



Praxis Note No. 36

Building Confidence for Co-operation:

Experience of efforts to improve the environment for co-operation between NGOs and the public sector in Turkey

April 2007

INTRAC
International NGO Training and Research Centre

Building Confidence for Co-operation:

Experience of efforts to improve the environment for co-operation between NGOs and the public sector in Turkey

Simon Forrester

Keywords: Turkey, partnership, public sector, NGOs

Introduction

This Note sets out how partnership between the public sector and non-governmental organisations in Turkey has been strengthened through a tailored capacity-building initiative.

What Can We Learn from Training for Partnership?

During 2006, an EU-funded project set out to implement a number of capacity building measures to improve levels of co-operation between non-governmental organisations (NGOs)¹ and public institutions in Turkey. From some of those endeavours, it has been possible to draw out lessons learnt that may have practical applications for practitioners engaged in similar processes. This Note aims to describe those lessons, and has a particular focus on the development and delivery of a Partnership Development training course, piloted across various regions in Turkey by a consortium led by the British Council, after an initial approach by the European Union Secretariat General (EUSG) of the Prime Ministry in Turkey.

¹ The term NGO is not often used in Turkey, where the translation of civil society organisation (CSO) is the preferred term. In this paper, NGO and CSO are used interchangeably and in this context refer to the basic types of non-governmental, non-profit organisation that exist under Turkish law: Associations and Foundations.

The experience in Turkey illustrates three important messages. First, potential partners learn more effectively about how to develop their partnership when doing so together, than if they are trying to learn on a separate, unilateral basis. Second, partnership principles can be applied in the design and delivery of training programmes, and in so doing can assist external interventions to promote the local ownership of training assets. Lastly, the experience has also shown what might be achieved in the short term through the delivery of a Partnership Development training course, and what might be improved in future courses.

What Do We Mean By 'Partnership'?

'The Partnering Initiative' is a global programme of the Prince of Wales' International Business Leaders Forum in association with The University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. The Initiative focuses on developing and disseminating cutting-edge knowledge and methodologies for effective cross-sector partnerships, and was an important reference point for the project in Turkey. For the Initiative, "the hypothesis underpinning a partnership approach is that only with comprehensive and widespread cross-sector collaboration can we ensure that sustainable development initiatives are imaginative, coherent and integrated enough to tackle the most intractable problems. Single sector

approaches have been tried and have proved disappointing.”² In other words, if we look at what happens without partnership, it is easy to see that working separately often leads to different sectors developing activities in isolation – sometimes competing with each other and/or duplicating effort and wasting valuable resources. Working separately has all too often led to the development of a ‘blame culture’, in which chaos or neglect is always regarded as someone else’s fault. So partnership provides a new opportunity for doing development better by recognising the qualities and competencies of each sector and finding new ways of harnessing these for the common good. But we also have to bear in mind that partnerships in practice have many dimensions.

“Networks and partnerships often perform multiple functions for the participants. They may provide information and opportunities for learning, and allow members to exert joint influence and manage their interests. They may also offer access to resources and allow for joint action.”³

In the context of improving NGO–public sector relations in Turkey, it is useful to have an idea of what motivates the key stakeholders for such improvement, and where they think it will lead.

Under Turkey’s programme of reform and development in its quest for accession to the EU, the Turkish Government has implemented a number of measures to enhance the scope and capacity of civil society, and on the whole these have been

² Ros Tennyson (2003), *The Partnering Toolbook*, International Business Leaders Forum - downloadable at the Partnering Initiative website.

³ Jan Ubels of the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV (www.snvworld.org), *contributing to Capacity.org* (2005).

well supported by CSOs. One of the most recent of these efforts set about making partnership and co-operation between government and NGOs a key national strategy. This initiative saw ‘partnership’ as an end in itself, in order to “strengthen the democratic participation level within the framework of the EU alignment process”. This objective follows one of the EU’s key principles of good governance: the need for citizen participation and the role that civil society can play as an interface between political decision-makers and affected citizens.⁴ In addition, as suggested previously, participants in any mechanism for co-operation may also benefit from multiple applications of that mechanism, and in the case of Turkey the expectation is that public institutions and NGOs will increasingly work together to ensure more effective service delivery.

For Turkey, the benefits of improved co-operation between NGOs and the public sector would be that the people of Turkey would live happier, healthier and longer lives because: (a) they are governed with policies made better through more inclusive dialogue and (b) they benefit from the delivery of better-targeted and more effective and efficient social services..

So the benefits of improved co-operation are clear. But to bring these benefits to fruition requires challenging the existing levels and content of co-operation between the sectors. To understand how this particular project went about addressing this issue, we will need to take a summary glance at the context. This involves reviewing the nature and status of civil society in Turkey, the historical relationship between civil society and the state and current opportunities and constraints for co-operation between them.

⁴ c.f. EU Commission, *White Paper on European Governance*, 2001

Civil Society in Turkey

Most observers in Turkey would agree that the main components of civil society are the approximately 80,000 registered Associations, some 3,000 non-state Foundations (registered since the founding of the Republic), and several hundred Unions and Chambers.⁵ These are strongly characterised by their urban and 'centralised' structure, with poor representation in the rural and eastern regions. The Unions and Chambers tend to be well-organised and resourced (and actually have some fairly robust channels through which to dialogue with the government). However, many of the Associations and Foundations are dysfunctional or moribund, and those that are operating do so without having deep roots in the communities they claim to serve⁶. There are exceptions, however, for there is a growing trend for the Associations and Foundations to become better networked and organised among themselves. For example, the national campaign to lobby against the Iraq war (during 2003/04) was noteworthy in that it was led by a powerful platform of CSOs, an illustration of Turkish civil society's nascent capacity to unite.

The role of the state, its weight and its hold over civil society has long been a talking point in Turkey. For most of the Republican era, state apparatus has been used to police and tightly control CSO activity. Until 2002, NGOs were viewed as a national security issue and only a very few were granted special status (officially recognised 'Public Benefit Organisations') were actively encouraged to provide services. This, however, has changed dramatically since the new Law on

Associations (2003), which brought an end to the 'policing' of NGOs and introduced a much easier, faster and less expensive registration process. Many CSOs are cautiously optimistic about the legal environment, but they also comment that the government continues to meddle in CSO affairs, the common example being the prevention of organised protests and boycotts.⁷

Although during the past five years the legal environment for CSOs and their relationship with the state have greatly improved, there is a forceful legacy of strong central government, and the application of laws and regulations with deliberately vague language that encourages use of government discretionary power. CSOs have always complained that they are not treated equally by the state. At any one time, so-called 'oppositional' CSOs are sidelined in favour of CSOs representing particular power groups or those having a close relationship with the government. Indeed, the CSO landscape remains dominated by state-managed Foundations – those largely inherited from the Ottoman period – and by Associations established or run by individuals supportive of state ideology. In such an environment, characterised by a general capacity weakness within civil society, it can be seen that CSOs tend to fail in transforming or influencing target groups and communities beyond their membership or direct beneficiaries. They are not, on the whole, a serious focus for discussion of the basic social and political issues in Turkey, with the exception of policies relating to human rights. Other areas where civil society has been (and is) demonstrating strength lie in the environmental and women's sector, and in the provision of basic humanitarian assistance.

⁵ TESEV/Civicus 'Civil Society Index for Turkey', draft 2005.

⁶ For example, research by the YADA Foundation (2004) shows that NGO membership is only 7.8% of the total Turkish population, and volunteering is limited to just 1.5% of citizens.

⁷ TESEV/Civicus 'Civil Society Index for Turkey', draft 2005.

What is Hindering Turkish NGO–Public Sector Co-operation?

There are a range of constraints to NGOs and the public sector improving their relationship and areas for co-operation. Given the government’s commitment to reform in line with EU accession requirements and the funding mechanisms available to support that reform, and the fact that CSOs in Turkey lack the unity and maturity to lead on national initiatives, it is within one of the government’s own programmes, *Sivil Toplum – Kamu İşbirliği Projesi* (SKIP) (Improving Co-operation between NGOs and the Public Sector), that steps are being taken to address these constraints.

In order to understand the capacity constraints and to identify the most suitable ways of delivering any required training activities, the SKIP project conducted a brief Training Needs Assessment Study. The findings from this study illustrate the scope of the challenge and help to explain the content and methodology applied in the SKIP Partnership Development training course.

Understanding the Training Needs

A series of interviews and focus group discussions were facilitated with groups from both sectors – some together, some by sector only – in various locations across Turkey. From this interaction, it was clear that co-operation and partnerships would be effective only if key behavioural changes occurred, steered by an analysis of existing knowledge, attitudes and practice.

The study found an undeveloped and restricted understanding of the concepts of partnership and co-operation. Representatives from both sectors tended to see partnerships purely as mechanisms to aid the delivery of services and humanitarian assistance. On the whole, informants failed to link ‘co-operation’ with policy development.

There was also a poor understanding of the NGO sector, mostly within public institutions but also in the NGO sector itself. Many officials reported that they didn’t know much about what NGOs did or how they were organised. One result of this is that it tends to be the larger, national NGOs that are most attractive to the state as potential partners while smaller and more recently established organisations are sidelined.

On the positive side, despite expressing a lack of understanding of what partnership or co-operation could entail, all respondents to the study emphasised their openness and willingness for co-operation between the public and NGO sectors.

At the local level, the study found that public sector officials are not comfortable about formal mechanisms, but rely more on informal processes, which tend to reduce transparency and accountability. The common reasons given for this were on the one hand, the controlling mechanisms of central government, and on the other, concern about confrontation with local interest groups.

There was also found to be both a high degree of confusion and self-confessed ignorance about the existing legal frameworks that can influence the formal aspects of inter-sector co-operation. It was also noteworthy that none of the informants for the report mentioned arrangements for financing partnerships.

Representatives from both public sector organisations and NGOs expressed the view that it was important to have training on ‘know-how’ for building sustainable partnerships. However, informants concluded that there is no obvious pool of capacity builders in Turkey to address these needs.

When asked directly about their previous experience of training provision and their

current needs, respondents noted that much of the previous training had been ineffectual as the trainers were not competent and used theoretical rather than practical approaches.

Mechanisms for facilitating the flow of and access to information between the sectors are poorly developed, and active only on an *ad hoc* basis. However, at the local level there are clear examples of support structures, with mandates to improve communication, beginning to emerge. Some of those interviewed for the study quoted examples of work inspired through the Local Agenda 21 Programme.⁸

There are also a number of general features of civil society capacity building in Turkey to be noted. Across the country, there are very few indigenous NGO support organisations, and thus few structures to stimulate and nurture organisational development. Likewise, the NGO sector enjoys little external assistance in working towards a strengthened civil society. In some specific sectors, such as the environment, and on governance issues, there have been and are interventions to support NGO organisation. The EU has funded a Civil Society Development Programme similar to those rolled out across Eastern Europe in the 1990s. However, on the whole, Turkish CSOs are fairly isolated and many hope that the EU pre-accession process may come up with innovative ways to combat this.

Responding to the Needs Assessment

Based on the study results, there appear to have been four key responses.

1. There is a strong desire expressed by stakeholders for a process to facilitate

⁸ Local Agenda 21 is an international sustainability planning process that provides an opportunity for local governments to work with their communities to create a sustainable future.

the expression of their collective tacit knowledge.⁹ There was a sense that dialogue between the sectors could be much improved through both an exploration of existing good local practices and collective examination of the prevailing negative attitudes.

2. Complementing the above, the need was identified for informed input from international experience on NGO–public sector experience, and for an understanding of the global view of partnership and its application.

3. Delivery of training has to be done in such a way that representatives from NGOs and the public sector can learn together: this should not be hurried by a fixed schedule of activities.

4. It is important to foster genuine local ownership of both training content and its delivery.

Working within the confines of the project logframe, the guiding principles and approach described above helped shape a process whereby a Partnership Development training course was designed and then delivered through a series of modular workshops.

Developing the Training Course

The SKIP project had a target of reaching approximately 150 representatives from both NGO and public sectors over a period of just a few months. It was envisaged that it would be necessary to involve a team of a dozen or so trainers, rather than deploying a pair of international trainers to conduct a string of workshops. It became clear that in order to promote local ownership of the course, the whole team of trainers should be involved in its design, preparation and delivery. To this end, the project set

⁹ This is, as Polanyi (1996) describes, the knowledge that may manifest itself in a “pre-logical phase”, an acceptance that “we can know more than we can tell”.

about identifying a group of 15 Turkish trainers, drawn from both the NGO sector and from public institutions, to take part in two 'train-the-trainer' workshops.

The two train-the-trainer workshops were led and facilitated by international consultants. The first looked at the theory of partnership and explored its application in Turkey. The second explored how such content could be developed into a Turkish training course on partnership development, and what methodology should be used for delivery. As the local trainers selected had all demonstrated a strong interest in partnership, had experience in the delivery of training programmes and were drawn from very different backgrounds – from the public and private sectors and with a range of interests – including the environment, health, education, gender and youth – the workshops were a powerful example of peer sharing and learning. All 15 trainers made significant contributions to shaping the draft of the Partnership Development training course and, because of their mix, were able to test how individuals from each sector might best work together in a learning environment.

The results of these train-the-trainer workshops were: a framework for the Partnership Development training course, including some rough session plans; a collection of various supporting materials; and a cadre of well informed, highly-motivated trainers. Furthermore, with the trainers themselves coming from both sectors, an innovative output from the workshops was the formation of training teams made up of at least one trainer from each sector. These mixed teams would be the trainers who then delivered the Partnership Development course at the various locations across Turkey, mirroring the make-up of the profiles of the course participants.

Even though the two three-day workshops with the trainers had been very

productive, there was still long way to go before the course was polished and ready for delivery. Over a period of six weeks, the SKIP project facilitated various activities to finalise the course. They::

- Produced a trainers' workshop report, which included annexes to show the Partnership Development training course framework, participant selection process, logistical details of proposed workshops and the agreed training teams. This report was disseminated to all the local trainers and to the project's key stakeholders in order to stimulate feedback and ensure full approval from all those involved.
- Established a communication strategy among the trainers, including setting up email groups, and facilitated an e-dialogue to finalise and agree on the overall training objectives and to identify and prepare additional training materials for the course.
- Established a Local Trainers' Working Group, with terms of reference to draft an outline of the Partnership Development Training Resource Book, complete with training materials and ideas on how to run sessions.
- Held discussions with the project's key stakeholders to obtain feedback on and approval of the training plans.
- Promoted the course widely to would-be applicants and encouraged trainers to engage in the process of participant selection.

The Partnership Development Training Course

Training Objectives

The specific objectives for this capacity-building exercise were designed to give participants:

- an enhanced understanding of the principles of partnership and how to apply them in practice
- practical skills for making partnerships more effective, including tools to enable joint problem-solving and joint project cycle management
- increased awareness of the opportunities for, and contributions to mechanisms for, NGO–public sector co-operation in Turkey
- increased understanding of how to mitigate conflict and improve inter-sector communication.

Target for the Training

The SKIP project target groups included “associations, foundations, professional organisations and public institutions, excluding chambers of commerce, industry, commodity exchanges, trade unions and foundations established by public authorities.”¹⁰ It was expected that a range of these stakeholders would benefit from the capacity-building measures. In order to focus the exercise, potential participants in the training course were identified through a selection process, with applications solicited from particular groups highlighted in the project’s Clustering and Feasibility Study. These included: NGOs operating at regional and local level, including branches of national NGOs; regional offices of central government; local authorities; representatives of public institutions working at regional or local level to

¹⁰ Extract from the Terms of Reference for the Technical Assistance to SKIP (EUSG 2004).

improve service delivery; and representatives of existing platforms for inter-sector co-operation.

In order to maximise the impact of this training course, one of the most significant selection criteria for would-be participants was to demonstrate capacity and willingness to share their learning from the course – to be able to contribute to a ‘cascade’ of training whereby, on completing the course, participants themselves share what they have learned with colleagues and partners.

The training was provided free of charge to participants, with the project paying residential and transport costs. However, as part of the application process, participants were asked to commit themselves to full participation and completion of a ‘home assignment’. Those not demonstrating full commitment during module one of the training were not invited back to module two.

Course Content

The local trainers had agreed that a good delivery approach was to divide the training course into two modules, separated by a few weeks during which participants conducted home assignments. This approach owed much to experience shared with the trainers of training courses run by INTRAC in Central Asia.¹¹

The first module was intended to provide space for participants from the two different sectors to get to know each other and to explore jointly the concepts and principles behind partnership. Time was also spent in looking at recent analysis of the NGO and public sectors in Turkey, and attempting to identify a common understanding of the *status quo* and what shaped it. The second module

¹¹ For more on this see INTRAC Praxis Note 22 (Sorgenfrei, M. with Buxton, C. 2006).

had a more practical orientation, and focused on practice at both national and local levels. For this reason, participants were introduced to tools for undertaking 'pre-partnership' assessment, and to ways in which partnership projects and joint activities might be managed. Fundamental to this was the examination and contribution to a potential Turkish 'code of practice' to guide relationships between the NGOs and the public sector.

Although the modular course was designed to work to fixed, agreed objectives, the framework for the course was very much a guidance tool for trainers, indicative of the sessions that could be given in the workshops, rather than a rigid session-by-session plan.

Topics covered in each module were broadly as detailed below.

Module 1 – 'The Concept of Partnership':

- the concepts of partnerships and participation
- constraints and opportunities for partnership in Turkey
- comparative analysis of practices in NGOs and the public sector
- conflict mitigation/resolution
- communication
- the issue of governance.

Module 2 – 'Partnership in Practice':

- enabling improvement of public sector-NGO co-operation in Turkey
- governance – good practice in applying partnership principles
- partnership for what? – broadening horizons regarding the purposes for which co-operation between the sectors might be mobilised
- stakeholder analysis
- problem-solving and project management in partnership

- sustaining and monitoring partnerships
- planning next steps.

The objective and nature of the home assignments between modules varied from workshop to workshop, with the training teams assessing what might be the most suitable and useful tasks for participants to undertake prior to their second workshop. In some cases the assignment involved collecting information from the participants' locality, while for others the assignment was to document a case study of their own partnership experience.

In terms of training materials to accompany the Partnership Development training, the SKIP project and Local Trainers' Working Group produced an extensive Turkish language Training Resource Book.¹²

Improving Impact: what could be done to improve the effectiveness of the training?

The Partnership Development training set out to build confidence and skills for improving the working relationship between NGOs and public institutions in Turkey. The initial feedback, covered in more detail in the following section, is that all those involved in the process to date agree that this has been achieved. However, they also note that, before rolling out similar capacity-building measures, two particular aspects of the training need to be addressed.

Working Thematically

Under the SKIP project, the training was targeted at groups defined by their legal status and function, and participants came from NGOs and public institutions engaged in a wide range of activities. At times this meant that the participants

¹² Available to download in Turkish from www.skip.org.tr

struggled to find common ground where the sharing of experience made sense, Often they were able to undertake practical exercises together only by using made-up scenarios. To overcome this, many of the participants suggested that the training would be more effective if they had been ‘clustered’ by the theme in which they worked, for example management of natural resources or health service provision. Such thematic work may lead to more sustainable post-training networking among the participants and even to joint activities between the participants’ own organisations.

Building Institutional Links

The second challenge suggested by participants to those engaged in furthering Partnership Development training was related to how the training itself might help move partnership work from being a personal endeavour to an institutional one. Although representing organisations and public institutions, participants in the training course were only able to act as individuals in terms of voicing perspectives and proposing possible follow-up work during the training sessions. Some possible actions were proposed:

- as part of a participant selection process, ask institutions/organisations to make a commitment to support post-training follow-up work: this might, for example, involve agreeing to produce ‘position papers’ on partnership or developing a strategic plan with a ‘co-operation’ focus
- target training at the most senior level of management within the organisations
- institutions/organisations to support ‘exchange visits’ between staff.

Making a Difference: key successes of the training course

The training course was rolled out through the SKIP project during May–October 2006, involving a total of 171 participants from NGOs and public institutions from across Turkey. The modular workshops were held in many different locations, with the groups of participants averaging a total of 21 people, and the training teams composed of an average of three trainer/facilitators.

The training was fairly closely monitored using a number of mechanisms: post-training participants’ and facilitators’ feedback; contact between participants and trainers between modules, and an external final evaluation.

From these various sources, it is possible to document the reflections of trainers, facilitators, participants and managers on what have been considered the most significant elements of the Partnership Development training delivered to date. These reflections are no substitute for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the course, which may well be implemented in the coming year. However, viewed in terms of the classic Kirkpatrick (1998) hierarchy of evaluation, they do offer some significant insight.

- There are a number of important lessons that can be learnt from the actual design and delivery of the training.
- These lessons are relevant for others engaged in similar capacity building measures for inter-sector co-operation.
- Conclusions that can be drawn about the immediate effect of the training on both the individuals who participated and the organisations in which they work.

Lessons Learnt: how to put together an effective training programme for partnership development

1. Establishing the ‘Right’ Learning Environment

a) Create and manage a ‘safe’ environment for discussion

Any stakeholders engaged in the process of building stronger NGO–public sector relationships need to have the capacity to manage the tensions that will inevitably arise during such processes. Participants agreed that employing a strategy for managing tensions contributes to building sustainable relationships, and is preferable to taking a course of avoidance and failing to identify potential areas of disagreement. During the workshops, participants themselves suggested several ways to manage stressful discussions: introduce small group exercises to disperse tension from the wider group; stop discussion by introducing a new topic and stating that the former topic would be returned to later; challenge the participants to suggest strategies for dealing with tension.

An early session in module 1 of this training, aimed at exploring chronologically the significant events and prevailing attitudes that have shaped the existing relationships between the public sector and civil society in Turkey, helped participants to appreciate a common picture of the defining moments and debates in Turkey over the past 80 years (some of which have been very painful experiences). They identified the value of creating a ‘safe’ environment in which participants from all sectors feel comfortable discussing such defining moments. It was agreed by all participants that such discussion was crucial in the development of trust and common understanding among representatives of the various stakeholder groups.

b) Encourage diversity among trainers and application of their experience

The process of building a group of local trainers was seen as highly significant, both by the trainers themselves, and by participants. It was the first time that the trainers from public and NGO sectors in Turkey had worked together and formed a common cadre. To this extent, participating trainers have made great contributions in sharing their knowledge and experience, and have successfully created a good environment for cross-sector learning. The dynamics active among the trainers were then successfully used as a model to promote a strong learning environment for participants in the Partnership Development workshops.

The local trainers offered a very strong resource for the delivery of training on inter-sector co-operation. Deploying ‘training teams’ of two or three trainers ensured that there was a balanced mix of knowledge of inter-sector co-operation and knowledge of the two sectors, a solid range of training skills and positive attitudes that promote empathy and inspire collaboration.

c) Representatives from NGOs and the public sector can learn together

One common positive feedback from participants noted in the external evaluation report was “the involvement of a mix of participants from NGOs and public sector”, and that the good facilitation enabled participants with diverse views to remain “positive, realistic, mature” and respectful of others.

The trainers had set out to ensure that representatives from NGOs and the public sector could work and learn together. Providing the ‘space’ for discussions, as described above, was key to this success, but equally important was the appropriate facilitation within that space. For some of the training exercises,

public sector and NGO people worked in small groups of only their own sector; for example, in exercises to tease out the perceptions of each sector. At other times, participants were mixed in small-group work, or facilitated to work in pairs, one from each sector. In this way, the learning environment became most productive when levels of trust and confidence among participants were highest.

2. Ensuring Delivery and Methodology Fit with Expectations and Time Constraints

In line with the pre-accession processes, the EU and the Turkish Government are increasing investment in capacity building measures to facilitate absorption of EU Structural Funds and the reform of public administration. To this end, a large number of participants reported that they had, to varying degrees, experienced technical training. Most reported that this training was often rigidly structured, delivered through a didactic approach, and lacked any follow-up. Thus the approach of the Partnership Development training was highly regarded in that it allowed participants, in discussion with the training teams, to set their own pace in the learning process and to dwell on issues and topics prioritised by the participants themselves.

Having a break of several weeks between the two modules not only enabled participants to have a go at some practical exercises in their own working environment, and then to report on those assignments to the trainers, but also allowed participants to reflect on their learning to date. They could then use that reflection to identify their own learning priorities for the second module without losing momentum.

Participants also acknowledged that packaging the course as two three-day modules, rather than one six-day training

workshop, was better suited to the other demands on their time.

3. Promoting Local Ownership

Towards the end of the second train-the-trainer workshop it was clear that the local trainers had taken a big step towards claiming ownership of the training programme and were demonstrating the capacity and confidence to deliver training on Partnership Development successfully. This was the result of the workshops being managed as an open learning space, and of the SKIP project being clear that what it was offering was facilitation of production of a training framework, training resources (materials and logistics), and mobilisation of training participants. They were also clear that thereafter the local trainers would deliver training according to detailed plans they themselves designed.

The teams of local trainers also contributed to the process of selecting participants in the Partnership Development training, thus ensuring that the individual training plans for the various workshops were designed to match the profile and needs of the selected participants.

Having a pool of local trainers was likewise important, as it allowed the trainers themselves to team up in a way that produced a balanced mix of trainer attributes: professional experience, skills and qualifications; representing different sectors, different areas of the country, varying personal interests, and a balance in terms of age and gender.

The only significant omission in the local trainers' preparedness to deliver Partnership Development training was the lack of materials illustrating Turkish case studies of, and practice in, inter-sector co-operation. For this reason, the

Trainers' Working Group¹³ would be assigned to develop and finalise the Resource Book by reviewing the existing materials (used in the train-the-trainers workshop), and to source other materials, both produced by the trainers themselves and from other authors. The time and effort to collect and shape these training materials was fundamental to the process of building a locally owned training programme.

Some Effects of Partnership Development Training

Shifting from 'Project Mentality' to 'Partnership as an End in Itself'

Sessions were deliberately designed to challenge participants to think about and discuss what partnership might be for. As a result there was the beginning of a shift in the dominant mind set among all the stakeholders and realisation that partnership might be entered into with the aim of doing more than just implementing one particular project. Providing space to talk about relationships between the sectors at both local and central levels enabled participants to view a range of actions that went from basic service at local level to dialogue on national policies. When the range of co-operation between sectors was illustrated, participants began to discuss whether partnership might possibly be pursued as an end in itself, with mechanisms created that might be deployed to meet any one particular need. Since the training was completed, a number of participants have reported that they have persuaded their organisations (some NGOs and some local government departments) to hold round-table-type meetings with local stakeholders to explore partnership opportunities.

¹³ From among the local pool of trainers, a group of four self-selected trainers agreed to work together with the project team to expand and edit a final collection of training materials.

About 15 of the participants – nearly ten per cent of the total – are now actively contributing to the drafting of a national Memorandum of Understanding between NGOs and the public sector.

In one particular location, where eight of the training participants are based, participants have launched a dedicated Co-operation Committee within the mechanism of the local City Council.

The post-training evaluation process has also thrown up a few examples where participants report that their organisations have embarked on changes to improve their capacity to relate to others. For instance, an NGO in the city of Adana is now deliberately targeting public institutions in its drive to increase its volunteer base.

Action Planning: Applying the Learning

Another significant piece of feedback from the training participants was that more than half acknowledged the importance of devoting time in the workshop to collectively discussing and planning possible follow-up action to the training, and of the fact that the SKIP project was able to offer support in this.

Thus it was clear that, in planning the delivery of the training, the total investment was made much more effective by ensuring that managers of the training (in the SKIP project) could:

- make training materials publicly available in hard and electronic format
- assign local trainers available to advise on the design and delivery of participants' own follow-up activities: for example, in running 'in-house' learning seminars for colleagues and contributing sessions at conferences
- facilitate e-groups among the participants

- participate with trainees in local media events
- facilitate mini-study tours whereby groups of trainees collectively visit their own local stakeholders.

As a result of this planning, participants are reporting that they have found it relatively easy to apply some of the learning from the training immediately. For example, one NGO working with representatives of the National Education Directorate are running a local course, 'Training for Joint Action.'

In the longer term, it can be expected that future research with participants in Partnership Development training will reveal what impact the training might have had on them and the performance of their organisations. In the meantime, any reader wishing to learn more about the activities and reflections reported on in this Note are strongly encouraged to contact the author: simonforrester@yahoo.com

References

EUSG (2004) *Terms of Reference for the Technical Assistance to SKIP*. Ankara: European Union Secretariat General of the Prime Ministry in Turkey.

Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1998) *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*, 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA, USA: Berrett-Koehler.

Emrealp, S. (2005) *Handbook on Facilitative Information for the Implementation of Local Agenda 21*, 2nd edn. www.la21turkey.net

Polanyi, M. (1996) *The Tacit Dimension*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

SKIP Project (2006) *The Partnership Development Training Resource Book*. Ankara: EUSG/British Council. www.skip.org.tr

Sorgenfrei, M. with Buxton, C. (2006) *Building Organisational Capacity Through Analytical Skills Training in Central Asia*. Praxis Note 22. Oxford, UK: INTRAC.

TESEV (Turkish Economic & Social Studies Foundation)/Civicus 'Civil Society Index for Turkey' (draft 2005). See www.tesev.org.tr

YADA Foundation (2004) *Civil Society Organisations; Needs and Constraints*. Ankara: YADA Foundation.

Resources

The Partnering Initiative:
www.thepartneringinitiative.org

Capacity.org (pages on Partnership and Networking):
www.capacity.org