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THE PARTNERSHIPS RESOURCE CENTRE

Same but Different

Scaling through partnership replication

The case of the Sustainable Development Programme
for Coffee Growing Families in Nariño



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Scaling up efforts: the potential of replication	6
The case: narrating the partnership story	13
Establishing repeated collaboration effectively	26

Resumen

Las alianzas público privadas para el desarrollo (APPDs) comienzan usualmente como proyectos piloto con el fin de probar una estrategia de alianzas para alcanzar objetivos de desarrollo. Cuando estas APPDs producen los resultados esperados y sobrepasan expectativas, los aliados, convencidos del potencial de la estrategia buscan opciones para adoptar una estrategia similar y replicar los esfuerzos. Sin embargo, un proyecto en alianza rara vez se presta en su totalidad a una replicación por parte de una organización, ya que ésta busca primeramente operar un proyecto de manera idéntica en un contexto



distinto o con una configuración de aliados diferente. Por consecuencia, el nuevo proyecto no produce los resultados esperados. Una de las maneras más efectivas para replicar ha demostrado ser a través de “colaboraciones repetidas” entre los mismos aliados que implementaron el proyecto inicial.

El Programa de Desarrollo Sostenible para Familias Caficultoras de Nariño, implementado como una APPD, es un ejemplo de replicación en forma de colaboración repetida que ha logrado crear valor para todos los participantes. El haber trabajado de esta manera, permitió a los aliados escalar resultados, desarrollar capacidades para la formación de alianzas e internalizar aprendizajes. El estudio de la APPD en Nariño, resalta que el establecer una colaboración repetida es un proceso complejo por medio del cual la alianza evoluciona de acuerdo a las nuevas realidades en las que está inmersa. En dicho proceso, el propósito debe alejarse de una pura imitación de componentes y actividades específicas, que pueden resultar inapropiadas para las circunstancias, contextos culturales, y preferencias organizacionales cada vez cambiantes. En su lugar, el proceso se beneficia de un enfoque dirigido a la identificación de lecciones aprendidas y la posterior aplicación de éstas en un plan de proyecto actualizado.

El presente caso de estudio ha permitido definir una serie de pasos para ayudar a organizaciones a establecer colaboraciones repetidas con la intención de replicar eficazmente un proyecto exitoso:

- 1 Identificando la propuesta de valor de la estrategia implementada: **¿Que hemos alcanzado?**
- 2 Reflexionando sobre las experiencias y lecciones aprendidas en la creación de valor: **¿Cómo lo hemos alcanzado?**
- 3 Revalorando la decisión de continuar con una colaboración repetida: **¿Por qué queremos replicar?**
- 4 Renegociando las bases de la colaboración: **¿Cómo nos adaptamos a la nueva realidad?**
- 5 Rediseñando las actividades de proyecto: **¿Cómo llevamos nuestra colaboración repetida a la práctica?**
- 6 Implementando una colaboración repetida: **¿Cómo apalancaremos experiencias previas mientras ganamos nuevas?**

A diferencia de la formación del proyecto inicial, a lo largo de estos 6 pasos, los aliados construyen una colaboración repetida basándose en un nivel de familiaridad y confianza desarrollada durante la primera colaboración. Sin embargo, dicha familiaridad y confianza contribuirán a un proceso fluido y sin contratiempos en la medida que los aliados sean capaces de cerciorar la presencia de una serie de facilitadores en cada uno de los seis pasos:

- 1 **Énfasis en el desarrollo de relaciones interinstitucionales para largo plazo**
- 2 **Establecer un nivel de flexibilidad entre aliados y dentro de cada organización para la renegociación y rediseño de la alianza**
- 3 **Instaurar espacios y dedicar tiempo para la reflexión conjunta e individual y la transferencia de aprendizajes**
- 4 **Buscar nuevas perspectivas e ideas (a través de la introducción de un nuevo aliado)**



Scaling up efforts: the potential of replication

An example of successful replication

In 2004, after almost two years of exploring and designing a joint partnership project, a consortium consisting of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Empresas de Nariño (ENA), Carcafe Foundation, Starbucks and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands started a partnership with the objective of improving the living conditions of 1,080 vulnerable coffee-growing families in the conflict-affected department of Nariño in Colombia. The partnership was designed as a project of four years. The partners gained such value from the first project that they decided to replicate the strategy with a new group of 800 coffee-growing families from a different region in Nariño from 2009 to 2012. Partner organisations in the second partnership remained the same, except for the bilateral development agency. The second project was also successfully completed, and the active collaboration formally ended, but there were further developments after the deadline.

Partnership achievements after
10 years of intensive collaboration:

Social context

- Farmers became empowered to sell their high-quality coffee to the best buyer

Organisational level

- Partners internalised new structures, processes and strategies in their organisations

Relational level

- Collaborative capabilities have developed
- Relationships between partners, farmers, and development agencies continued but changed in nature and intensity
- Possibilities for collaborations with new partners emerged.

This is the story of a cross-sector development partnership (CSDP) as a temporary arrangement, which despite operating in a situation of institutional instability, successfully managed to set in motion a sequence of further development efforts.¹ CSDPs often start as ‘pilots’ – testing out the potential of partnering approach to deliver desired results within a pre-defined time. As projects, CSDPs have potential for replication because they test innovative approaches which can be scaled up by the partners, preferably by the private sector after donor funding ends.² In practice, however, pilot projects are criticised for often having no substantial impact over the longer term, and often fail to scale up.³ In addition, a partnership project is seldom wholly repeatable. If replicated, it often operates with a slightly different configuration or in a different context.

Not much is known about how replication of successfully piloted partnerships actually works. This publication provides insights into replication through repeated collaboration, based on the experiences of the partnership described above. In addition to identifying the benefits, process and facilitators of the repeated collaboration, it examines how bilateral development agencies can facilitate successful replication through repeated collaboration.

*“We consider successful interventions those where the mechanisms and the relationship live longer than our participation (international cooperation). A successful intervention is when you roll out a project through an initiative but then the project keeps on working and stabilising even if international cooperation leaves”
(Interview USAID, 2013)*

Replication and repeated collaboration: insights from literature

Partnerships in development co-operation tend to follow typical project characteristics. They operate in a specific context, involve the formation of a specific execution team, create a degree of uniqueness and complexity, define tasks based on individualised activities and are set up within a specific timeframe, usually between three to four years.⁴

The project-based approach includes that at the end of the project, the co-funding from the bilateral development agency stops and in many cases the formal partnership

dissolves. However, bilateral development agencies and partners aim to sustain results, so in some cases the project will continue after the funding ends.⁵ Decisions about whether to moving the partnership on often emerge in the process of partnering, and depend on a number of drivers such as available resources, organisational priorities and changes in the context in which the partnership operates.⁶ The tension between temporary piloting a partnership approach and the intended long-term sustainability of the project creates a major management challenge in CSDPs.⁷

Advantages of the project-based approach

- Quickly produces results
- Flexibility to adapt to organisational and social context
- Risks become more manageable for organisations
- Innovative character
- Possibility to learn from experiences
- Possibility for new collaborations

Criticisms of the project-based approach

- Limited timeframe interrupts and discontinues relationships
- Inability to make results self-sustaining
- Inherent time pressure to deliver outputs challenges the development of intangible relational resources (e.g. relationship building and development of trust, reputation, learning, joint problem solving)

It is hoped that development interventions can be scaled up by replicating projects with successful approaches. Replication means using the ideas, experience and practices of a tested approach and implementing them in a similar project. Such replication can be done through other organisations, but preferably through repeated collaboration with a similar partner configuration. Repeated collaboration is an interesting option for sustaining collaboration beyond a pilot project's lifetime.

Repetitions of collaborations with the same partners and focusing on similar activities are at risk of creating a 'lock-in' situation. On the one hand, following the same project approach with the same partners reduces high levels of uncertainty.⁸ On the other hand, consecutive projects risk losing their innovative character by copying partnership activities rather than focusing on the transfer of learning.¹⁰

What is the attraction of replication through repeated collaboration?

- Adding value by spreading good practices
- Achieving scale
- Reducing risks and costs
- Previously developed trust smoothes and speeds the process in repeated collaboration
- Developed project capabilities and partner-specific knowledge can be used or transferred to new projects, or used in the individual organisation⁹

Replication is often understood as copying or duplicating, or as expansion. Indeed, projects often contain routine elements but projects are typically not repeatable as a whole. Repeating requires that partners have to repeat the negotiations about their relationships and a certain level of “re-institutionalisation of partnership processes, and structures is required”¹¹ at the outset of any repeated collaboration. So the term replication is used to refer to diffusion and utilisation of a partnership approach that has been proved to work rather than whole projects.¹²

General cautions when replicating¹³

- **Premature replication:** results need too long to justify that the partnership approach ‘works’
- **One-size-fits all:** a standardised approach does not take into account differences of groups and context
- **De-contextualization:** circumstances and environments vary; new values, expectations and funding priorities challenge replication

The research project

This research revealed that replication through repeated collaboration worked in the partnership case in Nariño. The exploratory case study of this particular partnership focused on analysing how the partnership project was brought into being, the design and implementation of the activities, interpretation of results and how they were experienced, and how this eventually led to an adjustment of the partnership replication. This allowed us to describe the process of replication, to identify facilitators of successful repeated collaboration and to consider how bilateral development agencies can facilitate a process of replication.

The findings are based on information from project documents, interviews and field visits in three different rounds: March 2011, June-July 2013 and October 2013, which provided information from various perspectives: individuals involved in partner organisations, farmers, and stakeholders external to the partnership.

“How We Have Experienced the Public Private Partnership: Reflections from Nariño Coffee Growers”

Researchers from the Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC) met a number of coffee growers who had participated in the projects. This was to learn about their needs, their experiences and challenges throughout the project, and to discover the value they have gained from being part of the partnership projects. These farmer stories from 2013 have been compiled in a publication available for further reading. www.partnershipsresourcecentre.org



Narrating the partnership story

STARBUCKS



FUNDACION CARCAFE
EMPRESAS DE NARIÑO LTDA.



FAMILIA: ERAZO GRIJALBA

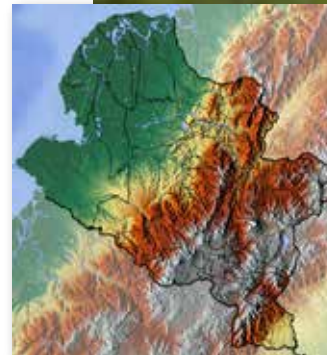
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Coffee farming in Nariño: challenges and opportunities

More than 30,000 families in Nariño depend on coffee growing as their only source of income, and 40 per cent of the land in the Nariño area is used for its production.¹⁴ The geography and climate of Nariño's mountain range allow coffee to be grown at very high altitudes and to acquire superior flavours and aromas. As a result, Nariño coffee is recognised as a high quality 'specialty coffee', entitling growers to charge a premium for their crop when it enters niche markets.

The coffee sector is very important for the economy of the region: it generates 31,000 permanent jobs and a vast number of seasonal jobs during harvesting of the coffee cherries.¹⁵ However, the region produces only 3 per cent of the total national coffee production and annual productivity is limited to 737 kg per hectare. Nariño's landscape is characterised by very small coffee farms: 99.2 per cent of the farms are less than 1 hectare and the average farm is 0.64 hectares.¹⁶



*Department of Nariño
in South-West Colombia*

What prevented Nariño's coffee growers from getting higher productivity and prices before the partnership?

1 Low socio-economic development of the majority of small coffee growers

In 2003, Nariño's poverty rate was 56.78%, higher than the national average (48.84%¹⁷). Access to education, water and energy were limited, and social security and health services were deficient. Unfulfilled basic needs decreased the coffee growers' capacity to run their farms effectively and to develop best practices. Infrastructure – such as paved roads – was scarce and inadequate. It hampered the logistics for coffee supply and prevented access to the farms for those trying to build production capacity.

2 Persistent armed conflict

Nariño is gravely affected by armed conflict between guerrillas and paramilitary groups. The region has strategic value for armed groups because of its proximity to national borders and isolated coastlines that facilitate illegal trafficking. As a result, coffee-growing families were vulnerable to violence and some were forced to abandon their plantations and coffee production. Nariño became the main coca-growing region in Colombia because of its favourable climate and remoteness. With few economic opportunities, coffee producers considered growing coca instead of coffee on their land because despite its dangers, it's more profitable.

3 Limited capacity and restricted access to markets

Global demand for high quality coffee that adheres to environmental conservation and fair trade standards has increased. Responding to this demand effectively depends on farmers' adoption of best practices and investments in improved infrastructure. For Nariño's small producers, such improvements are beyond their resources and technical capacity; they are prevented from joining the coffee value chain and securing satisfactory prices.

Partnership as a response

The Partners

The interrelation of issues described above and the potential for linking commercial interests with development motivated the formation of a partnership between Empresas de Nariño, Starbucks, Carcafé Foundation, the International Organisation for Migration, the Dutch Embassy in Bogota, and USAID (in the second project).

Empresas de Nariño: Colombian coffee exporting company

Motivation: improve the quality of coffee supply, develop the capacities of coffee suppliers and improve their living conditions, and strengthen the relationship with farmers.

Role: co-manage implementation, provide technical support, accompany association development, and ensure commercialisation of farmers' coffee.

Starbucks Co.: multinational coffee roaster and retailer

Motivation: improve traceability of coffee, develop capacities of coffee suppliers and improve their living conditions, increase supply of sustainability-certified coffee.

Role: co-finance the project, guarantee the purchase of farmers' coffee, and guarantee premium prices for certified coffee.

Carcafé Foundation: non-profit organisation belonging to the Carcafé group

Motivation: implements corporate social responsibility strategies for the two companies belonging to the Carcafé group, including Empresas de Nariño.

Role: mainly administrative – execute and co-ordinate local social activities, manage human resources, and contracting, hiring and paying suppliers and subcontractors. Carcafé Foundation has been much less visible than other partners and therefore regarded as a 'silent partner'.

International Organisation for Migration: intergovernmental organisation for development focused on migration issues

Motivation: link the private sector to social development projects, help private business develop CSR policies, reduce forced migration for coffee-growing communities.

Role: co-manage implementation, manage budget, manage internal and external communication, and implement social development activities.

Dutch Embassy in Bogota: the diplomatic mission of The Netherlands in Colombia.

Motivation: improve social conditions of the coffee-growing community, stimulate development of environmental conservation practices, decrease the incidence of conflict, engage the private sector in development efforts to ensure sustainability of results.

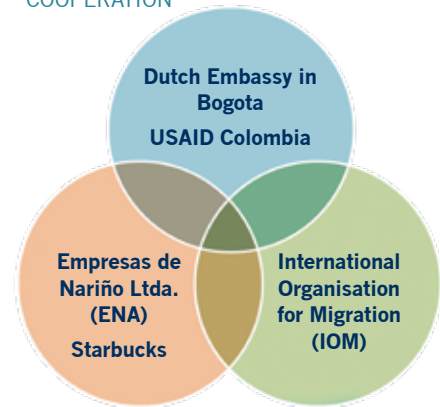
Role: co-finance project, participate in field visits, facilitate decision-making, facilitate partner dynamics, monitor project progress, and assign external evaluation.

USAID: development agency of the government of the United States

Motivation: support productive capacities of farmers, engage private sector in development efforts to ensure sustainability of results, decrease vulnerability of communities to the conflict.

Role: co-finance project, monitor project progress, participate in field visits, and provide links to third party organisations for additional access to resources.

BILATERAL
DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION



PRIVATE
SECTOR

INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

The Project



The idea of building a partnership to address the challenges of small coffee-farmers in the Nariño region started in 2002. The partners agreed on objectives and priorities, delineated partner roles and activities, defined individual contributions and

commitments, and consequently drew up the partnership agreement.

The project was set up as a multiple-impact programme for vulnerable coffee-growing communities that suffered a high rate of displacement and risk of forced migration. It implemented a strategy of social, economic and eco-friendly development. Farmers were invited to a series of training workshops to build their technical capacity, with the objective of improving farm productivity and developing entrepreneurial abilities. These training sessions included the development of environmental conservation practices, such as water and waste management, recycling, and organic compost production. The project was intended to train farmers to increase yields, improve coffee quality and meet the requirements of sustainability certifications.

At the same time, participating families were provided with production

infrastructure, such as drying patios, in order that they could produce better quality coffee, and household infrastructure such as kitchens to improve their own living conditions.

Further support for the development process came from activities such as educational programmes for 1,085 families, plus the distribution of household water tanks. Significant achievements were made in each component within the first two years of the project, and valuable savings were made through efficient management of resources. Partners therefore expanded the outreach of the project to benefit another 75 families.

In 2007, most activities were completed, suggesting the project was coming to a close. Although some implementations were still pending, during this time the partnership was involved in closing the technical support to farms and producing the accounts, so it was vital to gather and update all the relevant documentation

and information on the project's execution and allocation of resources. A final report was produced in August 2007 and presented the outcomes of the partnership activities. For more details on the project activities and results see table on page 24.

Partners were convinced that positive results had been achieved and had exceeded their expectations. Moreover, the partnership project was recognised as successful development initiative by other institutions in public, private and civil sectors. As a result – and conscious of the potential for reaching out to even more families in Nariño – the partners decided to extend their collaboration for a second project. However, the Dutch Embassy did not provide any further financial assistance because of their policy of not funding replications of strategies that had already been implemented.

Lessons learned from the first project

1. 'Earned' instead of 'donated' infrastructure:

Donating infrastructure at the beginning of the farmer's participation did not gather the expected commitment to training sessions and measures for improving productivity. In the second project, growers and associations only gained infrastructure in return for their efforts if they met technical development objectives and completed improvement tasks.

2. From individual to collective mentality:

Formation of associations was not a goal during the first project but it surfaced as a mechanism to stimulate farmers to seek a direct relationship with the exporter; the development of associations became a main activity in the second project.

3. 'Productive' over 'household' infrastructure:

Productive infrastructure proved to be most cost-efficient and created most value for farmers. The second project therefore focused on this type of infrastructure.

4. Producers as business partners:

Commitment from the farmers in the first project was lower than expected. In the second project, coffee farmers were selected according to their potential to become business partners; this was a shift away from viewing farmers as merely receiving 'aid'. Instead they were viewed as active business partners.

La Carrera Cafetera (The Coffee Race)

In order to increase the commitment of farmers to the training component of the project, and to stimulate the farmers' motivation to earn production infrastructure, the second project incorporated an innovative tool called 'Carrera Cafetera'.

It was a series of capacity-building workshops with clearly defined practical objectives for farms and associations. After completing the series of workshops, farmers and associations were evaluated and scored on their performance and progress in achieving the objectives. Objectives included implementation of best agricultural practices, increasing the amount of coffee sold, achieving quality standards, and ensuring that association meetings were effective.

Associations that proved most successful in achieving the improvement goals were rewarded with commercialisation tools, as well as drying patios and other quality enhancing infrastructure for member farms.



ENA and IOM had built an apparently effective co-operative relationship. They were committed to the idea of continuing collaborative work and also had the knowledge to do so. Thus, after the exit of the Dutch Embassy, USAID entered the partnership as co-funder. Partners initially devised a large project for the second phase but plans had to be adapted because the budget was smaller; adaptations were mainly in the selection of target groups and in reorganisation of operational activities.

The design of the second project and its operational activities were largely based on the design of the first project. However, specifics of implementation were adjusted before replication in order to reflect 1) USAID's particular requirements for funding; 2) lessons learned from the first phase; and 3) changing circumstances in partner organisations.

The second project was launched in May 2009, one and a half years after the first partnership project formally ended. USAID's participation focused the project's attention on farmers located in areas with higher incidence of armed conflict. As such, the second phase of the partnership concentrated efforts in the more vulnerable western region of Nariño. Moreover, the partnership had fewer financial resources available and a shorter time in which to act, so activities were designed to focus on farms improving production and gaining certification.

Taking into account these new boundaries for resources and time as well as lessons learned from before, partners decided to revise their measures and engaged in a more thorough selection of producers. The project emphasised the formation of associations in order to ensure sustainability of certification efforts and safeguard investments for productivity. In particular, the project stimulated coffee farmers to become more engaged and committed to their associations. The result was a reorganisation of activities, whereby training was prioritised. Training sessions for the associations included developing commercialisation capacity for the association as a collective, again with the reward of production infrastructure for successful completion. The second project closed in 2012.

Near the close of the second project, in January 2012, the partners agreed to extend a new pilot project with farmers in the Samaniego region involving implementation of FAIR TRADE certifications. This pilot project incorporated additional resources from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), an international NGO engaged in development work in Colombia, and finished in October 2012. On completion of the pilot project, CRS and ENA continued their joint efforts to stimulate development in the area. ENA and IOM had no joint project at the time of research, but they have maintained communication with each other, with USAID and with the Dutch Embassy.

After the second project:

- 70 per cent of associations operate autonomously
- ENA was able to build direct relationships with associations and individual farmers



However:

- Not all associations are operating suggesting that the project duration was too short to consolidate relationships
- Intensified competition for Nariño coffee supply empowered farmers to choose best-paying buyer
- Competitive pricing put a strain on unconsolidated relationships between ENA and some farmers



Learning:

- Relationships need to be nurtured beyond the project's lifetime through continued technical support, revising certifications and referring back to project impact during interactions
- Communities must be empowered to increase sustainability BUT they must be included as active agents in the project
- Time and resources need to be invested in accompanying farmers after project execution

Value created for the farmers

“...luckily we were able to meet (the certification objectives), after which we saw better coffee prices. We even had new packaging for our coffee where it was clearly stamped that it was specialty quality coffee from Nariño”
(Interview Nueva Esperanza Coffee Association, 2013)

- Higher quality coffee, more sales, higher prices
- Wider range of buyers in the area making prices more competitive
- Increased family income and living standards
- Increased capacity to form associations, an effective link to coffee value chain
- Direct and strong relationship with coffee exporter
- Recognition of Nariño origin coffee in international markets
- Internationally recognised sustainability certifications
- Legal opportunities for generating income
- Increased productivity, higher farm valuation
- Improved family and community life: higher levels of unity, collaboration and communication

Value created for the private sector

“It made ENA more visible to the farmers, it brought us closer... many farmers have decided to increase the share of their produce that they sell to us.”
(Interview ENA, 2013)

- Higher quality coffee, higher percentage of certified coffee
- More direct and organised supplier relationships
- Consistent and increasing supply of coffee
- Increased capacity for CSR initiatives
- Greater traceability of coffee
- Proven experience of working with cross sector partnerships

*“I think IOM took a valuable lesson learned from that, because due to PPP1, IOM created a specialised unit for Public Private Partnership and afterwards it was changed into incorporating CSR as well”
(Interview IOM, 2013)*

Value created for the intergovernmental organisation

- A reduction in forced migration of farming communities
- Improved capacity to work with private sector
- Proven successful experience with CSR initiatives
- Empowered coffee farming communities able to sustain their economic development

Value created for the bilateral development agency

*“It (the partnership) was directed at the Millennium Development Goals, which had to be achieved by 2015, and for us... well our department's goal was poverty eradication... and that was achieved (in this project)”
(Interview Dutch Embassy Bogota, 2013)*

- Goals of bilateral co-operation strategy achieved
- Contribution to the Millennium Development Goals
- Successful transfer of knowledge about development projects
- Local partner capable of sustaining development work
- Private sector as proven partner in development cooperation

Name and Area of Influence	<p>Project 1: <i>Programa de Desarrollo Sostenible para las Familias Productoras de Café en Nariño</i> (Sustainable Development Programme for Coffee Growing Families in Nariño) – Northern part of coffee growing area</p>	<p>Project 2: <i>Programa de Desarrollo Sostenible para las Familias Caficultoras Víctimas del Conflicto Armado en Nariño</i> (Sustainable Development Programme for Coffee Growing Families, Victims of the Armed Conflict in Nariño) – Western part of the coffee growing area</p>
Core Components	<p>Economic: Formation of value chain (promote associations, establish purchase commitments from ENA); provision of technical training for best practices in coffee production; improvement of production facilities (infrastructure provision)</p> <p>Environmental: Implementation of environmentally friendly agriculture (e.g. preventing erosion, water treatment); training for production of organic compost; installation of clean water supply</p> <p>Social: Social community-building programmes (growing alternative crops, access to public utilities); family training (training in household economics); investments in public goods (education centres)</p>	<p>Technical: Technical assistance for sustainable growing; installation of water treatment systems; promotion of environmental protection plans</p> <p>Infrastructure: Production infrastructure (drying patios, parabolic dryers); implementation of a reward-based system for providing infrastructure</p> <p>Entrepreneurial: Introduction of strategies for associations of coffee growers (formation and commercialisation); increasing entrepreneurial capacity through training (organisational management, accounting practices)</p>
Main Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,160 coffee growers certified under C.A.F.E. practices certification label • 1,211 capacity building training workshops • 25 associations created for 442 farmers • 26.5% and 20.8% increase in coffee price in 2006 and 2007 respectively • 2,133 infrastructure projects completed on 1,160 farms • 925 families with access to national public health care • 1080 water tanks delivered to families • 450 computers donated to education centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000 trees planted as part of successful reforestation programme • 111 farms received new water treatment systems • 600 infrastructure projects completed (but public disorders prevented the completion of projects in Samaniego) • 25 associations were formed, 12 of which have been legalized in 2011 • 238 farmers approved for Rainforest Alliance Certification in 2011

Source: (1) Several interim project evaluation reports and (2) International Organisation for Migration (2013), *Recopilación de Experiencias Desarrollo Sostenible para Familias Caficultoras Departamento de Nariño*, IOM: Bogotá.

Challenges during implementation

“...the idea is to start thinking about working as a group, we are individual growers working together. Like a group of friends working together, and do it following an approach similar to associations. We would still like to formalise this however, but it requires a lot of patience.” (Interview IOM, 2011)

1 Hindrance from persistent conflict: Transportation of materials to the field was hampered by lengthy procedures to ensure secure access. Partners were forced to change the specifics of activities during implementation because of security threats. This led to unexpected costs and delays.

2 Low-trust environment: Farmers’ low levels of trust in the project during the initial stages slowed down its execution and made it difficult to gather commitment. These difficulties were influenced by farmers’ previous disappointments from development initiatives, and made it difficult to encourage them to be loyal to exporters.

3 Limited timeframes: Project deadlines put pressure on the execution of activities, particularly time-intensive ones. Sustainable impact depended on dedicating time to long-term accompaniment beyond the 2-3 years of implementation. Moreover, the partnership aimed to stimulate changes in attitudes to the coffee business. Such cultural transformations call for greater time investments.

Establishing effective repeated collaborations



Benefits of repeated collaboration

Working in a repeated collaboration and learning from the experience in the Nariño partnership projects has enabled scaling capacity, project capabilities, partnering capacity and internalisation of experiences for the partner organisations. This stimulated a more efficient and focused approach to developing and managing collaborations with partner organisations in the future.

- Efforts from the first project were multiplied and reached more farmers
- Improved strategy increased commitment from farmers and ensured more sustainable results

Scaling

Partners developed their collaborative capabilities in project management, leading to:

- Faster negotiations
- Leverage of previous experience
- More efficient project planning and implementation

Project capabilities

Partnering capacity

Through repeated collaboration, partners:

- Developed better understanding of each other as partners
- Got used to each other's way of working and were able to adapt to conditions for collaboration
- Learned to approach other sectors for new collaborative projects
- Became known as capable partnering organisations, which opened doors for new projects

Internalisation

- Partners developed strategies to work with their stakeholders based on a partnering approach (e.g. ENA learned to take a more inclusive approach to its relationship with farmers)
- Partners created strategies and teams within their organisations for taking advantage of partnership opportunities (e.g. IOM formed a PPP unit to manage and stimulate further CSDPs)

A 6-step process for repeated collaboration

The study of consecutive partnership projects in Nariño suggests that replication of a partnership is a complex process because the partnership needs to adapt to new realities. Even when the most attractive approach to replication may well be a repeated collaboration, this still entails a process in which partners need to engage in reflections, negotiations, design and formalisation of activities and commitments. This might resemble the process for the initial partnership, but it can be expected that the nature of the partner interactions and content of their discussions will build on their learning, the level of trust developed – and as a result may be comparably smoother and more efficient.

With this in mind, the process of repeated collaboration can be understood as a 6-step route:

1 Realising the value of the chosen approach. **What was achieved?**

Once the initial partnership project ended, partners gathered information about the execution of project activities as well as their results and outcomes. A post-project evaluation enabled partners to recognise the value of the chosen approach for their own organisations, and for the development outcomes that were achieved. Simultaneously, it allowed partners to examine and identify the practices that led to the obtained results. If the approach proved successful, partners can in future consider replication through repeated collaboration as a way to scale up their efforts.

2 Reflecting on experiences and lessons learned. **How was it achieved?**

Realising that their initial approach had created value, partners were advised to reflect on their experience. Together, partners could check exactly what was done throughout the partnership and project, and identify which actions contributed directly to the valuable outcomes. Jointly reflecting on why these actions and practices produced value can help partners learn, and spotlights these particular lessons for second or subsequent projects.

3 Reassessing the decision to move on. Why repeat the collaboration?

Having identified which aspects of the initial partnership project produced value (and consequently the motivation to continue), partners might need to reassess the decision to repeat the collaboration. At this point, each organisation will need to evaluate their individual readiness and capacity to invest further in a similar project. Partners may also need to look for additional sources of funding. This step in the process requires partners to consider the timing of the repeated collaboration and to prepare themselves for a second project.

4 Renegotiating the foundations of collaboration. How can the partnership adapt to new realities?

With all partners ready for new collaboration, and perhaps having found potential new partners or ideas that contribute resources or innovative perspectives, the next step is renegotiating the partnership. Partners may want to revise the agreements and commitments made for the first project, and compare them with the lessons from steps 1) and 2). At this point, changing external circumstances and new or changed partner preferences will drive partners to renegotiate the objectives, target areas, strategy, and commitments, which will then form the basis for re-defining the new project.

5 Redesigning the project. How can it be realised?

The result of renegotiation is a common collaborative framework adapted to the new reality of the partnership. This reshaped framework is now the foundation of a new partnership project with revised expectations and areas of focus. The next step is now translating the framework into an action plan. Partners may use the design of the first project and adjust particular components of the renegotiated framework, e.g. activities, timeframes, priorities, target milestones, individual tasks and so on.

6 Implementing a project through repeated collaboration. How can experiences be used to good advantage?

Using a design based on – and using lessons from – the first project, as well as considerations that take into account the new partnership environment, partners may implement activities on the ground. Repeated collaboration is characterised by bringing together proven past experiences with innovative new measures. Partners may therefore want to keep links to past projects alive by continuously considering how to leverage what was learned, at the same time as experimenting with new strategies.

Facilitators of successful repeated collaborations

“I think that it is a process that takes time and doesn’t come without difficulties, but which in the end is what allows that from these experiences new partnerships can emerge, and that new strategies can be developed in as far as one has been able to build bonds based on trust and credibility with your partners, but also with the community, the private sector and the public sector”
(Interview IOM, 2013)

The 6-step process of establishing a repeated collaboration is different to the formation of the first partnership project in the sense that partners can build on the familiarity, trust and confidence developed through their initial collaboration. However, the extent to which this ‘gained territory’ contributes to a smoother process also depends on the extent to which partners can embed and use the measures for facilitating the process, derived from case analysis and described below:

- 1 **Strong emphasis on building and managing a relationship** allowed partners to stay committed and show responsibility to the collaboration and farmers beyond the partnership deadline.
- 2 **Flexibility of the project approach, of partner expectations and development agency requirements** allowed the partnership to be adapted according to changing circumstances and new realities.
- 3 **Time and space for reflecting on the process and results of the previous project** was the key for making best use of learning and made it possible to wait until the organisation was ready to proceed when financial times were tough.
- 4 **Openness for new ideas allows for innovations.** Taking learning seriously, and having USAID as new partner, prevented other partners becoming trapped, particularly from the third step.

Emphasise the development and maintenance of the relationship

Why?

Focusing on the development of relationships supports confidence in each other and the partnering process. This is particularly vital for an organisation's first partnering experience. More confidence in the relationship makes project processes smoother the second time around, because each partner recognises the potential for mutual benefit. The result is a strong relationship in which partners can invest during a second collaboration.

How?

- Ensure formal and informal relationship mechanisms are in place and that they reinforce one another. Formal mechanisms are rules for minimising risks. They include partnering agreements, reporting mechanisms, committees at various levels and joint decision-making procedures. Informal mechanisms such as equal footing, joint field visits, plus communication and spaces for dialogue help build trust and confidence in the formal mechanisms.
- If possible, use the same team of committed individuals for repeated collaborations to ensure knowledge and trust between individuals is not lost, and is retained as a living memory for project personnel.
- Don't abandon established relationships after the end of the project. Instead, maintain informal communication.

Bilateral development agencies can support the relationship building by:

- Facilitating interactions from a neutral standpoint
- Introducing formal mechanisms that stimulate inter-partner accountability, but also
- Dedicating time and resources towards developing the relationship rather than focusing only on delivering the results on time.

Maintaining flexibility

Why?

Projects cannot be replicated identically. Changing contexts and preferences call for flexibility in the process of repeating collaborations and in redesigning the new project according to new circumstances. For example, the partnership projects in Nariño operated in an unstable context and conflicts were more common in some areas than others. Distinct target populations may respond differently to the project depending on their cultural, social or economic context. Flexibility allows for activities and expectations to be adjusted accordingly.

How?

- Stimulate active and continuous communication between partners and across various levels of the partnership (e.g. strategic level and execution level)
- Encourage willingness and a flexible approach that can be adjusted depending on circumstances
- Build adjustable time frames for different activities, particularly those that might become time-intensive based on ongoing experience
- Ensure commitment and ownership of risks as well as success

Bilateral development agencies can support flexibility by:

- Building flexibility into their approach towards partnership
- Being well informed about the progress of the partnership so they can react quickly to issues in the collaboration and in the context.

*“Many of these donors are active in other countries, in other continents where they have done things that can be adapted here. Although they also need to understand that not everything is simple and not everything can just be applied here”
(Interview ENA, 2013)*

Ensuring time and spaces for learning

Why?

Repeated collaboration requires a transfer of learning from preceding projects. Partners need to learn which factors contributed to the project's success and why, and opportunities for improvement need to be identified and applied. Moreover, the link between consecutive collaborations is enhanced when past experiences are internalised and generate the realisation of a need for repeated collaboration. The generation of knowledge in this regard asks partners to invest in the time and design spaces for interaction and sharing of learning.

How?

- Design joint evaluations that go beyond the monitoring of immediate result indicators. Rather, include discussions about the evolution of the collaboration and its effects, analysing what has changed, why and how
- Allow space to consider the impact that has been sustained even after the conclusion of the project
- Provide space and time for each organisation to reflect, but keep them in contact to stimulate the sharing of learning that comes from their reflection

Bilateral development agencies can facilitate the creation of spaces for learning by:

- Facilitating and stimulating regular joint learning sessions
- Providing regular feedback
- Assigning resources for conducting evaluation studies after the conclusion of the project. Project partners should be closely involved in the design of evaluations
- Supporting the internal and external communication of results and outcomes

Being open to new ideas

Why?

When partners merely copy what has been done previously, repeated collaborations face the disadvantages of lock-in situations. Bringing in new ideas through new partners, advice or training can infuse the partnership with an innovative character. Redesign can be stimulated by the requirements or preferences of a new partner. Partners can be motivated to improve efficiencies, or encouraged to apply frameworks in new contexts, or prompted to take on new challenges that ultimately increase confidence in organisational capabilities.

How?

- Search for advice or training from external professionals who can help to show the value of the chosen approach in comparison with other (non-) partnering approaches
- Consider potential new partners as more than merely providers of financial capital
- Be open to potential partners that can contribute new perspectives or be responsible for activities that support the partnership as a whole
- Be open to new project activities that may motivate new partners to join. Therefore, be more innovative rather than opportunistic in pursuit of scaling potential.

Bilateral development agencies can bring in new ideas by:

- Considering partner's previous experience before reshaping projects to fit their own policy
- Introducing their own objectives that can motivate partners to devise new opportunities and approaches
- Stimulating exchange events so partners can learn from each other's experiences

"I think that the donor can always bring new blood, new ideas and support that can contribute to the project, new interests that can be discussed and talked over"
(Interview ENA 2013)



Following the road to successful replication through repeated collaboration

When CSDPs achieve their objectives and exceed expectations, partners are convinced of the potential of their CSDP and are motivated to dedicate further resources to similar approaches for scaling up development efforts. The eagerness to replicate projects targeting different regions or communities often drives organisations to consider repeated collaborations with the same partners. However, the focus is usually placed on imitating project-specific components and activities that might be unsuitable for changed circumstances, community contexts or partner preferences. Anyone making a decision to engage in a repeated collaboration – even though it might be beneficial – is advised to consider the six-step process for repeated collaboration, and to establish the facilitators listed below to get the advantages of a project-based approach:

- **Development and maintenance of the relationship**
- **Maintain flexibility**
- **Time and spaces for transfer of learning**
- **Openness for new ideas**

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Postal address

Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

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For more information please visit:

www.rsm.nl/prc

The Partnerships Resource Centre

Postal address

P.O. Box 1738
3000 DR Rotterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. +31 10 408 1126
Email prc@rsm.nl

Visiting address

Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA Rotterdam,
The Netherlands



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ERASMUS UNIVERSITY



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