigeria has government at three levels, Federal, State and Local, as well as traditional structures and numerous agencies. Each diocese in AEP exists in a state, but there are overlaps:

- *Idah and Lokoja Diocese are both in Kogi State*
- *Makurdi and Otukpo diocese are both in Benue State*
- *Lafia Diocese is in Lafia State*
- *Abuja Archdiocese is coterminous with the Federal Capital Territory (not a state)*

Thus Idah and Lokoja Diocese, for example, would include different local governments although they are within the same state. Local governments are often spatially orientated along ethnic lines. Thus Idah Diocese occupies the same space as a series of local governments spread over three ethnic groups; Igala (the majority), Bassa Komo and Bass Nge. Superimposed on this spatial variation is an historical dimension. Nigeria has endured much turbulence since independence with periods of Military Government, *coups* and counter *coups* and periods of poor relationships with the US and Europe. This has impacted upon how government aid agencies in the US and Europe have regarded Nigeria, especially during periods of sanctions, and in turn this has influenced the functioning of the Catholic Church-based donors in Nigeria.

Unfortunately the resources available to this research only allowed for interviews at Federal Ministry level. It was therefore not possible, for example, to interview Local Government personnel about their relationships with the Catholic Church regarding development. However, it is at Federal level that decisions are made with regard to international donors allowed to operate in Nigeria and where strategies are decided upon regarding development priorities for the federation as a whole. Few of the respondents were aware of the details of the involvement of the Catholic Church in development. One respondent was only aware through her neighbour; *“I’ve known much about what Catholics do through my neighbour because she’s very, very active”* (C6). The exception was one respondent (C4) who herself is a Catholic and thus had a better awareness of Catholic Church-based projects. However, one important point which did emerge from the interviews was a feeling that the Federal Government was

keen to introduce more coordination between what the international donors were doing in the country and what was perceived by government as the ‘needs’.

“Government decided that since the private sector provides up to 60% of health care in Nigeria then it is necessary that we bring them closer to us so that we are able to coordinate all their activities together. Now in doing that we need some document to work with... I mean some guidelines.....and that is why we drew up this policy and I know that when it is finally implemented we will come up with different ways as to who should do what... I mean which area each group should go into.... Because right now we have so many NGOs especially international NGOs coming to the country.....they want to do something on HIV/AIDS and that is their focus and we have had too many there ... We want them to move to maternal and child health.....some other areas....but I’m sure when we are through with the policy it will be able to guide us..... actually it has been a concern we have that the focus has been on HIV/AIDS as if there are no any other health problems in the country and we know there are massive health problems. Children are dying of immunisable diseases. Pregnant women are dying and all that... and little attention is given to those areas. So much money is just being given to HIV/AIDS.”

C1

Thus according to this respondent the Federal Ministry of Health feels that there is potential for the international donors to engage in a more coordinated fashion and avoid an over-targeting of issues such as HIV-AIDS. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Health has a ‘Research and Review Committee’ on which faith-based groups have representatives. A number of respondents at this level certainly saw the advantages of the Catholic Church being involved in development. The following is a candid response from one of the respondents in the Federal Ministry of Water Resources

“The government is very far from the community, they provide this and leave. But the Catholic Church lives with them, UNICEF stays around with them and they also try to enlighten them to appreciate that this project belongs to them. And in some places, even decide to allow the community to propose a project and then bring some money, just a small amount of money, they pay this money to provide a project, and then it makes them feel that this is theirs.... and then manage it when they are not there. But the Federal Government drills a borehole and leaves, and hands it over, pumping and generator and all.”

C3

The ability of the Church to provide a sustained interaction through its grass roots and long-term presence on the ground amongst communities is clearly perceived as an advantage. Therefore in general terms the feeling was positive – yes, the Church is making a good contribution and it is important for the government to be aware of what is going on even if they feel that the understanding is limited at present. For the most part the ‘awareness’ seems to take place through a number of meetings where the Church has a representative. However, there are mixed views with regard to how the Church agencies perceive their relationships with government.

“We haven't got any real partnership with the government. Working with the Church structure, that is where our partnership is.”

B21

For B21 the government are ‘collaborators rather than partners.

Overall, the relationship between the Catholic Church components of the aid chain and the respective government agencies provides more evidence of patchiness. Donors A, B, C and D have to work with their respective government agencies and the modes of operation are different.

Donors B and D based in England/Wales and Ireland respectively appear to have a similar basis to their relationship with government, even if Ireland is a predominantly Catholic country while England/Wales is predominantly protestant. In both cases the donors negotiate reasonably long-term programmes with their government agencies and while there is flexibility it is clear that the Church agencies have to work within broad parameters set by DFID and Irish Aid. It is also clear that donors B and D do have a discourse with their government agencies that is not only limited to the practicalities of programme implementation. To an extent the use of the programmatic approach rather than specific projects does force a wider discourse and engagement over time, but while there may be ups and downs one also has a sense of a sustained and deeper engagement based upon a measure of mutual respect. Clearly there are factors that get in the way, such as the issue raised by the Irish Aid respondent over capacity and the fact that government agencies, after all, have to reflect the policies of a governing party or coalition. Thus Donors B and D are but two voices that DFID and Irish Aid respectively listen to.

Donors A and C provide extremes either side of the Donor B/D grouping. Donor A based in the USA appears to have much more of a client-contractor relationship with its government agencies such as USAID. They are required to bid for projects in competition with other agencies, including those from the private sector; if successful Donor A has to abide by the terms set out in the contract, and these can be given in some detail. Discussion is possible even if this is focussed more on practical arrangements. There is no core funding, even in programmatic form, and while Donor A brings influence to bear on its government agencies it does have power given the large number of Catholics in the USA; at operational level the relationship does seem to be far from being a partnership by the criteria set out in Chapter 2 or indeed as expressed by the respondents in Chapter 4.

In Germany, Donor C has what amounts to core funding from its government agency (BMZ) even if it has to present a plan as to what it intends to do with the funds. In this case there does seem to be much freedom for Donor C. They discuss and dialogue with BMZ and the latter can suggest that Donor C remove elements from its plan if there is disagreement with policy, but this looks like being the exception rather than the rule. Ironically respondents from BMZ were the most guarded of all those interviewed as to whether they thought that they had a good partnership with Donor C and even staff from Donor C use the terms ‘principles and ‘agents’ which has a remarkable resonance with the ‘client – contractor’ language that was at the heart of the conversation with respondents from Donor A and USAID. Indeed it was difficult

to detect a sense of partnership in the relationship between Donor C and BMZ, even if strained. Answers to questions were short and it was difficult to tease out nuances of the relationship beyond statements that it existed.

In Nigeria the relationship between the Catholic Church and ‘government’ is complex. On the one hand there does seem to be an appreciation from at least the Federal Government agencies that the Catholic Church is a significant provider of services, but that it is one of many. Indeed the main concern of the Federal Government appears to be the need to better coordinate all the activities taking place so as to ensure that overlap is minimised. The Church does have influence at all levels of government, if nothing else because there are many civil servants who are Catholics. In addition the longer-term and sustained presence of the Church at grass roots level is recognised. While interviews were not conducted with government officials and indeed politicians at local and state levels it would be expected that the contribution of the Church would be more apparent at those levels. Indeed an interesting avenue for future research would be to explore partnership between the Church, and other faith-based groups, and government at these separate scales. Nigeria would be an excellent space to do that given its variety of faith-based groups and spatial differentiation of government.

Chapter 7. Partnership in context

So what does this analysis of partnership say about relationships in the Catholic Church aid chain? Is it possible to identify from the interviews elements of the ‘*Burbulesian Trap*’ from the interviews? Herein rests the conundrum. It would be all too easy to jump to the conclusion that all is not well and that there is much obvious tension and disharmony. While the definitions of partnership in Chapter 2 and indeed the ideals expressed by respondents in Chapter 4 refer to collaboration and mutual respect amongst other positives this realisation in practice appears at best to be patchy. There are examples of this through the interviews, but Donor A provides the best example at least for those donors included in the research. Their approach to partnership was considered by the upper echelons as bypassing existing Church structures at national and provincial scales in its drive to help people. In doing so it appeared to portray itself as more concerned about its function as a contractor for USAID rather than as a part of the Catholic Church. However, it is fair to say that a number of respondents at diocesan level appreciated the transparency and accountability required by Donor A and did not highlight this perceived bypassing of structures. Ashman (2001b) has pointed to the tensions that can exist between pressures for accountability within partnerships and while this was present in the aid chain explored here there were also positives. Indeed at diocesan level the impressions of Donor A were by and large very positive, even if the need to provide detailed financial reports was taxing. For the other donors, especially C, the views at all levels in the Church were entirely positive and there was a readiness to employ the term ‘partnership’ to describe the nature of the relationship.

This was nuanced by a number of considerations. It was accepted by most that the donors had the ultimate power as they controlled the resources and while there was a broad acknowledgement that discussion took place one was left with the underlying sense that the donors had the final say as to what projects were funded. Indeed the tendency of donors to ‘black list’ dioceses that make mistakes with their finances or whatever does have a tinge of master-servant. Meetings between the donors and coordinators had taken place on a regular basis, especially with representatives of Donors A and B which that have, after all, offices in the country. Representatives of Donor C travelled to Nigeria on a regular basis and that donor also provided support for Nigerian and foreign staff located in the provincial and national offices. There was a lot of contact taking place, even if criticisms could be levelled at Donor A for failing to engage beyond some dioceses. No doubt this degree of contact was having an influence on donors, especially as all existed within the same international structure, but there seemed no avoidance of an imbalance of power represented by an axis of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. That power was exercised in decisions such as the choice of diocese to host projects and indeed the projects themselves.

There was also evidence that the Church itself was compliant in its acceptance of this power difference. As Bebbington (2004; page 732) puts it “*why did nongovernmental resources flow here and not there*”? In this research the answer to that question is a simple one as successful dioceses understandably wished to remain successful and cultivated their links with donors. Dioceses without a track record did not seem to get much in the way of support from other dioceses or indeed the Province or CSN. That is not to say that support is impossible for such dioceses. Much does depend on the project(s) and the systems in place to provide support but nonetheless there appears to

be an element of money following money. The Province was trying to bring dioceses together to share best practice and was trying to make links between diocese and donors, but there is obviously a limit as to what can be achieved given that the decisions ultimately rest with the donors. Given this background, all the meetings in the world may not help dioceses that felt they had been blacklisted or bypassed for whatever reason. All of this might suggest evidence of power forcing compliance, the “*social pathology*” highlighted by Burbules. In effect the Church in Nigeria has accepted this power imbalance in practice and while there are structures in place to help mitigate it and the language speaks of at least some feeling of inclusivity and partnership the power is still primarily with the donors. Is this a too simplistic conclusion?

Firstly, it is necessary to take into account how these relationships have played out over time. After all the Catholic Church has a long history of aid? and the aid chain dynamics involving the actors interviewed for this research span 40 years or more. Catholic aid chains for development purposes are actually a fairly new phenomenon and did not exist in the days of the early Missionaries (1900-1960s) and who without these formal means of assistance were responsible for many interventions especially in health and education. The history of Donor A for example begins during the 2nd World War and the 2nd Vatican Council call for more help to be given to the poor dates to the early/mid 1960s. The longer term presence of the Catholic Church within development in Nigeria does give it a series of advantages. Donors, and not only those of the Church, recognise that advantage and it helps with the relationships that the Church-based donors have with their respective government aid agencies. This was commented on, for example, by a respondent from DFID and others within the Church-based donors, and was also recognised by respondents in the Federal Government of Nigeria. Indeed it is important to remember that this research explored only a slice in that time when formal assistance through official Catholic aid chains became available. It is also important to bear in mind that this research reflects the experience of those interviewed, and for some that experience may be relatively short when compared to the timescale in which the donors have been working in Nigeria.

In much of the literature the discussion over partnership is often framed within relatively short time frames and based upon more ephemeral interactions where agencies are not necessarily held together by any kind of structure. Engagement between agencies over the longer term is more likely a result of satisfaction with what has been delivered, and once this wanes then the relationship may dissolve. This is also true with the Catholic Church-aid chain but at the same time there is an adhesion which keeps the parts bound into the whole, even if occasional difficulties emerge. There is a sense that all involved feel that they are in it for the longer term, even if there are problems. Thus while Donor A and some people in authority within the Church in Nigeria may have had issues or misunderstandings, there is resolve on the part of those involved to address them and there is certainly the time to do so. Donor A itself explains some of its problems in Nigeria as due to an inevitable learning curve having been out of the country for almost 40 years - since the end of the Civil War. Yet because people may be within this chain for relatively short periods their views may inevitably be framed, for good or bad, by limited experience. In the dioceses of AEP many of the key positions were held by religious personnel, some within orders, that were often rotated within the dioceses or asked to move to other dioceses as demands arose. People can only experience snapshots of this longer institutional

history. Thus the Catholic Church aid chain has elements of the inter-dependence (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003). There are feelings of attachment and a desire to maintain a relationship “for better or worse” (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993; page 180). Thus the frameworks in Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 have a deceptive feel of stasis; that relationships can be categorised and placed into neat boxes, while in practice the Catholic Church aid chain has a fluidity which means that over time and space relationships between components of the chain will migrate around the categories and thus resist a simple label.

Secondly there is patchiness in relationships within the donor and field agency groups. That inequality exists within and between dioceses is obvious and while the forces that have created such inequality are understandable given that funds are always limited and demand far outreaches availability, it is nonetheless unfortunate that some dioceses are unable to gain support. This inequality was not invisible and was mentioned in various contexts during the conversations including the problem of ‘blacklisting’ that some felt had applied to their diocese. Indeed it is interesting how even within a family such as the Catholic Church there can be such misunderstanding and poor communication. The presence of Donor A in Nigeria as an operational agency was a cause for friction, especially with the CSN and Provincial office. It is not that respondents were unaware that this is how Donor A operates globally but there did seem to be some lack of understanding as to why they work that way – the philosophical rationale which is behind it. This would suggest that more needs to be done both between dioceses and between donors to ensure that all have a chance to elicit support. While there is much communication between all these groups both within and outside Nigeria there is always more that could be done. This conclusion might at first glance seem rather odd given the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church and the presence of two major coordinating umbrellas for the donor agencies; Caritas Internationalis and CIDSE. However, experiences within Nigeria indicate that the role of Caritas Internationalis and indeed CIDSE as catalysts for donors to liaise would appear to be limited. Indeed it is interesting to note that Donor A discontinued to be a member of CIDSE and the reason for withdrawal deserves to be quoted at length.

“We were a founding member of CIDSE way back when. When we started becoming more involved in justice programming and we started to try to influence the United States government on certain issues, justice, and we developed a legislative advocacy group, we now have grassroots advocacy in all of the parishes and dioceses throughout the United States on issues, fair trade and all these kind of things. We joined very closely with the Justice and Peace Office of the Bishop’s Conference, that’s a very capable group but they’re studied and measured, they say the right thing at the right time with the right language..... CIDSE by the nature of their organisation, which we don’t have a problem with, they’re lay groups, they tend to be shrill and fast and, you know, things in black and white, you know, the capitalists and the good people and the, this kind of thing. And so we were in a situation where we were trying to use the experience of [Donor A] around the world, the power of the American Catholic Bishop’s Conference and this large constituency all around the United States to influence public policy in the measured effective way. And on the other hand we were on the letterhead when these blasts, you

know, American evil imperialism things came up. And, so it was just, it was hurting our effectiveness in the United States. That was number one.

Number two is, you tend to pay dues based on the size of your agency. So we paid huge dues to Caritas Internationalis, we pay about \$170,000 a year in dues. We were paying big dues to CIDSE, we were paying big dues to the American one called Interaction, and so at some point we said, you know, we've too much donor good will and money going into membership organisations. So we made the decision about eight years ago, but in a friendly way, we really get along very well. I was at CIDSE a month ago in Brussels, visiting the General Secretary of CIDSE and the current President is the President of SCIAF from Scotland, and we met and we talked about cooperation so it wasn't an unfriendly departure. But we gave them four years' advance notice.

So now we cooperate, we're a strategic partner to CIDSE, but our name is no longer on the letterhead because we didn't want to continue to pay €70,000, €75,000 a year in dues and we wanted to pick and choose our involvement in participation and we didn't want it to be a drag on our effectiveness in promoting just public policies in the United States."

B9

Thus Donor A felt that the anti-American/capitalism language which emanated from CIDSE was harmful to its own advocacy mission in the USA. However, while Donor A is not a member it does feel that it needs to keep a watching brief on what CIDSE members are doing and given that three of the donors included in this research are members then is there not scope for CIDSE to do more in terms of facilitating cooperation? This has an inherent logic, especially as members of CIDSE do have 'working groups' focussed on specific parts of the world including Africa. However, this is much easier said than done and another quotation, this time from an interview with a member of the CIDSE Secretariat, also deserves to be repeated at length.

"CIDSE is there to support and help and facilitate but it doesn't take any initiative or drive, it's not a driving force in itself..... and a big, what we call a crosscutting priority for CIDSE in all areas of work, is to strengthen partnerships and links and involvement of southern partners to CIDSE's work.

So we're trying to do that in many different ways and there are lots of challenges doing that, just the distance and the money involved and the time involved. Because if you want to consult, it takes time and so on..... And what we are doing then at the CIDSE level is, for example with the working groups, an objective to try and encourage the working groups to meet as much as possible in Africa so that they can invite partners to be part of those discussions, and if they can't meet every time in Africa, maybe every other time in Africa. And at the level where we come together, on a broader aspect we also try to involve more partners. So on Africa, one of the topics that had emerged is the issue of extractive industry and oil and other industries. So last year we organised a workshop with partners from, I think, nine different African countries in

Paris, and we're going to organise another event in Nairobi in January. So that is something, that's new if you like.

The fact is that at CIDSE we have said OK, we prioritise action on advocacy, that is our main number one priority with a capital 'P'. Now the agencies, when we went through their strategic planning processes, they said yes, that's important, but programme cooperation is important too, so let's do some of that too but not at the same level. So it's much, more low key..... it's more about facilitating space for a change and looking at possible possibilities to cooperate..... And then problems start because they only meet once a year, people change, etc, etc. So there's lots of work to be done, we have a great steering team now in Africa, they have lots of ideas of how these groups could be better and more systematic... But then of course there are disagreements, there are certain agencies that disagree with the way others operate and work and behave, and that's just a fact. But it doesn't involve CIDSE because we don't involve their whole operation, we involve selected bits of an operation where they have agreed to work together, that's where CIDSE comes in..... they are autonomous organisations, you know, they are not CIDSE Germany or anything like that..... the agencies are very different in size, budget, approaches, way of working.....But having said that, I don't think we have reached our full potential yet, no, I don't think so. I think we can improve our country working groups, I think we have a lot of work to do and that's what we are working on now, the goals we have set out now in our current thinking so, you know, that's where we're at...

B15

The CIDSE working group structure would seem ideal for ensuring that coordination takes place within Nigeria but clearly the differences between the donors in terms of their “ways of working” and approach does impose constraints. Simply providing a meeting physical place is not enough, nor indeed is it a simple matter of arranging meetings in Africa rather than Europe. Even so, as respondent A19 pointed out a regular meeting of CIDSE members working in Nigeria would be helpful, but differences between the donors do not seem to help make such coordination a reality.

The Catholic Church aid chain seems to have the same inherent issues that are present in any family. All seem aware of a power differential across the family and there are ‘ups and downs’. The ‘downs’ can be bad, as witnessed by the problems created by Donor A’s operations in Nigeria, but the time and intimacy is there for them to be worked through and that is precisely what happens. At the time of writing there have been various meetings between those involved in the problems highlighted here and they have been addressed. As a result the situation on the ground has been completely transformed from what has been described here, and while new issues will undoubtedly emerge over time there is both a desire and space within which to address them. As a result it must be concluded that long term relationships such as those of the Catholic Church aid chain, and indeed the same would probably be true of faith-based groups in general, cannot be so readily labelled as good or bad. A snapshot of indicators taken at any one time will paint a picture, but it has to be remembered that the indicators are dynamic. Even if there are symptoms of the “social pathology” of Burbules, an aid chain comprising a family of related agencies

like this can provide the space for them to be worked through. Human perceptions based on relatively short periods in post and position within the patchiness can imply either “*social pathology*” or “*social health*”, and thus ironically it could be said that people are the worst source of evidence when partnership is being explored.

A further interesting insight to emerge from the research is the role of personal relationships. This is often seen as an importance factor in partnerships as Lister (2000; page 236) points out with regard to the partnership she explored in her research:

“The mechanisms of partnership, through which power was exercised, were found to be those of individual relationships. At an organizational level, partnership in this example was through agency, not structure.”

This does have an inherent logic to it as, after all, it is people that do the interfacing and much can be assumed to depend upon their approach. Certainly there were many positive views from people in the dioceses about how they were able to work with donor personnel. However, it must be remembered that personnel in the dioceses and donors changed, even over the relatively short period of this research, and while individual relationships may be important they can by no means be the major factor at play. The research reported here indicates that structure, or avoidance of it in the case of Donor A, was the most important determinant of how relationships were perceived.

Finally, there must be a few words regarding the methodology. At times the language employed by respondents was direct and blunt and this allowed issues to emerge almost organically. It is impossible to say whether the same insights would have emerged with researchers having no inside knowledge at all of the AEP and donors and their history of interaction going back decades. What was gratifying to the researchers was the extent to which respondents seemed to trust them and respect their experience. The conversational nature of the interviews allowed for issues to be aired, and it is a healthy aspect of the process that little was being hidden. All engaged with the research in the way in which it was intended i.e. as a learning experience which could hopefully help to make relationships better. Indeed as a result of the conversations a number of changes took place such as the Coordinator of the AEP Province meeting with the country representative of Donor A for the first time. All respondents were eager to know what insights had been generated by the research and where possible these were relayed verbally during conversations. At the end of the fieldwork a workshop was held in Abuja where a summary of the results were presented, and the researchers promised to distribute a written report. It is to be hoped that the lessons learnt from the research will improve relationships.

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