



## Corporate-NGO Partnerships Seminar: 10 Nov 09 at The RSA, London

What is happening in the partnerships between businesses and NGOs?

What are the key developments in the landscape and what drives these developments?

And what will define or characterize the 'winning' partnerships over the next 3-5 years or so?

This charity focused seminar included senior participants from AMREF, Barnardos, BLISS, Care International, Christian Aid, Comic Relief, Marie Curie, NSPCC, Scope, Global Action Plan and UNICEF.

Manny Amadi (CEO, C&E Advisory), Oonagh Turnbull (Head of CSR at Boots) and Nick Wright (EMEA Managing Director, Corporate responsibility and Community Affairs at UBS), drew on their expertise and market knowledge to compare notes with participants and give insight into partnerships from the corporate point of view.

The highly informed discussion covered a wide range of partnership-related topics and anticipated the features that will define the leading partnerships of the next few years.

**Headlines** from the session included the following points:

1. The credit crunch, recession, pressure on public sector finances etc, will have a strong impact on the corporate-NGO agenda over the next few years, including:
  - Further pressure on businesses to engage on socio-economic issues, working in partnership with NGOs and other sectors to address a range of issues.
  - A likely increase in the partnerships and collaborations across and within sectors as a means of achieving 'greater than the sum of the parts' solutions.
  - Greater emphasis on delivering maximum value from partnerships and demonstrating *impact*.
2. The trend towards *strategic*, integrated and multi-annual partnerships will intensify.
3. Businesses will continue to face a tension between the (rational) growth in business benefit / business competency-led partnerships, and the need for the more emotional (feel good) philanthropic partnerships which are more likely to resonate with employees.
4. Most businesses are likely to manage this tension via a 'twin-track' approach.

5. Businesses and NGOs need to work through the implications and demands of strategic, integrated partnerships, including:

- The need for charity and NGO leaders, service and policy colleagues to 'get' the potential value role of business partnerships to help fulfill NGO missions.
- The need for businesses to work harder to ensure a greater balance in the power dynamic between partners – properly understanding the tangible and intangible value that NGOs bring.
- The challenges of relationship management and the important role of 'relationship leads' in engaging across functions within their organization to ensure integrated thinking and delivery.
- The varying advantages and disadvantages inherent in partnerships for small and large NGOs.

In what was, by common consent, considered an open and highly stimulating session, participants were particularly struck by the similarity of challenges and opportunities for partnerships across the corporate and NGO sectors as well as within different sections of the NGO sector.