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Level 1 Partnership Broker Training organized by DFAT under SDIP

Duration: 18-21 February, 2014

Venue: Gorman House Art Centre, Canberra, Australia

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Background

Partnership Brokers Training (PBT) is run by the Partnership Brokers Association (established as a not-for-profit company in January 2012). This training was funded by DFAT specifically for SDIP participants. We all attended the Level 1 (PBT) which is the first stage of this training.

L1 PBT course is an intensive face-to-face training designed to deepen understanding of the changing nature of the process management role during a partnership cycle and explore essential brokering skills. PBT Level 1 training is highly interactive and experiential in nature in order to optimise learning, and involves plenary sessions, tutor groups with ongoing role plays and different types of working groups. It also draws extensively on participants' own experiences of partnership work. The main aim of this training is to make the participants au courante with the world of partnership management and brokering skills, facilitation of partnership agreements, using various partnership brokering tools for fostering effective partnerships and polishing the hidden brokering skills of participants in terms of their role-internal brokering and external brokering.

Participants

In total, 19 participants attended this workshop hailing from DFAT (Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), CSIRO (Common Wealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization), ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research), ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), CUTS International, ICEWaRM (International Centre for Excellence for Water Resource Management), and IOD PARC. The lead trainer was one of the best partnership brokers in Australia, Ms Julie Mundy and Ms Yeshe Smith was the co-trainer.

Day 1

- The agenda of day 1 was divided into 4 sessions which were intended to develop a common understanding on partnerships, partnering cycle and partnership brokers.
- The three core principles of partnerships namely equity, transparency and mutual benefit were highlighted.
- The common challenges faced by partners and brokers, the components of partnering cycle, and how to negotiate effectively were discussed in various sessions through interactive and innovative exercises.
- In case of different organizations who would like to partner for a common purpose but are clueless on how to do so, partnership brokers can facilitate meetings of interested parties.
- To understand the nitty-gritty attached to it, we did a role play exercise to understand the diverse perspectives of various sectors that come together to form a partnership.

- What we learned from this exercise was that partnership works well when each sector plays its appropriate part and contributes from core competencies and strengths. Also, partnership is not always the means for a successful project.
 - As partnership brokers we have to understand and analyse how the existing partnership is going and whether such partnership should have been undertaken at the very first place.
 - Day 1 also aimed to position our roles in our organization as partnership brokers; whether internal broker or external broker and also if the role is reactive or proactive. Accordingly, three of us placed ourselves as reactive internal brokers.
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Day 2

- To develop understanding on the intricacies of the roles of partnership brokers as facilitators, Day 2 focussed on role plays and facilitating workshops.
 - Each participant had to facilitate a session on brokering with partners from diverse sectors and also had to play different roles of partners as well as that of observer.
 - The sessions of facilitation ranged right from the introduction of partners, agreeing objectives, mapping resource contribution of each partner, addressing underlying issues and finally to reaching agreement.
 - This was the most interactive and highly informative session of the entire 4 day workshop as we learned how difficult but exciting is the task of partnership brokers.
 - After each session we had a review of what went well and what went wrong and how it could have improved. We all received constructive criticisms from our fellow participants which was an added benefit for enhancing our partnership skills.
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Day 3

- The discussions on Day 3 were revolving around how to prepare a good partnering agreement. The participants were asked to give review and reflections on a model partnership agreement and comment in what way it was a good/poor agreement.
 - The broker's role in shaping a good partnership agreement was also covered. Through café discussions and carousel process, participants were asked to come up with suggestions for good governance, deepening partnering engagement, building good communication and capacity building of partners.
 - The importance of these issues, role of brokers in addressing these issues and success indicators for each was presented by each group.
 - Planning a partnership review meeting was another highlight of Day 3. Assuming their respective roles in the role play scenario, participants in working groups designed a review meeting considering key points like the aim of review, venue, tools and processes to be used and came up with a proposal that was presented.
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Day 4

- Day 4 was exclusively meant for reflections on key skills for partnership brokers.
- Using Belbin questionnaire participants analysed themselves as what kind of partnership brokers are they.
- Among the eight team roles of innovator, shaper, implementer, coordinator, resource mobiliser, team worker, monitor and evaluator and completer participants analysed their roles

and how it can contribute as partnership brokers. The analysis also scaled and identified the roles which require improvement at personal level.

- The participants also mapped their journey as brokers visioning our current role and where do we stand after attending the workshop and how can it be taken in the future. The final session was on good partnership principles and at the end of the day, participants were asked to give feedback on the 4 day workshop and how it will help them in future.
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Highlights

- The highlight of the 4 day workshop was that partnership brokering is an art as well as science. It is basically about human relationships- understanding each other ensuring transparency and accountability.
 - Though it was an intense 4 day workshop, all the sessions were carefully designed with innovative and interactive exercises. The role plays, games, mapping and facilitation exercises helped to sharpen our acumen and skills as partnership broker. Some of the participants were very much experienced and shared their stories of challenges which were a learning experience for new comers in the field. It also served as a means to meet all the SDIP partners and aided some informal interactions.
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Low lights

- At least a few exercises would have focussed on taking SDIP as model; in that case it would have helped a better understanding among partners.
 - The workshop outlined the science of brokering, but becoming a successful broker is more an art.
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Key Words

Partnership, Partnership Brokering, Facilitation, Role Plays
