



Partnership Policy

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable

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Partnership Policy

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable

Ever since the start of Help a Child as an organization it has had a strong belief in the power of its implementing partners. At a time when other Dutch NGO's sent expats to the field, Help a Child supported local partner organizations in their work to help children in need. A lot of things have changed since 1968, but not the conviction that together we are strong and that we need each other to bring lasting change in the lives of children and their families. This policy describes how Help a Child wants to form its relationship with its implementing partners.

History

From the start of its work Help a Child worked with local partners that had a lot of freedom and responsibility in implementing their projects. For many years this worked well with local partners in the role of implementers and Help a Child monitoring that implementation from a distance and at the same time building the capacity of its local partners.

As Help a Child chose to also apply for institutional funds the compliance and quality requirements increased. Also the nature of institutional funding changed as decision making from donors moved from North to South, whereas international NGO's were still required to guarantee compliance and quality. To respond to this shift Help a Child decided to decentralize and start country offices. This decentralization asks for a renewed partnership understanding.

1. What Help a Child commits to in a partnership

Role of local implementing partners: Help a Child recognizes the added value of local partner organizations. Local partners provide specific expertise and context knowledge, that Help a Child does not have itself. Local partners are important for the sustainability of achievements, for legitimacy of specific actions, for efficiency and for access to insecure areas.

Role of Help a Child towards local partners: One obvious role of Help a Child as a donor is that through the funds allocated by Help a Child to the local partner, the partner can implement child centered projects with impact on communities and children. Secondly, Help a Child believes that whereas local organizations will keep playing their role in the long run, Help a Child by default exits the country in time when our added value is no more there.



Help a Child temporarily has added value to build the capacity of a local partner and access institutional funding streams that are not yet accessible for a local partner alone.

More about Help a Child roles towards implementing partners is explained in paragraph 4; 'Help a Child's roles in a partnership'.

Mutual relationship and reciprocity: Help a Child aims for strategic, longer term partnerships with local and national NGOs in each program area. Help a Child knows from experience that Help a Child can also learn from the technical expertise and context knowledge of the partner organizations and that capacity development is not a one way process.

Help a Child respects the partners' mandate, obligations and autonomy; and recognize their constraints and commitments. Mutual accountability and transparency between Help a Child and partners are important quality aspects for partnerships. Help a Child strives not to undermine the local capacity of the partner.

Partner capacity building: Capacity development of local partners is an important focus for Help a Child. Help a Child does not partner only with strong and capable partners, but Help a Child invests in motivated and relevant partners also when their capacities are still limited.

2. What Help a Child is expecting in a partnership

A partnership can be defined at different levels. At the highest level in our context it means that two or more actors combine their efforts to accomplish goals together. This rather wide definition can still mean different things in different circumstances. So it is important to answer the question what a partnership means, or more precise; what does it mean to be a implementing partner of Help a Child? This question can be answered on different levels, such as:

- Identity and values
- Complementary mission, vision and strategies
- Quality & Compliance

IDENTITY AN VALUES

Help a Child supports children and families in need, because we follow Jesus Christ, who showed us God's love for mankind. The Bible teaches us to pass on God's love, to be merciful, to bring justice, to reconcile and to be good stewards. These Christian principles inspire us to give our best in all circumstances. Our corporate values are:

We value every child

We believe that every child is a unique gift from God, made in His image. We include all children, no matter their background, religion or abilities.

We belief in the strength of the people we help

We encourage children, youth and adults to identify and use their God given abilities. We empower community structures and strengthen local resources.



We are faithful

We are trustworthy and accountable to the ones we support and the ones supporting us. We use our resources wisely, effectively and efficiently.

We embrace partnership

We work together in relationships with mutual trust and respect. We are loyal and honest and expect the same from our partners.

We learn and adjust

We are eager to learn and open-minded. We appreciate feedback and we learn from our mistakes.

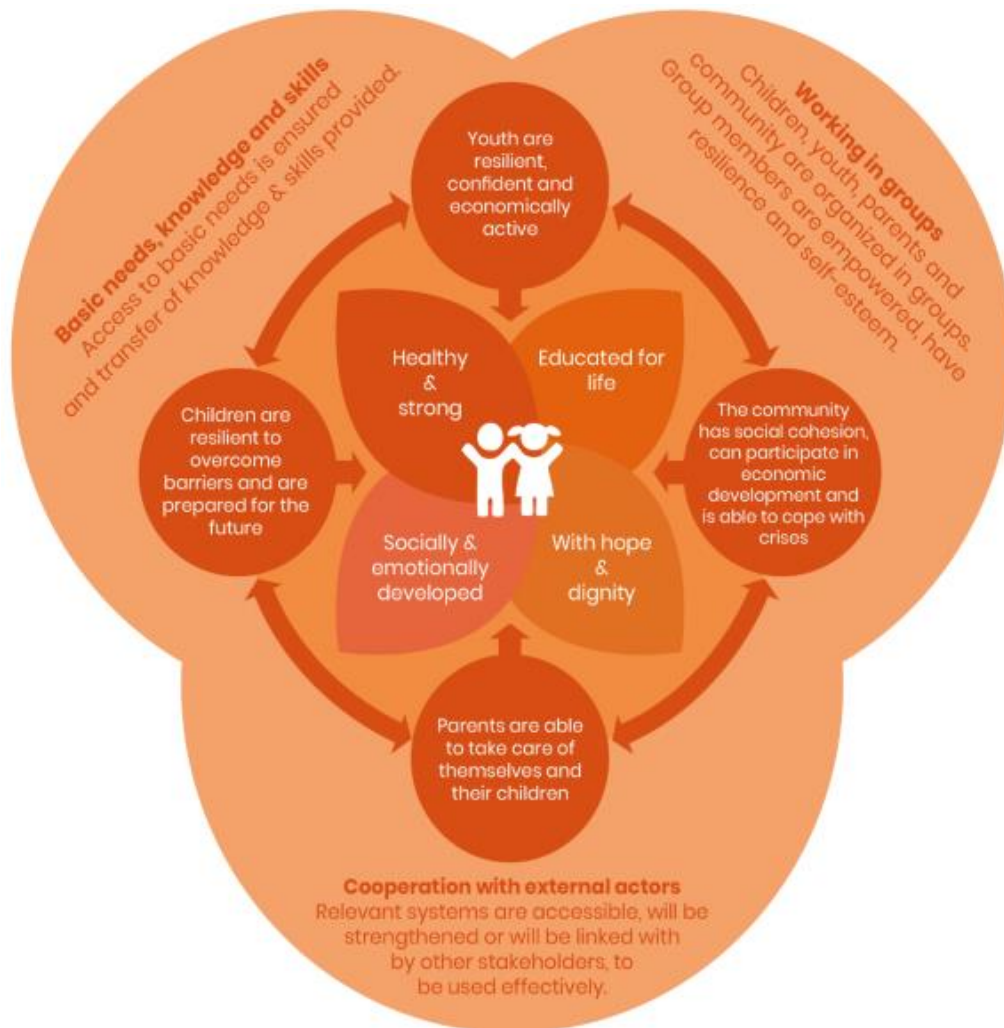
Help a Child wants to work with partners who recognize and embrace this identity and these values. We feel it makes a difference if you do the work together based on shared values. Next to these organizational values we have also formulated specific requirements for partners related to quality, integrity, and accountability. These criteria are mentioned in the chapter on quality.

COMPLEMENTARY MISSION, VISION AND STRATEGIES

Help a Child's vision is for every child – regardless of their social, political, religious, ethnic or economic background – to have a life in dignity, with love and with a promising future. And our mission is for Help a Child provides a future for children in need, their family and their entire community.

We have translated this mission and vision in a theory of change (ToC) that describes the way we want to achieve this mission. We expect our partners to subscribe to this theory of change as they design their programs and projects.





QUALITY & COMPLIANCE

We expect our partners to deliver quality work and that they comply with international standards like the core humanitarian standards (CHS). As much as possible we support our partners to build their capacity to deliver quality projects. In the partner selection criteria paragraph we elaborate on our expectations in this regard.

3. Different types of implementing partners

Help a Child distinguishes two different types of partners:

- The so called strategic implementing partners that implement long term community and child focused projects in development and disaster response. We expect from our strategic implementing partners that they are committed to Help a Child's biblical norms and values (as mentioned in paragraph 2).
- Technical or specialist partners that complement the work of our strategic implementing partners. This type of partner needs to respect our biblical norms and values but do not necessarily commit to them explicitly.
- New types of partnerships such as partners like CBOs, private sector and government actors.

4. Help a Child's roles in a partnership

In our partnership with our local implementing partner organizations Help a Child plays four roles:

1. Guardians of our resources

First of all we are the guardians of the resources that our own constituency entrusts us with. They give us money in order for us to help children and families in need. It is our duty to make sure that this money is used effectively and efficiently in order to have impact.

Characteristics of this role are:

- Own funding, so we can make our own choices and our own directions. In order to do that we coordinate our work locally.
- Long term multiple year programs in which Help a Child and the partner organization work together intensively. As much as possible we strive towards an equal partnership based on reciprocity.
- Program design and implementation is in line with our Theory of Change. This requires a clear understanding of our philosophy, our way of working and our quality requirements and this also implies space and need for capacity building.

2. Local fundraiser

The second role that we play is the role of local fundraiser. This means that we are raising funds from donors that are locally available but that don't give grants (yet) to local NGOs. We use our private funding as a multiplier to acquire additional funding which enables us to reach more children and families in need and to increase our impact. We do that temporarily as long as international donors are not willing to work directly with local NGOs. In that sense we give partners (indirect) access to funds that are not within their reach. In order to do play this role well we need to fulfil some additional requirements:

- In order to be an interesting partner for donors and possible consortium members we need to be visibly present (e.g. physical office and active participation in networks).
- In order to be an interesting partner for donors and possible consortium members we need to bring very clear added value. We choose to have this added value by coordinating the work of partners on ECD, Child Protection and Youth and Work and to implement projects directly together with local partner organizations in disaster response contexts or specific projects in development (where the context asks for such an approach).
- We play the applicant role towards donors, our partners play the sub grantee role. Ideally the sub grantees in this role are the same partners that we work with in the self-funded programs, but that is not always possible. Also here there is sometimes the need to add different (technical) sub grantees to be successful.
- Help a Child explicitly does not want to be a competitor of our local partners in their quest for institutional funding. This means have a temporary role to play and that during presence of Help a Child in country our proposals will be drafted as much as



possible together with our local implementing partners so that they develop a strong track record and capacity to access institutional funding without support of Help a Child in the long run.

3. Adding expertise

The third role that we play is to role of adding specific expertise and value on Help a Child's core expertise areas to our partners' projects. These specific expertise areas are Early Childhood Development (ECD), Youth & Work and Child Protection.

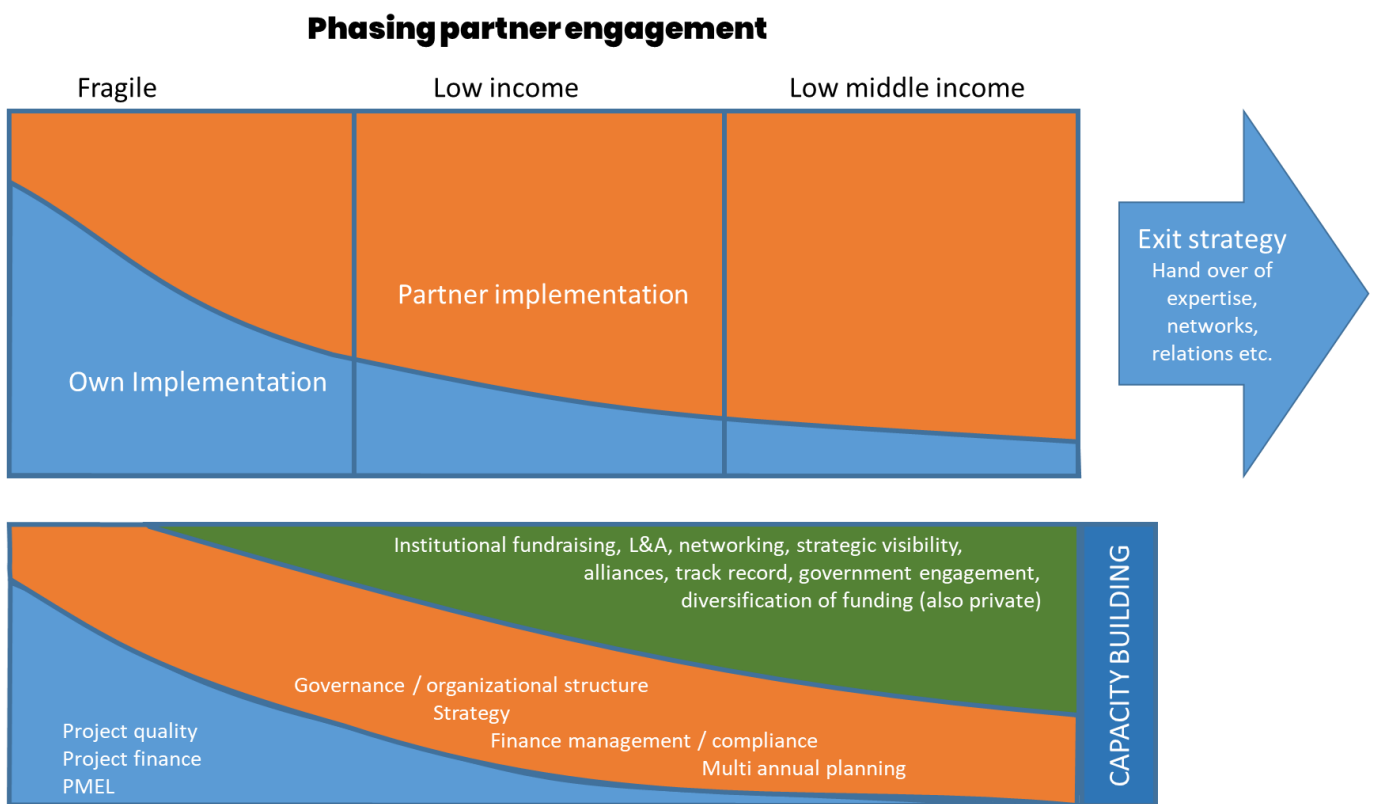
4. Building capacity

The fourth role that we play is the role of building capacity of implementing partners. Help a Child plays an important role towards implementing partners to lift them up to the high quality and compliance of institutional donors and prepare them for high quality project implementation and local fundraising without support of Help a Child. Help a Child therefore puts efforts in building capacity of its local implementing partners, as explained in paragraph 5 below. The type of capacity building depends on the context and strengths of the local implementing partner.



5. Help a Child’s long term vision on partnerships

Having a Help a Child local presence is not a goal in itself. We want to be in a country as long as our presence has an added value. Our role as local fundraiser will be played temporarily only until international donors do entrust their funds directly to local NGO’s. Similarly there may come a time that our investments in a specific country do not contribute enough anymore in reaching our mission to provide a future for children in need, their family and their entire community compared to making these investments in another country that has greater needs. In other words: our involvement in a specific country can come to an end. Just as we see a life cycle in a project with specific phases we also see a life cycle in our presence in a country and our interaction with our local partner organizations. The picture below tries that exit strategy and phasing approach.



As a country develops and as a local partner organization develops we see a shifting role for ourselves both in implementation of programs and capacity building needs.

6. Partner selection

Because of the sensitive nature of working in a difficult environment, the selection of potential implementing partners is of great importance. Minimum criteria has to be met, in order to secure a possible fruitful working relationship. Careful assessment of these criteria is important, in order avoid unnecessary risks or locate improvement areas, which can be worked on.

In our Disaster Response policy and the CCCD program manual the selection process and selection criteria of strategic implementing partnerships is explained in more detail.

Help a Child has developed a so called Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool that assesses the capacity of a local partner organization to implement projects. We expect potential strategic implementing partners to implement a pilot project for at least half a year to experience an actual working relationship before we officially accept a new strategic implementing partner.

Furthermore a lot of the practical partnership expectations are written down in a partnership agreement (Memorandum of Collaboration - MoC), and annual agreements (Annual Project contracts). These can be found in the annexes to this partnership policy.

7. Quality

To ensure strategic implementing partners deliver good quality projects, partners will be monitored continuously and audited by Help a Child at least every three years. The processes for Monitoring & Audits are described in the Monitoring & Audits policy of Help a Child (in development).

If during monitoring, audit or other forms of assessment is revealed that the quality of implementing partners is not strong enough or shows serious deficiencies the partnership agreement can be terminated. This is also explained in the partner contracts (see annexes).

Help a Child expects all strategic implementing partners to adhere to quality criteria embraced by Help a Child on integrity, accountability and delivering high quality projects to beneficiaries. Help a Child is amongst others a member of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and Keeping Children Safe (Child Safeguarding). The specific quality criteria are elaborated upon in the Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC – annex) to this policy.

ANNEXES

There is a lot of detailed information available that further guides the relationship between Help a Child and its partner organizations. The main documents are listed here.

- Monitoring & Audits policy
- Template for an Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC)
- Template for an Annual Project contract
- Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA)
- Template Teaming Agreement for IF proposals
- CCCD program manual
- Disaster Response policy

