

Final Evaluation Report

Thematic Evaluation of Save the Children Norway's Cooperation with Partners

Zimbabwe Case Study

Executive Summary

Save the Children Norway's (SCN) approach to partnership in Zimbabwe offers much of value, which should be noted and retained for the future.

Understanding of Partnership

Both SCN staff and its partners in Zimbabwe have had a similar understanding of what partnership means: working towards common goals, with each partner bringing its specific contribution in a spirit of mutual respect. However, local partners tend to see SCN principally as a donor, whereas SCN emphasises other aspects of partnership. But SCN was praised for being a 'true partner', always ready to go the extra mile to promote child rights. The spirit in which SCN approached partnership is in line with its rhetoric. Also appreciated was the continuity of SCN's support and its flexibility to adapt.

Partner Selection

SCN has had a mixed portfolio of partners – the largest group being NGOs, a substantial amount of work with governmental (at both national and district levels) and some direct work with children's groups. What has been commendable is the creativity shown in identifying partners, which could be used to help leverage SCN's broader objectives (e.g. a range of governmental departments, local districts) and also to seek out more innovative approaches. There is little evidence of major opportunities missed, but SC needs to continuously and thoroughly scan the horizon for new and creative possibilities.

Proposal Development

Partners appreciate SCN's approach to proposals for not being too irksome or bureaucratic. However, the down side of this is that the proposal documents are short on problem analysis, an underlying theory of change, and indicators for changes. Also, the one year time frame for project funding was widely seen as too short. Another area of concern is that SCN has sometimes given the partner a total budget amount (e.g. \$50,000) and then asked them to tailor their planned activities into the available funds.

Following Up with Partners

SCN has had a policy of official quarterly meetings with partners, which was felt to be appropriate. Partners did not express the view that SCN was too intrusive, even when there was the most intensive contact (almost daily in some instances). The manner in which SCN staff treated partners was described as accompaniment: respectful, supportive and not coming across as 'Big Brother'. Partners generally feel that SCN's systems and procedures have been relatively 'light touch' and reasonable.

Financial Accountability

Generally the sense was that SCN has taken this seriously and recognises the need to account for every cent. However, the SCN staff that follow up on partner accounts have not done so much recently, and this was criticised in a recent audit as leaving SC possibly vulnerable. This was explained in terms of the extra work relating to the unification process and more regular visiting would be resumed in the next quarter.

Capacity Building

While capacity building has been put at centre stage by SCN, in practice it has not always been as thorough and systematic as it might have been. There are some

significant areas of success (particularly on programme capacity building), but there are also gaps (particularly on organisational capacity building) and the approach taken could have been more systematic and focussed on organisations as well as programmes. The process of partner capacity assessment has been limited and could have been carried out in a more methodical and robust manner. Nevertheless, there are some clear areas where SCN has made a positive difference. Examples here lie in the realm of promoting SCN's core areas of programmatic interest – child rights programming, related technical areas and child participation. Capacity building has also been stronger on compliance issues – for example, on financial management in line with SCN's norms and regulations. Where capacity building has been less strong is around more generic organisational development issues, such as human resource management, governance, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Both internally and externally, SCN's approach to monitoring and evaluation is seen as a key area in need of strengthening. While there is follow up on completed activities (e.g. workshops held, number of children attending, staff trained etc.), there is much less on the actual changes to the lives of children or the development of capacity of partners. Efforts are now being made to address this through the global outcome indicators.

Exit Strategies and Sustainability

There has generally been little discussion of how partnerships will end at the inception period, and nor is there much planning for institutional sustainability. In practice, what has happened is that partners have received a warning of 6-12 months and some planning for what will happen in the post partnership period to sustain project outputs.

Changes in the Capacity of Partners

At the most fundamental level, partners have valued the continued and relatively flexible financial support, which has helped them to continue and consolidate themselves.

Changes in capacity can be seen in three main spheres:

- 1) To Be:** With its strong emphasis on child rights, partnership with SCN has influenced the identity, mission and values of partner organisations. It has played a key role in creating and demonstrating the viability of child led organisations. Where SCN has had less impact is in terms of the general capacity development of its partners, apart from financial accountability.
- 2) To Do:** SCN has enhanced different aspects of child rights programming. For example, it has helped partners develop skills in psycho-social support.
- 3) To Relate:** SCN's partner portfolio, with its combination of governmental and non governmental partners, meant that it could facilitate access for NGOs that they might otherwise have found hard to find; the Partners' Forum was particularly beneficial.

Contribution to Overall Capacity to Address Child Rights

While the primary focus of this evaluation was on the partnership approach, the impression of the evaluators was that SCN had brought about some significant benefits for children, including:

- Reporting against the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) progressed.
- Some increases in budget allocations to health and education.
- Increased percentage of children reaching a desirable reading level.
- School Development Councils are improving school governance.
- The Victim Friendly Courts system has been extended across the country.

- Follow up on hundreds of child abuse cases and strengthened reporting.
- Child led groups were supported and strengthened, which can be seen as both a benefit in itself (i.e. participating children see it as helpful in their own development and future prospects) as well as delivering benefits to others.

Evaluation Recommendations

- a) That the best of SCN Zimbabwe's partnership approach should be incorporated and reinforced within the SCI partnership approach and policy as it emerges.
- b) SC's work should predominantly be with partners, unless absolutely necessary to implement directly.
- c) Keep as much decision making authority and room for manoeuvre at country programme level as possible to enable more scope for negotiation with partners.
- d) Retain a balanced portfolio, which loosely sets out areas of work, types of partners and geographic areas, but articulate the best approach more clearly.
- e) Retain the emphasis on government (local and regional) as well as NGOs.
- f) The experience of supporting child led groups and meaningful child participation should be retained and strengthened. Work with child led groups can be through intermediary partners rather than by SCN staff directly.
- g) Continuously explore other possibilities of partners with whom to work.
- h) The process of assessing partners should be systematically carried out against agreed criteria and documented.
- i) In selecting partners, the degree of passion and commitment for child rights should be a key criterion.
- j) Continue the proactive approach to identifying partners, as well as reacting to proposals received.
- k) Partnerships should have a longer time frame than is currently the case, such as at least three years for non-emergency work, as far as resources permit.
- l) Retain the openness and flexibility that is so valued by partners.
- m) Review partnerships regularly and be prepared to terminate those that are not working and lack the potential to recover.
- n) Project proposals and subsequent activities should consider and strengthen the overall capacity of partners, not just focus on the child rights aspects of the project to be implemented.
- o) Project proposals should include more in-depth problem assessment and how the proposed activities will lead to solutions (theory of change), together with appropriate indicators.
- p) The proposal and budgeting processes should be more closely linked.
- q) Financial transfers should be carried out as quickly as possible while ensuring proper accountability.
- r) Capacity building should address overall organisational capacity needs, be based on a systematic process of assessment, and involve a variety of interventions.
- s) Monitoring and evaluation needs to be strengthened, addressing changes for children and organisational capacity, as well as activities completed.
- t) Exit strategies and plans for sustainability need to be discussed and implemented at an earlier stage.
- u) Reconstitute the Partners' Forums.
- v) Build on and strengthen staff skills to work with partners in a listening and respectful manner.
- w) Strengthen documentation and archiving.
- x) Enable partners to feed into new SC policies, particularly those affecting partnership.

Contents

Executive Summary	i
Abbreviations	v
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background to Evaluation	1
1.2 Terms of Reference and Summary	1
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Constraints of Evaluation	3
1.5 Structure of Report	3
2. Programme Description	3
2.1 Historical Development	3
2.2 Context	4
2.3 Summary of Strategy	4
2.4 Partner Policy and Strategy	5
2.5 Number and Type of Partners	5
2.6 SCN Structure and Staffing	6
3. Relationship between SCN and Partners	7
3.1 Conceptual Issues – Understanding of Partnership	7
3.2 Characteristics of SCN's Partnership Approach in Partnership	8
3.3 Selection of Partners	8
3.4 Development of Proposals	10
3.5 Visits, Communication, Accompaniment	11
3.6 SCN Systems and Procedures	12
3.7 Capacity Building	13
3.8 Child Participation and Child Led Groups	14
3.9 Monitoring and Evaluation	15
3.10 Exit Strategies and Sustainability	16
3.11 Horizontal Partnerships	16
4. Changes in Capacity and Behaviour of Partners	17
4.1 To Be – Identity and Internal Functioning	17
4.2 To Do – Programming	18
4.3 To Relate – Linkages with Others	18
5. Contribution to Overall Capacity to Address Child Rights	19
6. Good Practices	20
7. Implications of Changes within Save the Children	21
8. Recommendations	23
Appendix A - Terms of Reference	26
Appendix B – Key Documents	34
Appendix C - Itinerary for Evaluation	35
Appendix D - Map	40

Abbreviations

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	Department for International Development
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
NANGO	National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NORAD	The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPAC	National Programme of Action for Children
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
RDC	Rural District Council
SCI	Save the Children International
SCN	Save the Children Norway
SCUK	Save the Children United Kingdom
SDC	School Development Council
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP	Unified Presence
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
ZAPP	Zimbabwe AIDS Prevention Project
ZNCWC	Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Evaluation

This evaluation of Save the Children Norway's (SCN's) approach to cooperating with partners comes more than 10 years after this became the established SCN way of working. In the late 1990s, the last remaining direct implementation (sometimes known as 'self implementation') projects were phased out. An evaluation of SCN's global partnership approach was carried out by INTRAC in 2001, so another external review of this key aspect of SCN's way of working is timely.

But this evaluation is also important as Save the Children goes through a major organisational transformation – from each SC managing its own programme in a given country, to a Unified Presence (UP – that is a single SC presence in a country managed by one SC member such as SCN), towards a single presence managed by Save the Children International (SCI). In this process, the wish would clearly be that the positive aspects of what has been the experience to date in partnership are not lost, while the negative aspects that could be improved are in fact addressed.

This Zimbabwe report is just one of four case studies being carried out as part of this evaluation – the other countries being Mozambique, Nepal and Nicaragua¹. These countries each have a report like this, and then there is also a global report bringing all these experiences together, synthesising the key learning points.

1.2 Terms of Reference and Summary

The main purpose of this evaluation as expressed in the Terms of Reference (ToR) – is to provide an insight into SCN's work with partners, build learning and ensure accountability by:

1. Providing evidence of impact (positive and negative, intended or unintended outcome/impact) of SCN's cooperation with partners in five different countries; to what extent and how a) partners have been strengthened as providers of and advocators for children's rights, and b) how SCN through partner cooperation has added value to the overall capacity of key actors in the society where we work to address and fulfil children's rights.
2. Provide an oversight of different implementation models and identify and document good practices in cooperating with partners, both government and civil society, appropriate to the aim of the partnership and capacity building of the partner. This assessment should also provide evidence of enabling versus obstructing factors in different contexts and discuss how this could be taken into account when setting the objective for partnerships and selecting partners and modalities.
3. Contribute to increased knowledge and understanding by bringing the organisation up to date on research/evaluation findings on partner cooperation (short state of the art report) and bring insight into and awareness of different and sometimes multiple objectives in partner cooperation.
4. Based on the above, provide input to the formation of future partnership cooperation in SCN supported programmes and SCI.

¹ In addition, a parallel but separate evaluation is being carried out in Ethiopia, which will also feed into the overall learning.

The full ToR is shown in **Appendix A**. The first, second and fourth objectives are covered in this report with respect to Zimbabwe. The third has already been addressed by a separate paper on current thinking on partnership more widely, which is incorporated in a summarised form into the global report.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation initially outlined in the ToR issued by SCN, was developed by INTRAC through its Inception Report, which was then revised in the light of comments made by SCN staff and other stakeholders. The key aspects of the methodology can be summarised as follows:

- There were initial discussions in with SCN in Norway for the whole evaluation, and within the evaluation team, prior to this particular case study.
- Literature review (see **Appendix B**).
- A breakdown of all the partners by different categories (partner type, length of partnership, thematic area, size of grant, geographical location) was carried out before the visit to Zimbabwe. This was used to ensure that the sample of partners to be visited was representative across the different categories.
- For the Zimbabwe field trip (see **Appendix C** for itinerary), there was an initial workshop with SCN staff and partners to discuss methodology. As this was the 'pilot' case study, there were two international as well as one local consultant involved and the Inception Report was revised in the light of this experience.
- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a sample of partner organisations including: 4 CSOs who had been partners of SCN (and are now partners of SC-Zimbabwe), 2 previous SCN NGO partners (now ended), 4 Central Government partners, 4 Regional Government partners, 1 University partner and 2 partners/former partners of SCUK.
- 5 interviews with SC staff (with a knowledge of SCN's approach to partnership at different levels) – some individual, most group interviews.
- Interviews with other key informants and stakeholders (e.g. Norwegian Embassy, UNICEF).
- For all the above interviews, protocols were developed for each category of respondent to guide the discussion and ensure that the approaches adopted and information received by the evaluators were consistent, allowing conclusions to be drawn.
- A workshop with child led groups and child participants in adult-led projects and 2 interviews with child led groups. Child participation was analysed around the project cycle, drawing on current thinking on partnership with children (e.g. Lansdown, 2010).
- Preliminary feedback meeting at end of Zimbabwe visit and discussion of the preliminary findings.
- After all the case study visits, an online questionnaire was circulated across all the countries (except Ethiopia which was doing as a separate exercise) for staff and partners who had knowledge of SCN's approach to partnership. For Zimbabwe, there were 13 responses – 8 from staff, 5 from partners (2 NGO and 3 Government). The results of these responses are shown as relevant through the rest of the report. For most of the questions, respondents were asked to 'score' SCN's approach on a scale from 1 (terrible) to 6 (excellent). The scoring tended to be generous – the lowest score for any question for Zimbabwe was an average for all respondents of 3.83 ex 6 (for 'facilitation of exchange visits'), while the highest average score was 5.67 (for 'advice and support provided through

SCN staff visits'). To interpret the figures, in relative terms, anything above 5.00 (ex 6) can be seen as particularly good, while anything below 4.80 is more questioned. This interpretation is reinforced by the discussions with informants on around the same issues.

- Interviews were also carried out (both before and after this visit) with key informants on approaches to partnership from SCI and SCUUK, SCUS, SC Canada, SC Sweden and SC Denmark Head Offices.

1.4 Constraints of Evaluation

- With the time available, only a sample of partners could be visited, although every effort was made to make this sample as representative as possible (as mentioned above).
- The emphasis of the evaluation was on the partnership process itself, and not so much on the programme implemented through that partnership, although the two are closely related, so this is hard to separate out at times.
- The programme has transitioned from SCN (and SCUUK and SCUS) to the current Unified Presence (UP), which will then become the International Programme (IP). At times, there was some confusion as to which stage was being discussed.
- Where there is a dependency on resources, partners may be inclined to emphasise the positive aspects of SCN's approach to ensure continued funding.

1.5 Structure of Report

As mentioned, this is one of four case study reports, which all in turn feed into the global report. It is thus meant to stand alone, but also be part of a broader process. The report follows the same questions as in the ToR, but in some the order is adjusted as follows:

- Programme description (brief overview of partnership in Zimbabwe – descriptive part of Objective 2)
- Relationship between SCN² and its Partners (analytical part of Objective 2).
- Changes in Capacity and Behaviour of Partners (first part of Objective 1)
- Contribution to Overall Capacity to Address Child Rights (second part of Objective 1)
- Summary and Recommendations (Objective 4).³

2. Programme Description

2.1 Historical Development

Save the Children Norway has a long history of working in Zimbabwe, having started shortly after independence. Originally the programme was carried out by direct implementation (i.e. Save the Children Norway staff working directly with local communities), but this changed in the 1990s in line with overall organisational policy to work with local partners. At that same time, there was increasingly greater emphasis put on child rights framework, within a number of defined thematic areas.

² The report refers to 'SCN' throughout as this is the emphasis of the ToR, but looking ahead, implementation will be by SC Zimbabwe.

³ Objective 3 is addressed in the separate 'State of the Art' report, but the lessons learned from this are reflected in the analysis throughout the report.

SC UK and SC US also have histories of working in Zimbabwe, although have had different areas of focus (e.g. on livelihoods and emergencies). As of 1st October 2010, the unified presence of SC Zimbabwe was created with SCN as the Managing Member and the others as Participating Members. The programme now works out of one office with one Country Director. The total budget for 2011 is \$9.99 million of which just 11% is for partner implemented work (a much smaller percentage than when SCN worked separately).

2.2 Context

Zimbabwe has suffered well-publicised problems in recent years, which have resulted in it resting at the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Index. While the first two decades after Independence saw impressive progress in economic development and improvements in education and health services, there was a rapid decline after 2000 with economic collapse and one of the highest rates of HIV prevalence in the world. This had a major impact on children, especially the poorest. The current coalition government and the dollarisation of the economy has brought a degree of stability, but for most people, costs are high and living standards remain low, and large numbers of Zimbabweans have left for other countries, such as South Africa.

NGOs in Zimbabwe were caught up in the political fallout from disputes over the land reallocation process, and have come under strong pressure at times (e.g. around elections), particularly when felt to be critical of the government. However, the worst fears about closure of local NGOs (or expulsion for foreign organisations) have not materialised, and it remains possible for local NGOs to continue operations and for foreign organisations to support them. In this context, a distinction needs to be made between the more 'political' local NGOs (such as those campaigning for political rights, or against corruption) and those such as SCN and its partners which operate in less contentious areas. It is in fact easier for international organisations like SCN to support local NGOs in Zimbabwe than in countries like Ethiopia and India, where there are special regulations for bringing in foreign funds.

While the legislative and policy framework to protect, fulfil and promote child rights in Zimbabwe is quite strong, the implementation of policies deteriorated in the past decade. Government departments lack resources and sometimes the will to follow up, and the prevailing atmosphere has meant that it is not always easy for right holders and caregivers to demand accountability from the state. Children in Zimbabwe are vulnerable to abuse in terms of violence, sexual abuse, commercial sex exploitation and economic exploitation. The once exemplary education system has been affected by recent disruptions and eroding quality of basic education. Recent droughts and crop shortfalls have led to malnutrition amongst the most vulnerable.

2.3 Summary of Strategy

The most recent strategy for the Zimbabwe programme emphasises:

- A gradual rationalisation of operational geographical areas.
- Working in eight thematic areas (child rights governance, education, emergency, child protection, HIV and AIDS, health, nutrition and livelihoods).
- Unifying the two Save the Children members then present in Zimbabwe (Norway and UK), to be managed by Oslo. This will evolve into a programme directly managed by Save the Children International (but with funding and other technical thematic inputs contributed by SC members) by the end of 2012.

- Working in partnership with local organisations, but implementing directly where local capacity is lacking, or for strategic reasons (particularly for emergencies).
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation.

2.4 Partner Policy and Strategy

Save the Children Norway Zimbabwe's partnership approach has been governed by its Guidelines for Partnerships. This was originally developed in 1996 and includes what partnership means, the areas of focus, the criteria for selecting partners and procedures for selection. Since unification, the work of the two SC members has essentially continued as before, but there is the intention to forge a single approach in due course.

More broadly, Save the Children Norway also has a 'Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity', which covered the whole organisation. Other more procedural aspects of partnership are covered in the Programme Handbook produced in Oslo. The various Save the Children members have started to meet at Head Office level (the international Working Group on Partnership) to map and discuss the various partnership approaches and there have been suggestions that this is the start of a process which will lead to an overall Save the Children International policy document, but this lies in the future.

2.5 Number and Type of Partners

Altogether, Save the Children in Zimbabwe has 29 partners according to the figures provided for the evaluation for 2011, which can be broken down as follows:

Type of Partner

	Number (%)
Civil Society	16 (55%)
Government	13 (45%)
Total	29

All of the civil society partners are in fact NGOs. SCN also works directly with some child groups.

Length of Partnership

	Number (%)
2010/2011	8 (28%)
Strategy Period 2006-9	9 (31%)
Strategy Period 2000-5	9 (31%)
Before 2000	1 (3%)
No date	2 (7%)
Total	29

Thematic Area

	Number (%)
Basic Education	10 (34%)
Child Protection	3 (10%)
HIV	7 (24%)
Child Rights Governance	2 (7%)
Agriculture/Livelihoods	7 (24%)
Health	0
Emergencies	0
Institutional Capacity Devt.	0
Total	29

The 7 livelihood partners were brought into the unified programme in October 2010 and were not developed within the framework of SCN's partnership guidelines.

Geographical Location

	Number (%)
Bikita	1 (3%)
Binga	2 (7%)
Bulawayo	2 (7%)
Harare	14 (48%)
Marondera	1 (3%)
Matobo	2 (7%)
Mberengwa	1 (3%)
Mbire	2 (7%)
Muzarabani	1 (3%)
Norton	1 (3%)
Rushinga	1 (3%)
Shamva	1 (3%)
Total	29

See map in **Appendix D** for locations.

2.6 Staffing and Structure

Save the Children in Zimbabwe unified as of 1st October 2010. The Country Director, is now assisted by two Programme Directors (one for Development and one for Implementation), and 235 other staff. There are 15 staff now liaising directly with the 29 partners, while many other staff also play a role in working with partners (e.g. other programme staff, financial staff who work with partners, as well as administrative, transport and other support staff of the overall operation).

In financial terms, the overall figures (as provided by SC Zimbabwe) are as follows:

Theme	2011 Budget				2010 Actual			
	Self Implemented (US\$ 000)	Partner Implemented (US\$ 000)	Total Budget (US\$ 000)	%	Self Implemented (US\$ 000)	Partner Implemented (US\$ 000)	Total Budget (US\$ 000)	%
Education	428	305	733	7%	852	335	1,188	16%
Health	1,378	-	1,378	14%	183	-	183	2%
Child Rights Gov.	299	45	344	3%	283	41	324	4%
Child Protection	920	186	1,106	11%	340	174	514	7%
Emergencies	1,002	-	1,002	10%	1,671	66	1,737	23%
HIV/AIDS	96	288	384	4%	207	533	740	10%
Livelihoods	3,073	274	3,347	34%	434	85	519	7%
Non Programmatic	1,697	-	1,697	17%	2,273	-	2,273	30%
Grand Total	8,893	1,098	9,991		6,243	1,234	7,448	
%	89%	11%			83%	17%		

Notes:

- 1) It is clear from the above that the bulk of SC Zimbabwe's work is not partner implemented over these two years.
- 2) Most of the projects inherited from SCUUK finished at the end of 2010 or in the first quarter of 2011.
- 3) The 2011 budget figures only represent secured funding and does not include proposals in the pipeline.

3. Relationship between SCN and its Partners

3.1 Conceptual Issues – Understanding of Partnership

Both SCN staff and its partners in Zimbabwe have had a similar understanding of what partnership means in overall conceptual terms. Reflecting what is expressed in the 'Redd Barna Guidelines for Partnerships', all respondents (both partners and staff) talked in various terms about working towards common goals, with each partner bringing its specific contribution in a spirit of mutual respect. Fundamentally then, there is a shared understanding of partnership.

Where there was a difference was that for SCN respondents, the emphasis is more on such areas such as capacity building, cooperation, developing learning etc.. For the local partners, while those elements were usually mentioned, the transfer of financial resources to themselves to support their work and their organisation was what they valued the most.

Another difference in emphasis is that SCN has seen the partners as the best means through which to realise its mission in terms of realising child rights. While the partners are also interested in this objective (otherwise they would not be accepted as partners), they also have a greater interest in their own organisational capacity, viability and sustainability. In other words, SCN has had a more instrumental view of partner capacity development (to achieve specific child rights objectives), while partners value more their own capacity development as an 'end in itself'.

Undoubtedly SCN has sought to influence its partners towards a stronger child rights perspective. However, this influencing has generally come about through a process of negotiation and discussion, rather than a crude imposition of its own agenda. As a whole, there was not a sense that SCN was overbearing and dictating to its partners. In the survey, when asked to put SCN's partnership approach on a scale between 1 (sub contractual relationship) and 5 (partner completely free), the average of the 13 responses was more towards the latter at 3.54, and well above the average for all the countries surveyed globally (which produced an average of 3.08).

A few respondents also mentioned that partnership should be underpinned by a sense of equality between the partners. However, the majority pointed out that where there is a flow of funds in one direction, it is not possible to achieve equality in this sense. This was seen as an inevitable consequence of the situation, rather than a failing.

3.2 Characteristics of SCN's Partnership Approach in Practice

As to how partnership was realised, across the board there was a very positive sense of how SCN Zimbabwe put its principles into practice.

SCN was praised by most partners interviewed (governmental and non governmental) for being a 'true partner', which is ready to go the extra mile for its partners. It was said that the spirit in which SCN approached partnership was in line with its rhetoric and it genuinely sought a relationship based on mutual respect and equity ('I would call them my friends'). Partners appreciated SCN's passion for child rights and its promotion of child participation.

Frequently mentioned also was the continuity of SCN's support and its flexibility to adapt. In the survey, one of the higher average scores was for 'Understanding and flexibility from SCN' with an average of 5.54 (ex 6). Part of the reason for this flexibility (as explained by senior SC staff with a knowledge of SCN), was the comparative amount of freedom they had to take decisions at the local level, backed up by funding which was not too tightly restricted. This provided them with more scope to negotiate with partners and respond to their needs and priorities.

What partners fear most from partnership with organisations like SCN (and which they have experienced to varying degrees with others) was a 'Big Brother' attitude, in which the INGO plays a dominant role, dictates terms, does not listen to the local organisation, is rigid when it comes to implementation and imposes onerous administrative and reporting procedures. SCN seems largely to have avoided these pitfalls.

However, where the partnership was seen more as a sub-contractual arrangement (e.g. Matobo District Council) with more rigid institutional donor (e.g. the Department for International Development [DFID], the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]) requirements, there is more scepticism. Another criticism was that sometimes SCN was too concerned with its image, for example in being *seen* to be doing something about HIV.

Overall though, SCN was seen to have very positive characteristics to its partnership approach, which are explored in more depth in the following sections.

3.3 Selection of Partners

For an organisation which works with partners, the selection process is critical: if you choose the right partners, then subsequent work is likely to be easier and more effective; if you get it wrong then this is likely to have ramifications which are time consuming and damaging for all concerned. SCN has had a mixed portfolio of partners – the largest group being NGOs, a substantial amount of work with governmental (both national and district levels) and some direct work with children's groups which were 'orphaned' when SCN ended its support for their 'parent' organisations.

It could be questioned as to how appropriate it is to partner government in a context where doubts have been raised as to the conduct of elections and legitimacy. Currently

there is a coalition government in which both main parties are ostensibly seeking cooperation and a return to stability. Besides this, as other observers in Zimbabwe pointed out to the evaluators, in the Zimbabwe context, not a great deal has been accomplished by civil society taking a more oppositional position to the government in recent years, and taking an accommodating, supportive position has enabled SCN to influence policies on child rights from the inside. Also SCN has linked with the administrative rather than the political arms of government. It helps that SCN's mission of child rights is a relatively non-contentious issue, whereas it would be more complicated if its mission was to promote democratisation or oppose corruption.

The structure of the partner portfolio seems has not been precisely delineated, documented and then implemented on this basis. Rather it has been an approximate shape kept in the minds of senior staff, and borne in mind as decisions on new partnerships have arisen. Some might argue that the desired portfolio should be more sharply articulated, but this runs the danger that, the work becomes conceptualised more as a 'programme' managed by SC, in which the local partners are regarded as implementers, with consequent loss of autonomy and flexibility. Therefore the evaluators felt a 'loose portfolio' concept was appropriate, but perhaps there could be wider discussion and communication as to its shape with other SC staff and even with the input of partners themselves.

As to the initiation of relations and working towards an agreement with individual partners, there was evidence of both more reactive and proactive approaches from SCN. Partnerships with NGOs tended to be more of a reactive nature, in which a local organisation would approach SCN with a request for support, which would then be discussed and negotiated if it fitted in with the strategic directions. SCN tended to be more proactive in forming partnerships with government in identifying, for example, a key duty bearer like Mbire Rural District Council (RDC). Overall the process of initiating partnership was one of the higher rated aspects of SCN's approach to partnership, averaging 5.23 (ex 6) from the survey respondents.

Nevertheless, it was felt that SCN has managed to achieve a relatively strong and well balanced set of partners. In terms of quality, one staff member indicated that 60% of partners are good, 30% average and 10% weak, which seems reasonable and some other staff corroborated this estimate in discussion. No organisation stays still, and some improve while others deteriorate for a range of reasons. There has been some turnover of partners recently and efforts to cull those which were deemed not to be performing well, which is always necessary (although it was said that the partners had not always been told the reasons for their termination in a completely transparent way).

The evaluators found SCN to have been creative by identifying partners that could help leverage SCN's broader objectives and also seek out more innovative approaches. For example, NANGO, as the umbrella body for NGOs in Zimbabwe, does not have a sole child rights focus, but SCN's support came at a crucial time when it was going through a difficult period and the fact that NANGO has relations with so many others is useful. Padare is an interesting organisation in representing a gender initiative from the male perspective following the Beijing Platform for Women in 2005.

Another interesting approach is the education project with the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), where there is no grant component, but a technical partnership with UZ providing

technical know-how on a fee basis. This is strategic in that UZ has the mandate to deliver on teacher education in Zimbabwe and the project feeds back into planning.

A more difficult question to answer is whether SCN has missed major opportunities in terms of who it is *not* partnering. In other words, are there major opportunities in terms of potential partners that have not been picked up? From the perspective of NANGO (which is in a good position to have an overview of the landscape), Zimbabwe is quite weak in terms of child focused organisations, and SCN have not missed obvious choices. However, there was an (internal) view that SC needs to scan the horizon more thoroughly and that it would be strategic to look more beyond organisations which have a strict child focus in order to scale up impact for children. The evaluation found little evidence of partners based on social media, trade unions (previously were, but phased out due to political sensitivities) and the private sector, which could all be considered in the future.

In terms of the actual process, there are criteria for selecting partners set out in the 'Guidelines for Partnerships' (with headings of Effectiveness, Accountability, Sustainability and Governance), but it was not clear that these were known about by staff and partners and applied systematically. What was appreciated by recent partners was that the process was relatively speedy and non-bureaucratic.

3.4 Development of Proposals

The project proposal development process has usually started with a discussion, followed by relatively brief proposals. Often the proposals have been based on a joint planning process, which is appreciated - this particularly applies with government partners; NGO partners more often develop proposals by themselves.

Partners appreciate SCN's approach to proposals for not being too irksome or bureaucratic (and the proposal development process scored an average of 5.08 ex 6 in the survey). However, the down side of this is that the proposal documents are consequently short on problem analysis, an underlying theory of change to address problems, and indicators of how changes will be assessed (with related problems for monitoring and evaluation as discussed later).

It seems that SCN was open to considering a wide range of project activities to support, but would not fund work outside its specified thematic areas of child rights. It would also not allow its funds to be used for work which 'institutionalises' children and vehicles could not be purchased using SCN money.. SCN has been willing to support activities with a focus on child rights and capacity building to implement those activities, but less on more general organisational development for partners.

What to cover in project funding for salaries is complex, particularly when working with government partners, whose salary scales are generally significantly less than that of many NGOs. If a staff person is put into a Ministry on different terms (as was reported with the Ministry of Justice), this can create discrepancies and become problematic for longer term sustainability. If on the other hand, salaries and benefits are left to existing government remuneration, a government partner indicated that it can raise questions as why staff should do 'extra' work for NGO projects and lead to demotivation. (Even if it falls within the normal duties of that department, it can still apparently be seen as additional if arising from INGO cooperation). This is a dilemma to which there is no easy solution.

The one year time frame for project funding was widely seen as too short (this was one of the most frequently cited criticisms from partners). In the past, partners have had longer partnership agreements, with the workplans and budgets being agreed on an annual basis. The current annual focus was said to have been a product of the unification process, when the major changes led to some uncertainty and a difficulty in making longer term commitments. It is expected that as the unified programme settles down, then longer timeframes will be possible from 2012, which would be welcomed.

Another area of concern expressed by partners is that SCN has sometimes given the partner a total budget amount (e.g. \$50,000) and then asked them to tailor their planned activities into the available funds. More normally, a planning process is based on what an organisation seeks to do, and then costing what it costs to do it. This issue has become particularly pointed, as amounts per agency have generally been reduced in the past year, so previous levels of programming and support have had to be cut. While there is often an element of negotiation between donors and recipients in the sector as a whole (and the counter point was made that sometimes local partner develop inflated and unrealistic budgets), a number of partners said that planning processes are better starting from objectives and activities, rather than the bottom line figure.

3.5 Visits, Communication, Accompaniment

SCN has had a policy of official quarterly meetings to partners, which was felt to be appropriate. Other contacts with partners (phone calls, discussing implementation, upcoming events etc.) could be much more frequent – sometimes even daily.

Partners did not express the view that SCN was too intrusive, even when there was the most intensive contact. On the contrary, SCN staff were felt to have added value through their expertise and advice, particularly in the area of child rights programming, child participation and so on. Closer contact, particularly since little of it was based on irksome monitoring procedures, has meant that SCN was felt to be accompanying partners on a joint endeavour. In fact, SCN scored highest for any issue in the survey (5.67 average ex 6) for 'advice and support provided through SCN staff visits'.

Particularly important in partnership relations, is the *manner* in which INGO staff relate to partners. In general, from what we observed (although admittedly this was a somewhat artificial situation, but corroborated by partners), SCN staff have treated partners with respect and do not come across as a condescending 'Big Brother'. Communication lines are kept open, and staff have been ready to listen and respond sympathetically. However, the survey showed a relatively low average score (4.33) for 'clear and timely communication from SCN', possibly in relation to recent changes in the terms of partnership.

In one example, a new staff member did joint visits for the first six months with a senior staff member. This is doubtless somewhat labour intensive, but is a good practice to ensure that new staff take on board the SCN approach, and that the transition is smooth. What criticism there was of SCN staff attitudes towards came internally (it was said that sometimes staff could adopt a somewhat patronising tone with partners). More structured reflections and exercises on managing partner relations could help ensure that positive impressions of SCN's approach do continue in the future. The ideal partner liaison staff person, it was expressed, works with 'their hands on their back' – listening, but not jumping in to take the lead.

3.6 SCN Systems and Procedures

SCN's systems and procedures were continuing at the time of the evaluation, even after unification, (as do SC UK's) – but they will be brought together in due course. Although SCN in Zimbabwe has developed Guidelines for Partnership, the main source document for working with partners seemed more to be the organisation level SCN Programme Handbook, which has a number of relevant sections (e.g. Cooperation with Partners, Finance Management, Partner Audit etc.).

Partners generally feel that SCN's systems and procedures have been relatively 'light touch' and reasonable (SCN's financial and administrative procedures received an average score of 5.23 ex 6 in the survey). Requirements have been clearly communicated in advance and there were no 'unpleasant surprises' of additional requirements, which had not been anticipated. NANGO, which has a substantial number of international partners and donors, feels that SCN have been one of the most straightforward with which to deal.

Narrative reports are felt simple to complete, but the focus of reports, in line with the approach to proposals, is generally on completed activities and neither do they generally demonstrate change in terms of outcomes and impact for children, nor in terms of the changes to the capacity of the partner.

On the financial side, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation's (NORAD) strong policy of 'zero tolerance' for corruption necessitates a strong system of accountability. Generally the sense was that SCN has taken this aspect seriously and recognises the need to account for every cent. However, the SCN staff that follow up on partner accounts have not done so much recently, and this was criticised in a recent audit as leaving SC possibly vulnerable. This gap was explained in terms of the extra work caused by the unification process and quarterly visits should be resumed in the next quarter. Another question is whether the partner audits carried out by local firms (which the partners themselves choose) are sufficiently reliable and consistent, and maybe it would make sense for an international audit firm to undertake all partner audits, although this would have additional cost implications.

The timely transfer of funds is seen by partners as a very important issue and generally proceeds smoothly. However, some such as Zimbabwe AIDS Prevention Project (ZAPP) reported that the first tranche in a calendar year can be delayed due to the need to complete an audit of the previous year first. Other partners indicated that negotiation on funding can continue into February. Overall the feedback from partners was mixed, and an average score of 4.54 ex 6 in the survey for 'timely transfer of funds by SCN' show that there are a number of concerns here. At the same time, delays on releasing funds can occur because partners are late with their reporting to SCN. Either way, a delayed transfer of funds entails telescoping activities and can affect programme quality.

In complying with SCN's relatively light requirements, the governmental partners seemed to struggle the most. This seems partly due to their need to follow government established procedures, have reports approved through various layers of government and the unwillingness on the part of some staff, particularly in sections not so directly engaged in the partnership, to undertake 'extra' work (i.e. beyond the usual government procedures) to meet INGO needs.

SC's documentation system does not seem clearly managed currently, and it was hard to access all the partner documents requested by the evaluators. This was explained in terms of the confusion caused by unification, which undoubtedly is a factor. However, it is possibly also a reflection that producing and storing the necessary documentation in a way that can be subsequently accessed needs more attention.

3.7 Capacity Building

From the SCN perspective, capacity building is a major part of its partnership approach. Indeed, SCN's overall partnership policy is actually called the 'Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity', as if partnership and capacity building are synonymous.

While capacity building has been put at centre stage, in fact it has not always been carried out in the most thorough and consistent manner. There are some significant areas of success (particularly in building programmatic capacity), but there are also gaps (particularly with respect to supporting organisational development) and the approach taken could have been more systematic and focussed on organisations as well as programmes.

Capacity assessment was informally a part of the partner selection process (in terms of whether the partner is able and willing to do what the partnership agreement sets out as the expected outputs), but there has been no in-depth process of organisational assessment. In fact, the areas in which to support capacity building seem to come more from: a) the audit process in terms of accountability issues; b) issues that SCN has been particularly interested to promote at certain times; c) the Partners' Forum when capacity building initiatives would be discussed and implemented during the week long meeting.

The results of SCN's approach to capacity building in different areas are illustrated by the following table. In the survey, respondents were asked to rate the quality of capacity building support SCN has provided to local partners (averages of responses given for scoring from 1 (terrible) to 6 (excellent))

	All Countries	Zimbabwe
a. Advocacy	4.72	4.62
b. Child rights approach	5.42	5.54
c. Child participation	5.36	5.62
d. Documenting and Communicating Results	4.73	4.62
e. Governance	4.73	4.62
f. Human Resource Management	4.08	4.00
g. Financial Systems and Management	4.88	4.92
h. Management and Leadership	4.77	4.77
i. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.93	4.77
j. Project Planning	5.04	5.15
k. Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability	4.67	4.62
l. Strategic Planning, Vision and Mission	5.05	5.42
m. Technical Capacity Building in Thematic Areas	5.15	5.15

There are some clear areas where SCN has made a clear and positive difference. Examples here lie in the realm of promoting SCN's core areas of programmatic interest – child rights programming, related technical areas and child participation. Some partners cited the example, where a psycho-social expert was brought in to carry out a

workshop with positive results. The Partners' Forum was mentioned as a positive way, not just to receive such inputs, but also as a way to plan jointly, discuss issues and meet other organisations and its suspension two years ago (for reasons of cost) was regretted. Formal events like this have been supplemented by the ongoing counselling and support from staff liaising with partners as mentioned earlier. Capacity building has also been stronger on compliance issues – for example, on financial management in line with SCN's norms and regulations. Beyond SCN's own needs, this is valuable for partners to manage their resources more effectively and also to work with other partners and funders in the future. SCN was also rated relatively highly for Strategic Planning, Vision and Mission.

Where capacity building has been less strong is around other generic organisational development issues, such as human resource management, governance, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilisation and so on. Certainly these areas are not so directly related to SCN's mission of promoting child rights, but they are essential for strong organisations, without which no programming is likely to be successful. The lack of support in these areas is less important where partners (for example ZAPP) have many other more substantial donors who can step in and provide support, but where partners are more dependent on SCN, there is a much greater need. Also the situation is different for government departments in that they are part of a much bigger entity and hence a holistic approach to organisational capacity building may not be feasible, although they too could still probably benefit from more generic capacity building in some areas.

As a part of capacity building, the facilitation of relationships between other organisations is an area where SCN can and has played a positive role (scoring an average of 5.43 ex 6 for 'bringing partners together for network and collaborative action' in the survey). As mentioned, the Partners' Forum was seen as positive in this regard. Collaborations between organisations working on similar issues have been promoted on occasion and there is scope for more in this area. For example, SC could play a greater role in bringing partners together on shared advocacy platforms.

Where SCN scored the lowest in the survey was in 'facilitation of exchange visits' (an average of 3.83 ex 6) and this needs to be considered further, but taking into account the relative costs and benefits of such arrangements. Also relatively lowly rated was 'use of social media in partnership and networking' (4.08) and this was confirmed by the evaluators who did not find much evidence of this having been applied.

3.8 Child Participation and Child Led Groups

SC's relationship with children manifests itself in two ways: firstly, there are some projects which involve child led groups or organisations (which are partnered directly by SCN or through an intermediary); secondly all projects have the scope for child participation even if implemented through adult led organisations. The projects reviewed from this perspective ranged from highly articulate child led groups (Junior Councils, Schools Development Councils and Marondera Fight Club) to children's participation in Child Protection Committees that were much weaker and less clear about what they were trying to achieve.

Through the Junior Councils and Schools Council, participation corresponded to indicators of good practice and meaningful participation (IICRD, 2004), in that children were participating on a voluntary basis and meeting regularly (at least weekly

committees in the case of the Junior Councils), but not excessively. They considered themselves to be representing a constituency of their peers, engaging in critical dialogue with adults and having the competencies to participate. It should be noted that most of these highly articulate children are older, approaching or at pre University stage and the majority (but not all) were not the poorest. In the case of the younger children participating in Child Protection Committees, this did not hold true. Children appeared to be participating as they had been asked to do so, were less clear about objectives and activities and did not appear to have an active voice with adult members.

Children from the Junior Councils considered that they led at all stages of the project cycle and, indeed, do appear to run their own committees with relatively limited adult participation. The Schools Development Council (SDC) took a more collaborative approach with adult members. Children of the SDCs considered that they lead on action plans and implementation but all other aspects are undertaken in collaboration with supportive adults. The Junior Councillors expressed interest in more support in developing advocacy platforms and campaigns on children's rights, assistance with publications and with entry points to ministries.

While neither children nor adults raised this question, the evaluators were concerned that the parameters of children's participation may not have been defined sufficiently clearly to ensure the protection of children. Specifically, children's active engagement in sensitive and highly emotional issues of sexual abuse could be very stressful. The question is not *whether* children should be supported to engage but should *parameters* be defined, together with children.

Another issue of working with child led groups is whether SC should treat them as partners (as with other NGO/Government partners), or should engage them through other organisations. While it is understandable that SCN directly liaised with some groups when it disengaged from working with their 'parent' organisations (trade unions which became untenable as partners within Zimbabwe's political context), it seems preferable, more cost effective and sustainable to engage with such groups through other partners.

3.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

Both internally and externally, SCN's approach to monitoring and evaluation with partners is seen as a key area in need of strengthening. While there is follow up on completed activities (e.g. workshops held, staff trained, children reached etc.), there is less on the actual changes to the lives of children (or partners' capacity changes). In the survey, SCN's evaluation of work scored an average of 4.83 (ex 6), while its capacity building support for monitoring and evaluation scored 4.77.

The relatively less good performance in this area seems partly due to the lack of emphasis within SCN that this was something that staff should prioritise when managing relations with partners. At the same time, partners mentioned that they lacked capacity in this area, but did not feel that that SC could or would support them in this area. Indeed one partner staff member had independently funded his own training in monitoring and evaluation.

However, some efforts have been made to strengthen this. For example, with education, there have been efforts to measure change in terms of children's reading capabilities. In 2010, a small set of SCN global outcome indicators were rolled out to all

SCN funded programmes and a global baseline was established. These indicators will be measured annually again from 2012. There is also a process under way now through SCI to develop an overall monitoring and evaluation system, with 16 global outcome indicators for children agreed and now training is being carried out on these across the various regions.

In principle, an overall organisational system does make sense, but there is the danger that when indicators are defined centrally by SC (within which partners must fit), then it can be seen to tilt the relationship towards one in which the ownership is more with SC and less with the partners. The point was also made by one senior staff member that some of the most innovative work may require some years of investment without measurable progress towards the indicators, but which may ultimately prove valuable.

Within proposals and reports, the emphasis (understandably) has been on the children that SCN exists to reach, but there is very little on the changes to the capacity of the partner organisations through the partnership process. This again links back to the fact that there has been no systematic approach to assessing the capacity of partners, and therefore it is hard to show what progress is being made. There are various ways in which this could be approached.

3.10 Exit Strategies and Sustainability

There has generally been no discussion of how partnerships will end at the inception period, and nor is there much planning for when this occurs. In practice, what has happened is that partners have received a warning of 6-12 months and some planning for what will happen in the post partnership period.

Efforts have been concentrated to ensure the sustainability of the work, but less so the sustainability of the partners themselves. For government partners, they can be expected to continue albeit at a lower level of activity, but for NGO partners which tend to be close to 100% dependent on external funds, this has serious implications, unless they can attract other donors.

For one ex-partner visited, the Family Support Trust, in addition to a generally positive experience of working with SCN, there was appreciation that in the post-partnership period, relations had continued to the extent that a staff member had helped them write a proposal for another donor (although unfortunately this was unsuccessful).

There are no easy solutions to disengaging from partnerships and it is not uncommon for this area to be neglected, but transparency from the start and more emphasis on organisational as well as project sustainability would be beneficial.

3.11 Horizontal Partnerships

This evaluation is principally engaged with the local partners that SCN has supported. However, it is worth briefly touching on its 'horizontal' relationships – that is with peer organisations.

It should be recognised that SCN has been strong in not seeking (as some INGOs occasionally do) to 'own' partners – in the sense of insisting on 'monogamous' relationships and discouraging partnership with other international organisations. In fact, SCN has worked positively to bring in other organisations (particularly UNICEF, for example, with the Ministry of Justice Child Friendly Courts Project), to support similar

work. Such linkages can not only increase the financial support for partners, it can also help through the additional clout a UN body can bring in relating to government.

4. Changes in the Capacity and Behaviour of Partners

This section examines what differences result from SCN's approach to partnership. How has the capacity and behaviour of partners changed? INTRAC uses a simple model of organisational capacity, which involves three interlocking circles: the internal organisation (being), programme performance (doing), external linkages (relating) and the question is answered in these terms.

4.1 'To be' – Identity and Internal Functioning

At the most fundamental level, partners have valued the continued and relatively flexible financial support, which has helped them to consolidate themselves as viable organisations. Local NGOs in Zimbabwe are mostly dependent on external funding for their continued existence, so such support is crucial. NANGO indicated that SCN support came in when it was at a low ebb due to various internal problems; SCN helped it through this period and it continues now as the accepted umbrella body for the sector with more than 1,000 members.

Government organisations generally have the means to continue at some level being less dependent on external resources, but particularly given the recent financial and other difficulties, many departments have declined recently. The support from SCN has been valued (as mentioned for example, by the Ministry of Justice) because it can be relied upon whereas government funding sometimes gets delayed.

National Programme of Action for Children (NPAC)

This programme, lodged within the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare had been virtually moribund when the new staff person in charge (the 'Deputy Director') was appointed. She frankly indicated that at that point she did not know about this area of work and received no clear orientation from government. SCN staff made contact with her and accompanied her in developing the programme's mandate and leading on key activities for children such as training parliamentarians and developing the official Zimbabwe Children's Report, which had been well behind schedule.

SCN has also played a key role in creating and demonstrating the viability of child led organisations in Zimbabwe. It cannot claim to be the initiator of this (the Harare Junior Council was established more than 50 years ago independently), but it has developed and brought the concept to new areas. The existence and strong performance of some of these, such as the Marondera Fight Club, demonstrates what children are capable of and that child led organisations are not just viable but can have a sustained impact.

Marondera Fight Club

This is a child led group supported through Marondera Municipality that is now able to plan, implement and monitor its activities to an impressive extent. They have managed to establish clubs in almost all the schools in the area and have representatives on the child protection committee. Their commitment is underlined by their offer to work during weekends to cover utility bills for child headed households, who had had their water disconnected. They have designed activities to keep children off the streets and there are no street children as a result in Marondera.

With its strong emphasis on child rights, partnership with SCN has also affected the identity, mission and values of partner organisations. Some partners already had a child rights focus in principle, while others had a more general focus (e.g. Rural District Councils), but all indicated that this aspect of their identity is now stronger.

Partners were less able to identify where SCN's partnership had had a great impact on their strategic development, internal management systems, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilisation etc.. Indeed, they did not even seem to expect that SCN could have played a role in this area. This did not matter so much if partners could adequately address these issues using other resources, but in many cases they could not.

4.2 'To do' - Programming

Again, SCN has had the greatest impact in programming in promoting its core area of interest – child rights programming. At the generic level, partnership with SCN meant that local organisations engaged in child focused work, where this might otherwise have received less attention.

Beyond this, partners could point to specific examples where their ability to work on specific issues had been enhanced through their partnership with SCN. For example, with the Ministry of Education, SCN has been supporting a project aimed at reducing corporal punishment in schools. This is an interesting issue in that (apparently) corporal punishment is enshrined in the Zimbabwe Constitution, so complete abolition seems currently not to be an option. However, in supporting the Ministry of Education, SCN has been able to work in this area more effectively through monitoring and addressing abuses in the priority geographical areas.

For ZAPP, the support from SCN has been a relatively minor part of the overall budget, with much larger funds coming from other donors, but it has helped their ability to work on child focussed issues with the emphasis on prevention of Mother to Child transmission of HIV/AIDS. ZAPP particularly cited the workshop facilitate by the psycho-social expert that SCN had brought in as adding value to their programming work.

As much as the formal 'set piece' workshops and trainings that SCN has provided, the accompaniment process by SCN staff was frequently cited by partners as helping them as programme implementation proceeded. For example, the Matobo District Education Office underlined how helpful they found the visits from SCN in talking through such things as the planning of programme events.

With child led groups, clearly they are likely to have less programming experience and skills, but they have been supported to develop their work through SCN support (often through other intermediary partners). For example, Padare has enabled the Schools Council in Gweru to address the sensitive area of child abuse.

4.3 'To Relate' – Linkages with Others

SCN's partner portfolio, with its combination of governmental and non governmental partners, meant that it could facilitate access for NGOs that they might otherwise have found hard to achieve. Given recent political tensions and mutual suspicion between government and NGOs, the non-confrontational stance that SCN has taken towards government departments has helped it play a linking role. For example, NANGO mentioned that SCN helped them build relations with the Ministry of Justice.

By working on similar work in different geographic areas, there has also been benefit in bringing those actors together: Matobo District Education Office mentioned how partnership promoted contacts between different districts with similar issues. With respect to facilitating linkages, the Partners' Forum was widely mentioned as an arena in which like-minded organisations could meet and build linkages and its demise was widely regretted in this regard.

Bringing child led groups together can also bring benefits, as the joint meeting between Harare and Chitungwiza Junior Councils demonstrated, when a problem Chitungwiza Junior Council described in being taken seriously by the Senior Council resulted in a resolution for joint action by the Junior Councils.

The other area of linkage worth mentioning is back to SCN itself. There have been instances where partners have been able to influence SCN thinking through programmatic experience, such as the Quality Education Project growing out of a dialogue with a partner (Gondor College of Teacher Training) in Ethiopia, which was extended to Zimbabwe and influenced thinking and subsequent SCN work in other countries. Good practice was also observed with SC-UK in inviting its partners to various events to talk about their positive work. There is less evidence of partners influencing the overall strategies and policies of Save the Children Norway (and now SCI) more generally.

5. Contribution to Overall Capacity to Address Child Rights

Save the Children is a child rights organisation, so the ultimate test must be as to the extent that its work contributes to the realisation of children's rights in Zimbabwe. This evaluation has some limitations, in that the primary focus was on the partnership approach, rather than examining in great depth the impact of programmes on children at the grassroots. Also, as mentioned, the monitoring and evaluation system is recognised to need strengthening in terms of assessing outcomes and impact, so neither is it easy to derive such information from secondary sources. Nevertheless, the impression of the evaluators was that SCN had brought about some significant benefits for children.

The Capacity of Children to Address Issues Themselves

In the case of the Schools Councils, partnership had resulted in training and awareness raising on breaking the silence on sexual and physical abuse against children through child-to-child messaging, a reporting box and linking to a drop in centre. This had resulted in increased reporting, changed attitudes within the student body towards violence, and, at least as importantly, outreach work was beginning to result in more effective prevention such as safe play areas. Frustration was expressed, however, about the incapacity of state services (child-friendly policing and courts) to process cases and the fact that children were often returned home without issues having been addressed.

In the case of the Chitungwiza Junior Council, as a result of a campaign from NANGO to train children in budget analysis and analyse the delivery of state services, children conducted a survey of peers who had dropped out of school and were not getting access to the BEAM support for vulnerable children. However, they were also frustrated with the response from adult councillors that they were too young to worry about such things.

Interestingly, Junior Councillors from Harare were very unhappy with the way their colleagues had been treated and offered to support them in a joint campaign.

Importantly, results from children's participation should be considered on an individual as well as a collective level (IICRD, 2004, Lansdown, 2010). In most cases, children felt that they had developed in confidence and that the experience would be positive in their future career. Child participation is seen as an end in itself.

Real Benefits for Children

While the primary focus of this evaluation was on the partnership approach, the impression of the evaluators was that SCN had brought about some significant benefits for children including:

- There appears to have been some change in budget allocations to health and education through the work of NANGO and partners. More work is needed to establish the benefits for children as a result of these additional allocations.
- Increased percentage of children reaching a desirable reading level through training teachers on pedagogical approaches.
- School Development Councils are improving school governance and the commitment of parents to education.
- Padare and Basiliwizi have helped to increase reporting of child abuse, especially sexual abuse of children. In a context in which some 60% of abused children are (reportedly) HIV positive, this is especially important. However, there is a need to reach children younger and to strengthen prevention through adults.
- The Victim Friendly Courts system through the Ministry of Justice has been entrenched and extended across the country with 17 such courts now, and thousands of children receiving pre, during and post trial support.
- Follow up on hundreds of child abuse cases and strengthened reporting and recording of corporal punishment cases through the Ministry of Education.
- The official reporting against the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) progressed after many years of delay, and civil society also participated in monitoring. When released, this will provide the basis for all actors responsible for and interested in child rights to prioritise and assess their interventions.

6. Good Practices

Throughout the preceding sections, this report has discussed how SCN has implemented its partnership approach and identified many good practices. In this section, the most significant of these are summarised:

Good Practices in SCN Zimbabwe's Partnership Approach

- a) An open, flexible approach, which enables a range of partners to be supported and allows the scope for them to ask for changes to proposals if a reasonable justification can be given.
- b) Allowing many of the key decisions on strategic direction, choice of partners and areas of work to be taken at the country programme level, rather than higher up.
- c) Have developed a 'loose portfolio' of partners, which covers a range of actors, themes and geographic areas.
- d) Support for government at regional and national levels enabled engagement with the key duty bearers and long term service providers for children.
- e) Working with child led groups provides those children with development

- opportunities, as well as ensuring that the voice of children is heard.
- f) Working with non-child specialist organisations such as the umbrella body NANGO, Padare and Rural District Councils is strategic in bringing child rights into wider forums.
 - g) A clear focus on child rights and promoting this perspective at all stages of the partnership process.
 - h) A relatively non-bureaucratic process for developing partnerships and proposals.
 - i) Working together with partners in joint planning of new proposals.
 - j) Being open to supporting innovative work through partners, even if it requires up-front investment (e.g. on research) without showing immediate results.
 - k) Multi-annual commitment funding (when it has happened), has given partners stability and enabled a long term relationship based on trust to develop.
 - l) Clear communication of expectations from partners.
 - m) Relatively quick transfer of funds to partners – not all the time, but appreciated when it has happened.
 - n) Relatively non-bureaucratic and not too irksome reporting (in terms of length, detailed requirements and frequency) and other procedures to be followed.
 - o) Regular visits to partners, which are felt to be supportive and helpful.
 - p) Relating to partners with respect and not coming across as ‘Big Brother’.
 - q) Ensuring that new staff are accompanied by more experienced staff on partner visits for the initial few months.
 - r) The Partners’ Forum was widely appreciated as a good way in which to discuss issues, work on capacity development and network with others.
 - s) Strong capacity development with respect to child focused programming and child participation.
 - t) Also strong capacity development on financial management linked to regular follow up by financial staff (not very recently, but prior to that) reduced chances of ‘leakage’, and also put partners in a stronger position to secure other funding.
 - u) Linking partners with each other when working on similar issues.
 - v) Being open to and helping to bring in other funding partners (e.g. UNICEF) to broaden financial and other forms of support.
 - w) Being open to being influenced by partners and encouraging them to take advantage of opportunities for this – this has occurred to some extent, although could have been greater.
 - x) Maintaining linkages with partners and seeking to involve and support them in some ways after the partnership has formally ended.
 - y) Have developed learning on thematic areas and shared with other contexts.
 - z) Widely appreciated as a ‘true partner’.

The tendency in evaluations is to take the positive points for granted and jump straight to the more critical points. At a time when unification is occurring and with the change to SCI line management, it is particularly important that the above points are recognised and incorporated with further strengthening into the emerging new structures and agreed joint approaches. Notably, SCN has performed strongly in many areas which the 2010 Keystone NGO Partner survey showed to be highly valued by local partners.

7. Implications of Changes within Save the Children

This evaluation was taking place within the context of the most profound changes to the structure of Save the Children that the organisation has witnessed since it was founded.

In Zimbabwe, the unified presence officially started as of 1st October 2010, but in practice the approaches and procedures towards partnership from the previous members (SCN and SCUUK) were continuing at the time of the evaluation.

The impact that has been perceived by some staff and partners is that budgets for partners have been cut. Some attributed this to increased administration costs of the unified presence, while another explanation advanced was that an increased number of partners now needed to be covered (but presumably the Supporting Members are still contributing). A precise picture of how SCN's own funding for partners had changed and was being utilised was hard to establish⁴.

When the direct line management of the SC Zimbabwe Country Director passes over to SCI, further unknowns enter the equation. SCI's strategy (2010-2015) does indicate that its Theory of Change puts building partnerships at the centre when exercising SC's role as the innovator, the voice and the organisation that achieves results at scale for children. However, while there is an international SC Working Group on Partnership to map and compare approaches, the specifics (for example in the form of an agreed SCI partnership policy) are not yet developed. The experience from other countries (see Case Study Reports for Nicaragua, Mozambique and Nepal) indicate that there may be shifts towards more sub-contracting, sub-granting and tendering for partnerships.

Concern was expressed at the senior SC Zimbabwe staff level that there will be less autonomy for Country Directors/Country Programmes than experienced with SCN in the past. According to this view, if more decision making does occur at a higher level (outside the Country Programme), this is likely to leave less scope and flexibility for local staff to develop ideas and negotiate with partners.

It is likely that in due course that SCI will develop and implement across the board a negotiated set of new procedures on managing partnerships, grants and measuring results (the latter two are already in process). These will have to meet the needs of the SC members (particularly the largest) and will also have to reflect the requirements of their major 'back donors' – particularly bilateral agencies, such as NORAD, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and DFID. As has been reflected in interviews with other SC members (e.g. US), there can be much tighter expectations of specific measurable results from some back donors than has been the experience with SCN supported partnerships in the past.

With much of this lying in the future, how this will affect partnership remains uncertain. However, the real fear expressed during the field visit is that some of the best aspects of SCN's partnership approach may be lost, which would be highly regrettable.

⁴ In an email exchange to clarify this issue (at the overall level, not just for Zimbabwe), SCN said that: Norad and SCN funds continue almost the same way as before, with long term funding and partner focus; SCN is experiencing that more funding is earmarked from private donors and for shorter period of times (e.g. one year); the UP process with more grants coming in to the organisations earlier run by SCN have shifted the focus; some donors are going the 'other way' from one year to two or more years – e.g. MFA. So it remains somewhat unclear as to how much changes to partner support are due to changing income and how much is due to deliberate shifts in SC's ways of working.

8. Recommendations

- a) **That the best of SCN Zimbabwe's partnership approach should be incorporated and reinforced within the SCI partnership approach and policy as it emerges.** As shown throughout the report, there is a great deal of value in SCN's way of working with partners, which is evident both to the partners themselves and the evaluators. SC staff, particularly those engaged at the highest level to negotiate and decide upon these matters, need to be aware of the strengths outlined here and ensure that they are not lost.
- b) **Work with partners unless it is impossible to do otherwise.** The budget for 2011 indicates that just 11% of SC Zimbabwe's expenditure will be on partner implemented work – reduced from the already low 17% in 2010. If SC Zimbabwe is serious about this being the preferred approach, then the balance needs to be shifted in the future.
- c) **Keep as much decision making authority and room for manoeuvre at country programme level as possible.** With the new SC dispensation, it is not entirely clear how and where decisions will be taken on how funds will be allocated and which partners will be supported. There are considerable benefits to enabling Country Directors (and their staff) a wide range of discretion to negotiate with partners taking account of the local context, constraints and opportunities.
- d) **Retain a balanced portfolio, which loosely sets out areas of work, types of partners and geographic areas, but articulate it more clearly.** It is important to focus and limit areas of work to develop competence and achieve synergies, but it should not be seen as an SC designed and managed programme in which local partners become sub-contracted implementers.
- e) **The emphasis on government (local and regional) as well as NGO partners should be retained.** A distinctive aspect of SCN's approach in Zimbabwe has been its willingness to engage with government from an 'insider' perspective. This has brought benefits for children by influencing the key long term duty bearers and service providers.
- f) **The experience of supporting child led groups and meaningful child participation should be retained and strengthened.** Zimbabwe can show some very strong results in this area. Provided the processes are well managed, this is beneficial to the developing child leadership and facilitates project activities which are relevant and meaningful to children. **Work with child led groups can be through intermediary partners rather than by SCN staff directly.**
- g) **Explore other possibilities of partners with whom to work.** SCN previously worked with trade unions, but this was curtailed given their close association with the political opposition. Depending on the circumstances (and a risk assessment), SC should remain open to new partnerships with other CSOs like unions, explore possible relationships with emerging web-based 'partners' and also consider more work with the private sector on child rights.
- h) **The process of assessing partners should be systematically carried out against agreed criteria and documented.** There are criteria, but it seems that they are not universally used. It is beneficial to have a clear analysis and documented explanation as to why a partner was chosen, although this should not stifle innovation and the willingness to take risks.
- i) **In selecting partners, the degree of passion and commitment for child rights should be a key criterion.** If a partner is genuinely committed to child

- rights, then areas of capacity weakness can be addressed over time. Without commitment, positive results are unlikely. There is no objective way to 'measure' this, but it can be assessed by their existing work and the sense of purpose and knowledge conveyed by key staff and board members.
- j) **Continue the proactive approach to identifying partners (as well as reacting to proposals received).** Key duty bearers and governmental service providers may not be seeking out an INGO partner, but if they can be effectively engaged, this considerably scales up the potential for leverage.
 - k) **Partnerships should have a longer time frame than is currently the case, such as at least three years for non-emergency work.** Partnerships and projects need time to develop effectively, and going year by year is not the best way to proceed. This will depend to an extent on the 'back funding' available, but longer term agreements are likely to be more effective, even if they funding has to be confirmed on an annual basis.
 - l) **Retain the openness and flexibility that is so valued by partners.** The willingness to listen and adapt to reasonable requests for adjustment in the light of changing circumstances is a real strength of SCN's approach.
 - m) **Advocate with donors for more flexible funding policies and use SCN's own funds creatively.** It is recognised the openness and flexibility must be supported by the 'right' type of resources, so donors need to be persuaded that their funds should be structured to enable support for organisations as an end in itself and SCN's own available funds should at least in part be used for this purpose and not just to cover 'gaps' that others cannot fill.
 - n) **Review partnerships regularly and be prepared to terminate those that are not working and lack the potential to recover.** It must be recognised that not all partnerships and partners are permanently good. There will inevitably be some turnover of partners, particularly for those which are not performing and show no signs of change. While jumping around too much is counter productive, always sticking with the same partners can lead to complacency and stagnation.
 - o) **Project proposals and subsequent activities should consider and strengthen the overall capacity of partners, not just focus on the child rights aspects of the project to be implemented.** This means being open to address organisational development issues, such as vision, mission, values, strategy, and management systems etc., not just the child focused elements. Proposals could include organisational development objectives for partners.
 - p) **Project proposals should include more in-depth problem assessment and how the proposed activities will lead to solutions (theory of change), together with appropriate indicators.** Without becoming too lengthy and bureaucratic, it would be beneficial to both the partners and SCN to have a clearer road map for how interventions are leading to changes for children.
 - q) **The proposal and budgeting processes should be more closely linked.** While budgets need to take account of what is realistically available, they should be based on planned activities, rather than starting with a budget figure and then tailoring activities to fit in within that amount.
 - r) **Financial transfers should be carried out as quickly as possible while ensuring proper accountability.** On occasion delays have been reported, particularly at the year's start – it is possible interim payments could be considered in these circumstances.
 - s) **Capacity building should address overall organisational capacity needs of partners, be based on a systematic process of assessment, and involve a variety of interventions.** While the current emphasis on child rights

- programming is good and should be retained, other areas of organisational development should be addressed too.
- t) **Monitoring and evaluation needs to be strengthened, addressing changes for children and organisational capacity, as well as activities completed.** The current emphasis on outputs needs to be supplemented with a system which looks more at outcomes and impact. However, these need to be discussed and negotiated with partners and care should be taken about adopting a universal global system of indicators, into which all projects must fit.
 - u) **Exit strategies and plans for sustainability need to be discussed and implemented at an earlier stage.** Currently there is little discussion until decisions are taken. It would be beneficial to discuss and plan for (including alternative resource mobilisation) from the outset.
 - v) **Reinstitute the Partners' Forums.** While coming at a cost, these were widely appreciated by partners and bring considerable benefits.
 - w) **Build on and strengthen staff skills to work with partners in a listening and respectful manner.** This is already generally strong and appreciated, but should continue to be emphasised and strengthened through accompaniment of new staff and more reflection and capacity building (e.g. role plays).
 - x) **Strengthen documentation and archiving.** While a strength of SCN has been its lack of bureaucracy, the key partnership documents need to be produced, used systematically and stored so that they can be easily retrieved. This point is particularly made with reference to SC, but it applies to partners too.
 - y) **Enable partners to feed into new emerging SC policies, particularly those on partnership.** As SC comes up with new policies, it is important that the voices of partners are heard in that discussion and are taken seriously when reaching conclusions which affect partnership.

Appendix A – Terms of Reference - SCN’s thematic evaluation of cooperation with partners

Background

Building local and national capacity to secure child rights is a key working principle in SCN’s global strategy, as it has been since the 1990s. SCN’s global strategy 2010-2013 states that:

‘Our primary goal is achieving results for children. Lasting change is dependent on building local capacity and, in certain situations, increased capacity for partner organisations are in itself a goal.’

As a working principle, ‘building local and national capacity’ acknowledges the role of local duty bearers and civil society in advocating for children’s rights and achieving sustainable results for children in the long run. Local ownership is essential to this thinking. SCN aim to strengthen local and national authorities as well as civil society including child-led groups, both in terms of their administrative capacity and competence, their professional skills, and capability to plan, implement, monitor, coordinate and interact as stakeholders in the development processes. Furthermore, a specific objective on building local capacity is set in the Child Rights Governance thematic priority area in the strategy: “strengthened capacity within civil society, including child led groups, to promote children’s rights”. SCN’s Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity (2007) gives guidance to how country programmes should approach and engage with local partners.

In Save the Children International’s Global Strategy 2010-2015 the Theory of Change puts building partnerships at the centre when exercising SC’s role as the innovator, the voice and the organization that achieves results at scale for children. In the strategy, it is stated that SCI will “collaborate with children, civil society organisations, communities, governments and the private sector to share knowledge, influence others and build capacity to ensure children’s rights are met.”

Challenges

Building local and national capacity is essential for a locally owned and sustainable development and yet very complex and challenging to achieve. SCN want to assess how and to what extent our strategies and policies are being implemented and effective in strengthening local capacity in the countries where SCN work, and how partnership cooperation could develop in the future in order to maximize the development effect.

INGOs’ added value in development in general and more specifically in building the capacity of governments and civil society is central to both public and professional discourse in Norway and globally. Some voices from the South and North alike are critical to what could be called an INGO-ification of development countries and lack of local ownership, the taking over of development agendas, the outside influence on power structures, the asymmetry of partnerships, etc. Donors have multiple interests in terms of strengthening local capacity whilst also requiring value for money, efficiency and results corresponding to their home public and donor development agenda and requirements. Issues such as corruption and financial control have increased the technical requirements on partners. This focus is paralleled by a drive in many development countries to take control over the development agenda, and also some times over the understanding and implementation of human rights. Many countries have

issued laws and restrictions on INGO influence and activity. An INGO like Save the Children has to constantly prove our added value both to donors, host governments, partners and the children we work for. Additionally, SCN has to balance the roles of being both a trusted capacity building partner to governments and conducting the 'watchdog role' together with local and national civil society as advocates for child rights. Therefore, we need to understand and develop the way we cooperate with partners under different and changing contexts to maximize the positive effects of partner cooperation and avoid unintended negative effects.

In the evaluation of SCN's cooperation with partners conducted in 2001, the evaluation team (INTRAC), made several recommendations addressing key challenges in North - South partner cooperation:

- the need for more flexibility in setting objectives in order to be more responsive to local needs and initiative and not stifling local ownership
- the need for long term development with partners, a broader and more coherent approach to capacity building
- a need to redefine SCN's role in the capacity building of partners and especially the role as facilitator rather than 'manager' or 'supervisor'.

In Norad's Organizational Review of SCN, conducted in 2008, the review team found some evidence of instrumental relationships with civil society partners in the two programmes studied. In some cases, partners seemed to be considered a means to reach Save the Children Norway's own objectives, while the team emphasized that strengthening the capacity of local partners should be an objective on its own. Norad strongly emphasizes the need for partnerships built on equality and transparency, respecting local ownership. Building the capacity and competence of partners should contribute to building a strong civil society in the countries where Save the Children Norway operates. These findings and comments have already had an impact in the way SCN defines its goals related to building local and national capacity, by feeding into the discussions and drafting of the global strategy 2010-2013. As shown in quotations from the strategy earlier, SCN concluded that it is legitimate to say that in some instances building capacity of partners is a means to an end, a way to ensure that we reach our target groups and in other instances it is the building of capacity which is the end. The review findings were nevertheless of such an importance to SCN that further follow up is needed to assess the impact (both intended and unintended, positive and negative) of SCN partner cooperation, hence reflected in this evaluation.

Fundamental to any relationship between SCN and a local partner (whether government or civil society) is to define the objective for the relationship: What do SCN and the partner want to achieve? Whether the objective is to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of childrens' rights in a particular target group, provide a service to children or it is to strengthen a particular partner as a voice for children in a society, capacity building should be pack and parcel in order to increase the likelihood that these objectives are achieved effectively in a sustainable manner and the partner is strengthened as an actor in the local development process. The main question is if and how SCN actually add value to the partners in terms of strengthening them in delivering on their objectives, and beyond that, as empowered, competent and sustainable actors anchored in the development process in their societies.

As Save the Children has come together as one international organisation, SCN identify the strengthening of local and national capacity as a key working principle which we

would like to see develop in this new fellowship. Several Save the Children members (SC Sweden, SC UK and SC US) as well as several of the country programmes supported by SCN have engaged in evaluations and studies in this field lately, hence the interest to contribute to an increased understanding and development of partner cooperation is shared by many.

This evaluation will build on previous evaluations and studies, e.g. SCN's thematic evaluation of cooperation with partners in 2001, conducted by INTRAC, and coordinated with recent and ongoing work in other SC member organisations.

Purpose/Objectives

The main purpose of this evaluation is to provide an insight into SCN's work with partners, **build learning and ensure accountability** by:

1. Providing evidence of **impact** (positive and negative, intended or unintended outcome/impact) of SCN's cooperation with partners in five different countries; to what extent and how a) partners have been strengthened as providers of and advocators for children's rights, and b) how SCN through partner cooperation has added value to the overall capacity of key actors in the society where we work to address and fulfil children's rights.
2. Provide an oversight of different implementation models and identify and **document good practices** in cooperating with partners, both government and civil society, appropriate to the aim of the partnership and capacity building of the partner. This assessment should also provide evidence of enabling versus obstructing factors in different context and discuss how this could be taken into account when setting the objective for partnerships and selecting partners and modalities.
3. Contribute to **increased knowledge and understanding** by bringing the organisation up to date on research/evaluation findings on partner cooperation (short state of the art report) and bring insight into and awareness of different and sometimes multiple objectives in partner cooperation.
4. Based on the above, provide input to the **formation** of future partnership cooperation in SCN supported programmes and SCI.

This evaluation will go parallel to and be informed by an ongoing SCN mapping of administrative routines in partner cooperation in supported country programmes, aiming to identify gaps between current practises and the new requirements coming with the roll out of SCI programme administration and suggest corresponding adjustments.

The evaluation will start out with a desk review to 1) provide a short update on literature and knowledge on partner cooperation, 2) review SCN (HO and CPs) and SC policies in this field, and 3) map the nature of SCN partnership across supported country programmes, examining numbers and types of partners, etc., complementing the information gathered the above mentioned mapping.

Scope

Four country programmes where SCN have presence or provide support are invited to participate in the evolution as case countries: Nepal, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Additionally, Ethiopia will be offered financial and technical support to conduct a parallel external evaluation/study designed particularly for a context where government has applied an NGO law restricting the cooperation between local civil society and INGOs.

These cases are chosen because all have considerable experience in partner cooperation that the whole organisation can learn from and they differ on several dimensions assumed to influence on the implementation of good partnerships, helping to illustrate possible models in different contexts. Relevant dimensions are: conflict/post conflict/stable context (hence illustrating differences in partner cooperation in humanitarian versus long term interventions); # and nature of partners (government vs. civil society partners); level of government regulations and control of civil society; different level of civil society activity; SCN holds different roles (Managing member/Participating member/SCN country programmes), only to mention some. An acknowledgement of the uniqueness of each country context in which SCN work has lead us to play down the comparative approach and concentrate on analysing the impact, relevance and potential of partner cooperation in each case country.

The evaluation will cover both government partners (duty bearers), civil society partners in general and child organisations more specifically (representing right holders).

The evaluation will look at partner cooperation per 2011, selecting examples of both

- 1) long term partnerships, dating back to the previous strategy period 2006-2009 and before, to assess impact and identify good practices, and
- 2) partnership established since the beginning of the new strategy period 2010-2014, to assess if any changes in practises has taken place and give input to the formation of future partnership models.

Examples should be drawn that illustrate a wide range of partnerships. Criteria for selection of sample partnerships has to be carefully developed, but important dimensions are differences in terms of implementation of humanitarian and long term development interventions, small/large partner, different thematic areas (education and CRG are strategic priorities), delivery of services to children vs. innovation vs. advocacy/awareness raising, etc.

In search of good practises, examples can be drawn from both SCN partnerships and those of other SC members present in a country.

The question of self implementation versus working through partners is not within the scope of this evaluation. Although SCN promotes implementation of development projects with local partners, there are circumstances where self implementation is the only choice (unable or unwilling state actors, non-excising or weak civil society etc).

Objectives and Key Evaluation Questions

1. Assess impact:

- a. What impact has different modes of partner cooperation had, and how, on the capacity of partners, both government and civil society, to implement and advocate for children's rights?
- b. How effective have SCN's support been in terms of strengthening the capacity of each individual partner organisation beyond the achievement of the defined/common objectives for the partnership?
- c. Has SCN through its cooperation with partners contributed to the overall capacity of society in general, and civil society in particular, to voice, address and fulfil children's rights?

- d. To what extent are clear and consistent objectives set for the partner cooperation in each case, which impact can be assessed against? And are the objectives known and shared by HQ, Country Offices and partners?
- e. Are SC partnering with key actors in government and civil society when compared to the actual child rights issues in each case country? Which processes are followed in order to assess and select strategic partners corresponding to the human rights situation and the intended objectives for partner cooperation? Are the selections of partners ensuring sustainability as well as strengthening the new and weaker voices and actors in the field of child rights?
- f. Are there any negative or unintended effects to be found in the selected sample of partner cooperation? Special attention should be paid to the most prominent known pitfalls of INGO presence.

Impact should be assessed against intentions/objectives for the partnership, and the contextual and organisational setting. Key dimensions of impact are *relevance* and *sustainability*.

2. Document **good practices**:
 - a. Through a mapping of partner cooperation in practice and the assessment of impact, identify and document some good practices which could serve as examples to be replicated. Examples should apply to government and civil society cooperation respectively, and illustrate different contextual settings.
3. Contribute to **increased knowledge and understanding**:
 - a. Produce a short 'state of the art' on partnership cooperation, based on acknowledged research, evaluations and studies.
 - b. Structure the different intentions/objectives for partner cooperation found at different levels of the organisation (in writing and in practice) and discuss (i) potential conflicting vs. mutually reinforcing objectives and (ii) how different modes of partner cooperation contribute to the different objectives.
4. Input to **future partner cooperation** policy and practice:
 - a. Based on finding in this evaluation, with a special request for input from children, partners and stakeholders in general, what changes should be made to current modes of partnership cooperation in order to strengthen local capacity, ensure local ownership and sustainability in the future?
 - b. Which modes of partner cooperation are particularly strengthening civil society in promoting child rights?
 - c. Are modern technology and social media offering any potential to strengthen or change the way SCN work with local partners and networking?

Methodology

The main focus of this evaluation will be on how SCN has and can strengthen local capacity through partnership. With capacity we mean both the capacity of partners (both government, private and civil society) to implement development projects effectively, the

capacity to play a role/be the voice as advocates for children rights in line with the common objectives of SCN and the partner, and the ability of the partner organization to develop, define and perform according to their own full mandate (to manage their affairs successfully, to perform the functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives for themselves in a sustainable manner).

Assessing impact will mainly focus on the change in the capacity and potential of partners to perform better according to the common objective for the partnership. Capacity and potential will be analysed as strategic and organisational, relevance, sustainability and independence. This evaluation will not be a full assessment of partners' impact in terms of positive changes in the lives of children and society as a whole. Nevertheless, secondary sources (evaluations, project reports etc) and stakeholders should be consulted to a certain extent to get an impression of partner's ability to deliver according to their purpose.

The methods for data collection, analysis, review process and participation will be detailed in a dialogue between consultants and as outlined in the evaluation plan (Inception Report) to be produced by the consultants. A key principle in SCN evaluation is, however, child participation, which should be integrated in the research methodology. The methods will be finalized in detail in start up workshops in each country. Selection of sample cases of partnerships will be done by the consultants with assistance and advice from CO staff, based on pre-approved criteria for selection.

Deliverables

- Evaluation Plan / Inception Report to be approved by the Steering Group
- Participatory workshops/meetings
 - Start up workshop in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nepal and Nicaragua, settling the evaluation teams and involving stakeholders, and detailing/adopting the evaluation plan and data collection in country
 - Sharing findings and analysis with SMTs and staff upon return from data collection
 - Share draft reports and facilitate participatory review processes
- Data collection in the four case countries
- Draft and final country reports and global synthesis report
 - The country report should present the main findings, lessons learned, analysis and recommendations in accordance with the TOR and IR per country
 - The final global synthesis report should not exceed 30 pages, including an executive summary of 2-4 pages.
- Presentation of the final report(s) at one workshop/conference

All documentation and reports should be in English, and the Inception Report and final reports will be subject to approval by the Steering Group.

Criteria for selecting international consultant(s)

- Proven record of excellent competence in evaluations and assessments
- Excellent competence in development partnership models and practises involving both civil society and government partners, as well as capacity building with partners.
- Good team leader skills
- Good writing skills

- Preferably have knowledge of SCN and/or child rights' programming (at least one of the consultants) Preferably be familiar with the concept of children's participation (at least one of the consultants)
- Preferably have knowledge of Spanish/(Portuguese) (at least one of the consultants)

Reference documents

Key documents, but not exhaustive:

SCN strategies, especially 2006-2009 and the current strategy 2010-2013

SCN's Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity (2007)

Norad's 'Organisational Review of Save the Children Norway' (2008)

INTRAC's 'SCN- Thematic Evaluation of Co-operation with partners' (2001)

Time Frame

December 2010 – January 2011	Case Country to confirm participation and give input to evaluation questions Set Evaluation Organization Finalize Terms of Reference
February 2011	Call for consultants Decide Evaluation Team Desk review
March 2011	Inception report/evaluation plan First kick off workshop in one case country
March – June 2011	Field work and data analysis
July – August 2011	(Summer vacation in Europe) Draft country reports due by end of August
August – September 2011	Sharing and discussing findings with stakeholders and Reference group
October 2011	Draft Global Report and review process
November 2011	Final country reports and global report
December 2011 (January 2012)	Approval and sharing

Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities

Please see the organisational set up for a detailed outline of the formal organisation of the management of the evaluation. In brief, the evaluation will be anchored with the SCN International Programme Director, Gunnar Andresen, as project owner. The evaluation process will be managed by a project group, headed by the project manager. Most communication within the project group will happen by email and telephone, but we aim at 1-2 F2F meetings. A steering group will make decisions about budget, consultants and approval of reports, based on input from the reference group. A reference group with representatives from among SC staff from SCN HO and CPs, from other SC members and NORAD, will input to the substantial discussion on ToR, draft findings and conclusions. The Terms of Reference is approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) of SCN and the Board of Directors will be kept informed. The organisational set up for the evaluation in Ethiopia will be decided by the SMT there.

This should be an external evaluation, and external independent consultant(s) (hereafter called international consultants) will lead the evaluation process, analyse the data, and write up country reports and a final global report. Details will be outlined in a contract between SCN and the international consultant(s). To assist the international consultant(s), local national consultants and data collectors can be hired. As always in SCN managed evaluations, the evaluation will involve staff and stakeholders' participation, and special efforts will be made to ensure meaningful child participation. Evaluation teams will be set up for each country. One SCN focal person has been appointed in each of the case countries and in Ethiopia to facilitate the process in countries. These focal persons are also part of the project group. Although participation is encouraged, it will ultimately be the external global consultant's responsibility to ensure an independent and high quality evaluation process and reports. The SCN organisation will support them to the best of our ability to reach that end.

The interest and dedication of Country Directors and SMTs are always highly conducive to good evaluation processes.

Appendix B – Key Documents

Note: Many documents were received and reviewed by the evaluation team. Only some of the most significant are shown below.

Save the Children Norway Overall Documents

Save the Children Norway, (continuously sections have been updated), *Programme Handbook – Various Sections*

Save the Children Norway (2007), *Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity*

Save the Children Zimbabwe Documents

Redd Barna Zimbabwe (date?), *Guidelines for Partnerships*

Save the Children (2010?), *Light Strategy for the Zimbabwe Programme*

Save the Children Zimbabwe (2010), *Country Annual Report 2010*

Save the Children Zimbabwe (2011), *Annual Plan 2011*

Save the Children Alliance/International

Save the Children Alliance (2005), *Practice Standards in Children's Participation*

Save the Children International Programmes (2011), *Grant Management Manual*

Partner Documents

A number of partner proposals, agreements, reports and SCN partner meeting reports etc., particularly in relation to those partners visited during the evaluation

Other

International Institute for Child Rights and Development (2004), *Children as Partners: Child Participation Promoting Social Change*

Keystone Performance Surveys (2011), *NGO Partners Survey 2010, Public Report*

Lansdown Gerrison (2010), *A Framework for Measuring the Participation of Measuring the Participation of Children and Adolescents*

NORAD (2009), *Organisational Review: Save the Children Norway*

Appendix C – Itinerary for Evaluation

Date	Rod	Sekai	Maggie
Sunday 22 nd May	Arrival in Harare		Arrival in Harare
Monday 23 rd May	Security Briefing		Security Briefing
	<p>Workshop on purpose of evaluation, understanding of partnership, State of the Art document, selection process for sampling with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTRAC Consultants Local Consultant SC Oslo staff SC Mozambique and Ethiopia staff and consultant (Nepal and Nicaragua could not come) SC Zimbabwe staff SCN Zimbabwe partners 		
Tuesday 24 th May	<p>Smaller meeting on methodology in more detail with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTRAC Consultants Local Consultant SC Oslo staff SC Mozambique and Ethiopia staff and consultant (Nepal and Nicaragua could not come) SC Zimbabwe coordinating staff 		
	<p>Detailed planning of itinerary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTRAC Consultants Local Consultant SC Zimbabwe coordinating staff 		

Wednesday 25 th May	Development of interview protocols	UNICEF Ndangariro Moyo and Allette Sibanda, Child Protection Specs.	Writing up of workshop findings to amend Inception Report
Thursday 26 th May	Ministry of Justice Daniel Shoniwa, Regional Magistrate Idine Magonga, National Coordinator for Victim Friendly Courts		
	NANGO Abel Sanderson, Programme Coordinator	Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children Musavengana Chibwana, Programme Manager Kundai Dzinotywei, Finance and Administration Manager	NANGO Abel Sanderson, Programme Coordinator
Friday 27 th May	Save the Children Zimbabwe Helena Andersson Novela, Country Director Sibangani Shumba, Programme Director Development Sharon Hauser, Programme Director Implementation Sharon Mukanyi, Project Officer Patience Matambo, PO Ezekiel Kanengoni, PO Danai Chitumwa, Accounting Manager, Kudiwa, Muzango, Chief Controller	Presbyterian Children's Club Alice Chikomo, Director	Preparation for Workshop with Children

Saturday 28 th May	Workshop with Children: Harare City Junior Council (4 children) Chitungwiza Junior Council (5 children) Support Group, Warren Park (12 children)		
Sunday 29 th May			Travel to Matobo (Matopos)
Monday 30 th May	Mavombo Trust Former SCUK	Mbire Rural District Council Claudius Majaya, Chief Executive Officer Michaelangel Dumba, Project Coordinator Henry Pore, EO Administration and Community Services	Matobo District Education Office Dube Patrick, Acting District Education Officer
	Zimbabwe AIDS Prevention Project Winfreda Chandisarewa, Deputy Programme Director Ronald Anesu Sagonda, Finance and Administration Director	Mbire District Education Office Mr Chiweya, Inspector Mbire East Mr Rwambiwa, Inspector Mbire West Mr Munyambari, Better Schools Programme Coordinator Mr Madhuro, Early Childhood Development Trainer Mr Charuka, Special Needs Education/Psychological Services Mr Chidavaenzi, Mbire District Education Officer (acting)	Matobo Rural District Council Ndou Mashudu, District Child Protection Coordinator

	Ministry of Labour and Social Services Taurayi Tabarara, Programme Officer Leon Muwoni, National Coordinator, NAP II		Child Protection Committee, Matobo Members
			Basilwizi Trust Enos Kavina, Programmes Manager Tatan Thathari, Head of Finance and Administration
Tuesday 31st May	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare Anne Musiwa, Deputy Director, National Programme of Action for Children	University of Zimbabwe, Department of Teacher Education Mr Mavhundutse, Lecturer Dr Matiure, Chairman, Education Department	Travel to Gweru Cleopatra Nzombe , SC Programme Officer Basic Education en route
	Ministry of Education LD Hire, Project Officer P Makanyengwa, Committee Member M Munzara, Human Resources Officer	Chinhoyi Child Led Group Wilfred Mavhunga, Provincial Chairperson for Child Led Group Elvis Kamutango, Coordinator + 20 children	Padare Children's Group Nixon Nembaware, Acting Programme Director Obert Chigodor, Programme Officer, Rumbidzai Amin, Finance Manager Paul Juru, Programme Director Midlands

	Royal Norwegian Embassy Tor Kubberud, Counsellor		School in Gweru School Deputy Director Direct of Child Line School Development Council members
	NANGO Cephas Zinhumwe, Chief Executive Officer		
Wednesday 1 st June	Family Support Trust Effie SM Malianga, Director	Marondera Municipality Mr Nyamuzihwa, Chamber Secretary Kumbirai Kundiona, Coordinator Child Protection	Travel from Gweru to Harare
		Marondera Fight Club Nyasha Dick, Acting Director Munyaradzi Tengwa, Marondera Junior Council + 9 others	
Consolidation of data and preparation of Preliminary Feedback Power Point			
Thursday 2 nd June	Feedback Meeting: INTRAC Consultants Local Consultant SC Zimbabwe staff SCN Zimbabwe partners (particularly those met during evaluation)		
	Final Meeting of Consultants to discuss what remains to be done, documents and additional information to be collected		
Friday 3 rd June	Departure from Harare		Departure from Harare

Appendix D – Map of Zimbabwe



