Abstract

The complexity of modern development calls for effective networking and collaboration of the key state and non-state stakeholders. However, until recently, the focus has been on public-private partnership (PPP), civil society organization (CSO)-public (sector) partnership, and CSO–private (sector) partnership. CSO-public-private-partnership (CPPP) is a new but fast growing form of cooperative governance whose theoretical literature and practice need further development in Cameroon and elsewhere. Using a comparative approach, the paper examines how synergy between the private sector, government and the CSO can support poverty alleviation, improve public service delivery, and foster sustainable development. The paper further shows how CPPPs can be rendered more successful, and why its adoption can enhance the ongoing decentralization process in Cameroon.

Background Issues

The growing interdependencies of today’s knowledge societies make it increasingly necessary for stakeholders who share common outcomes to collaborate even when their strategies and orientation differ in many ways. This is particularly so because the knowledge economy is systematically uniting the consciences of actors in the public and private domains, and the CSO on the need to eradicate poverty and achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Accordingly, focus is shifting from PPPs, CSO–public partnerships, and CSO – private partnerships to CPPPs. PPP helps government to be more cost effective in managing public services. CSO-public partnerships are generally adopted to assist government deliver development support most appropriately, while CSO-private partnerships aid corporate concerns to deliver corporate social responsibility (CSR) products more effectively and efficiently. Generally, the supportive roles the CSO can play for either the public sector or private organizations are already well known, but the literature on CPPPs is still scanty. The paper notes that success in achieving and sustaining gainful CPPPs call for trust building, demonstrated through respect for agreements and commitment to long term development goals. The paper discusses why synergy of the CSO, the public sector, and the private sector is important for speedy development, and further draws lessons for CPPPs in Cameroon from selected experiences of other countries. The paper has 5 parts, as follows: 1 discusses the synergetic relationship between the CSO, government, and the private sector; 2 examines how private corporations manage their corporate social responsibilities through the CSO; 3 presents some models of CPPPs adopted elsewhere, and draws lessons for the institutionalization of CPPPs in Cameroon; 4 discusses the enablers of CPPPs. 5 analyses how CPPPs can be adapted to support the decentralization process in Cameroon, based on the experiences of a few other countries; lastly, 6 makes recommendations for promoting CPPPs in Cameroon.

1. Building synergy between the private sector, government and the civil society

Modern history has shown that the future of states and regions of the world lies in a strong relationship between states, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector. This new paradigm of collaborative governance is a shift from seeing governance as the preserve of government alone, to inclusive governance models that incorporate the contributions of CSOs and the private sector. However, in
most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, including Cameroon, the civil society movement is still in its infancy. Moreover, the growth of CSOs is hampered by weak capacity and declining financial support from donors and government. The past decades have witnessed a spectacular decline in donor funding, and many governments see the CSO as a threat to national stability. At the same time, however, there is growing need for governments and the corporate world to seek cross sector partnership with CSOs. While governments need the CSO for grass root mobilization and development monitoring, more corporate entities seek long-term partnerships with the CSO for the management and/or delivery of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) products and services. The CSO on its part earns legitimacy and obtains resources, and actualizes the reason for its existence, by partnering with the government, the corporate world, and the people. Although the value of CPPPs in Cameroon has not been measured empirically, the trend suggests a general rise in partnerships of the CSO with public and private sector institutions.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the synergetic relationship between the CSO, government, and the private sector. The principal characteristic of a well-functioning state is a healthy relationship between the private sector, government and the civil society. The productivity of the trio is essential for sustaining balanced development; the state is responsible for creating an enabling environment for functioning of the entire system and all activities, the private sector generates jobs and income, and the CSO facilitates sound service delivery and mobilizes people and groups to participate effectively in development. The CSO equally supports poverty reduction by helping the citizens to empower themselves, and pressuring government and the private sector institutions for social accountability and sound public finance management. In Cameroon, several CSOs have collaborated with government and private organizations on a number of projects, but the practice of CPPPs as illustrated in Figure 1 is so far not common.

Figure 1: Synergetic relationship between CSOs, Government, and the Private Sector

2. CSO - private partnership and corporate social responsibility (CSR)
The most common form of CSO-private partnership is linked to firms’ CSR strategy. Simply, CSR is a firm’s continuing commitment to behave ethically and contribute to improving the quality of life of its workers, the local community, and society at large. A firm’s CSR strategy is its effective response to a recognized social issue that can strengthen its social acceptability, business operations or competitiveness. It can also be an outcome of pressures by the host community to benefit directly from the firm. Whichever reason is stronger, many firms find it more economical and impactful to deliver CSR products and services through the CSO.

Generally, it is no longer enough for private sector institutions to exist merely to maximize profits. The impact of corporate organizations on the host communities and its closely linked state and non-state collaborators has emerged as an important benchmark of corporate performance. Host governments, communities and the public are now more concerned with the firm’s corporate social value than its direct productivity benefits. At the same time, prospective investors are increasingly interested in estimating the potential CSR demands of a community as a critical factor in deciding whether to invest in an area or not. Managing CSR successfully has become a risk factor associated with a firm’s reputation and corporate brand. Increasingly, the success and sustainability of a firm is linked to its community relationship strategy and as a result, more corporate bodies and the CSO have discovered common grounds. Satisfying the host community is not just about the CSR budget, but more seriously about how well the corporation communicates with its host community. This explains why a private organization would choose to deliver CSR through a credible CSO. Table 1 summarizes some of the benefits the CSO and private organizations gain from such collaborations.

### Table 1: Mutual gains from CSO – Private Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Society Organization</th>
<th>Private Sector Entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial resources</strong> – CSOs can be paid for its services directly; with subventions or seed funds.</td>
<td><strong>Reputation</strong> – broad acceptability of a firm in the new economy is dependent on how its social role is perceived by the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand recognition</strong> – association with a successful corporate entity impacts positively on a CSO’s public outlook.</td>
<td><strong>Legitimacy</strong> – impactful CSR projects bonds the corporate concern with the host community and government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to new networks</strong> – managing a relationship successfully opens doors to new relationships and networks.</td>
<td><strong>Access to new markets</strong> – more consumers and investors desire buy-in to socially responsible corporate entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management expertise</strong> – the CSO is compelled to apply best practice management principles acceptable to the corporate partners.</td>
<td><strong>Social entrepreneurship</strong> – the corporate entity is connected to wealth creation, people’s empowerment, and the building of social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda setting</strong> – CSO sets program agenda that is realistic and implementable.</td>
<td><strong>Lobbying</strong> – the firm lobbies for more favorable operational conditions through the CSO and its networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy monitoring and influence</strong> – the CSO earns social relevance and influence and builds capacity for policy monitoring.</td>
<td><strong>Stakeholder management</strong> – the firm focuses on its core business, and avoids being blamed for possible failure of the CSR activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.1. Pillars of sound CSO – Private Partnership

As depicted in Figure 2 below, the pillars of sound CSO-private partnership are as follows:
- **Pillar 1: Building identities and solidarity** - the CSO should be well identified and known by the relevant players and actors. Its relevance, legitimacy, credibility, and competencies should not be
Pillar 2: Mobilization & Mapping – the CSO should identify and mobilize the resources it requires to work effectively and efficiently. This includes information, finances, collaborators and platforms. This calls for sound competencies for sensitization, networking, promoting volunteerism and legitimate people-driven movements, and communicating effectively with the relevant constituency.

Pillar 3: Lobbying and Campaigning – the CSO should be well versed in the theory and practice of lobbying and campaigning. It should quickly identify and use the most appropriate means of swaying people to the desired line of thought and action. This call for the appropriate skills and approach to negotiation, dialogue, role modeling, education, animation, and relationship building.

Pillar 4: Programming and delivery of interventions – the CSO should prioritize its interventions, and deliver them in a manner that is most appropriate to achieve the desired outcomes. A realistic assessment and understanding of the socio-political milieu in Cameroon (that is, the enabling laws, political culture, policy regime, and socio-cultural context) is indispensable. What is universally true may not be factual or applicable given the local conditions. CSOs should “fight” with “facts” not “fists”, and wholesale adoption of models from elsewhere should be avoided. Strong aptitude for brinkmanship that allows the CSO officials to carry on advocacy without losing the support and patronage of the relevant state and non-state stakeholders is required.

Pillar 5: Monitoring and Evaluation – the CSO should design and implement M&E mechanisms for tracking plans, programs, actions, and policy decisions of governmental. The political environment in Cameroon seem well disposed to focusing on the technical issues of development e.g., how to enhance public service delivery, and less on the speed and efficacy of devolution of political power.

Additionally, the CSO needs to convince the corporate entity that the CSR activities can enhance its social marketability. The CSO should also be able to contribute some of its resources to support the CSR activity as a mark of its integrity and self-sustainability. This implies that the CSO should have capacity to generate some revenue internally.
3. Modeling CPPPs
A review of the relevant literature indicates several possible structured mechanisms for initiating and sustaining CPPPs. The major ones are summarized below as follows:

- **Produce and market innovations** – for example, a (public) research organization discovers how to process a local herb into tablets/capsules, a bank (corporate entity) finances the drug manufacture, and a CSO sensitizes the public on the efficacy of the new drug.

- **Task-oriented partnerships** – the CSO identifies low access to clean potable water as the primary cause of a disease and prepares a project for a donor (corporate entity) to drill a borehole and install a water treatment plant. The CSO lobbies government to approve land for the project, and the water supply authority to test the water for the required quality standard.

- **Finding indigenous means of meeting global standard** – the CSO engages a conservational organization and government to check bush meat hunting by domesticating/propagating forest animals.

- **Collaborative interventions** – the CSO works with an investor and the municipal council to establish a waste recycling plant.

3.1. Review of selected successful CPPPs
Below are selected cases of successful CPPPs and identification of lessons for Cameroon.

**A. Colombia**

A.1. **Bogotá Cómo Vamos (BCV):** BCV started as a collaboration of the Chamber of Commerce of Bogotá, the Corona Foundation and the newspaper El Tiempo in Bogotá, Colombia. The initiative engaged the CSO in monitoring and evaluating public policies in the city. BCV aims to increase citizens’ control over public policymaking, implementation of development plans, and governance generally. The initiative has already been implemented in Colombian cities including Medellín, Cali and Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Barranquilla Pereira. BCV has made ordinary citizens more informed of government policies and programs, and government officials more accountable.

**Lessons for Cameroon** – CSO coalitions in partnership with a donor (GIZ, EU, DFID, etc.) can assist the central government on budget implementation monitoring.

A.2. **Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB):** this collaboration is led by a group of recycling workers in Bogotá and has received support from private firms and governmental authorities. The initiative seeks to create a public agenda at both the local and national levels to increase the access of recycling organizations and workers to state services and recycling value chains. The outcome is that more recycling plants have been established in the area, leading to more green jobs, reduction in the littering of waste, and a cleaner and greener environment.

**Lessons for Cameroon** - CSO coalition can support the municipality to popularize waste selection by households prior to collection by HYSACAM. Reducing pre-recycling selection cost through this means will render recycling of waste more attractive to prospective investors.

**B. Brazil**

B.1. **Novas Alianças:** This project promotes the cross-sector collaboration of CSOs, legislature and the media for the M&E of public budgets to effectively implement the principles established in the Statute for Children and Adolescents in several municipalities. The project mobilized the social actors, especially public administration advisors, promoted the culture of participatory public budgeting, and communicated
periodic monitoring reports to the public. The project team consisted of CSOs, the media, and the legislature.

**Lessons for Cameroon** – gender advocacy CSO coalitions can collaborate with the Ministries of Public Health and Women’s Empowerment and the Family, and the media to monitor traditional health attendants’ practices and effectively enforce the law against female genital mutilation. The project can mobilize and train traditional birth attendants, women leaders, CBOs and FBOs and further educate the public on the dangers of such harmful practices, and why the culprits should be reported to the Police.

**B.2. Program One Million Cisterns:** This collaboration sought to ensure access to water for families in Brazil’s desert region. It was achieved by constructing cisterns to capture and process rain water for human consumption. The main principle of the initiative is civil society ownership; hence local communities are in charge of constructing the cisterns, and families are trained to manage them. The program is coordinated by a 62 CSO cluster network, and funded jointly by the Brazilian Federal government (70%), FEBRABAN (donor)(10%) and beneficiary families (20%).

**Lessons for Cameroon:** the project is quite relevant for Cameroon given the growing challenge of getting year round water supply in several towns. A water supply CSO coalition can collaborate with a research organization to construct cisterns that are subsidized by government and the technology disseminated to families.

**4. Enablers of CPPPs**

The review of experiences in countries with successful cross sector collaborations reveals some common themes or key enablers of CPPPs, as follows:

I. Cross sector collaborations should be seen as a means to achieve a social objective, and a process that improves and matures over time. As it is said “partnerships are built by partnering”. This implies that the initial challenges should be overlooked as the partners strive onward with the social objective in mind.

II. The success of CPPPs is often preceded by strong personal relationships or interactions based on the individuals' conviction about some social problems. Usually there may not be clear proposals or operational guidelines at the beginning. It follows that the CSO, government, and corporate entities should value and preserve relationships, as any one of it can lead to partnerships with time.

III. The collaborative initiative and leadership of a convening actor is an important bonding force in cross sector collaborations. Among other factors, the legitimacy, past roles, and mindset of the leader can make or mar the partnership. Good leaders persevere through the negotiation process; achieving agreement among partners, and advancing the initiative’s mission in the public arena.

IV. Having a common cause among the partnering actors/sectors is an essential condition for the sustainability of cross-sector partnerships. Often, a common cause can be a moral or ethical reaction to identification of a social problem. For instance, where various sectors in the society think that unjustifiable water or electricity bills are unacceptable.

V. To deal with the fear that an organization’s identity may be distorted by the partnership, it may be useful to work collectively, yet in parallel to maintain each partner’s identity and peculiarity.

VI. Conflicts and resistance in the course of building partnerships is healthy and relevant to the collaborative process. It allows the key actors of partnering entities to develop dynamics that can overcome differences among the partners and thereby render the relationship self-sustaining.

VII. Generating interest, resources and a commitment to action from civil society, the public sector and the corporate world is fundamental for CPPPs. An important step in the construction and sustainability of CPPPs is the creation of a public agenda that rallies the stakeholders towards a
common cause. Involvement of the state partner is essential for giving the public agenda broad legitimacy. Three steps can be followed to give broad legitimacy to a cause:

a. Firstly, the partnering actors (from the civil society, government, and the corporate world) should be mobilized to conceptualize and articulate the social problem or need to the extent that it becomes socially visible, thereby elevating it to the level of a public agenda.

b. Secondly, spaces should be created for open debate of the public agenda among various actors from diverse perspectives.

c. Thirdly, new knowledge should be produced about the public agenda through research and discussions until the initiatives to address it leads to the production of new knowledge on how to resolve it.

VIII. Concerting effectively among partners is a fundamental condition for building confidence within a partnership. It is also essential to develop a communication mechanism for keeping the partners and other interested parties well informed. Agreed rules and principles should be formally written in a legal document in order to enforce adherence and respect. All parties should respect and fulfill agreements, and earn the trust of others.

5. Using CPPPs to Support the Decentralization Process in Cameroon

It is widely accepted that decentralization can reduce poverty, improve access to social services, and enhance the political and economic inclusion of local people. However, most country level decentralization reforms progress slowly from delegation of the technical aspects of project implementation and monitoring, to the more complex aspects of devolution of political authority from the central to the sub-national units and local councils. It also needful to understand that each country has to determine the paradigms of decentralization the best fit its history and experiences. CSOs can support and participate actively in the process by creating platforms for CPPP dialogues and lobbying. Confrontation and provocative criticism of government should be avoided as they have the tendency to promote more exclusion and suspicion. Rather, promoting practical cost effective solutions to pressing social problem can build trust and encourage sustainable partnerships.

5.1. CPPPs and Local Governance

It needs to be understood that local governance does not refer to the local or municipal councils and the local population alone; it should legitimately involves also the CSO and private organizations that operate around and within the area. The CSO and private sector should support the strengthening of local governance for growth, poverty reduction and good governance. The most appropriate means for the civil society to promote CPPPs in local governance include the following:

- Building active links with various stakeholders at all levels, beginning with the local council where entry can be much easier.
- Accumulating social capital by mobilizing broad based participation in determining local priorities and contributing to the implementation and monitoring of local development initiatives.
- Participating actively in policy development; during local and national consultations, identification of issues, and creating opinions.
- Focusing advocacy energies on initiatives that are participatory, pro – poor and community level centered.

5.2. Selected examples of successful CPPPs

This sub-section reviews successful CPPP initiatives in some countries, and draws lesson for Cameroon.
5.1.1. Malawi

- **A Case for separating political decision making from technical advisory functions**
  To improve community decision-making and delivery of services, the District Development Committees (DDC), hitherto dominated by civil servants, was reviewed and allowed to focus on making political decisions, while the District Executive Committee (DEC), with civil society and private sector representatives as members, was created to provide purely technical advisory and project monitoring services. This restructuring led to the separation of political decision-making (of the DDC) and technical advisory functions (of the DEC). Equally, at the community level, Area Development Committees (ADC) and Village Development Committees (VDC) were reorganized with extension staff of ministries/departments, civil society and private sector as members to provide technical and advisory services to ADCs and VDCs. This restructuring of local participatory structures enhanced community participation.

  **Lesson for Cameroon** – DECs consisting of representatives of government, civil society, and the private sector can be created to monitor planning, plan implementation, and monitoring in each District or Division. The DEC should serve as a purely technical advisory body responsible for reviewing the activities of all levels of government within the District or Division and proposing the most appropriate line of action to take.

- **A case for decentralization of planning**
  A District Development Planning System (DDPS) is institutionalized in the districts with the active involvement of CSOs and the private sector. The DDPS has promoted district level data collection and documentation of periodic district socio-economic profiles that provide detailed situation analysis of a district and key development challenges and development priorities. These profiles guide central government, private investors, communities and development partners in investment planning, designing projects, and developing district plans.

  **Lesson for Cameroon** - the DDPS can be established in Cameroon to deepen decentralization of planning and promote socioeconomic profiling at the grassroots.

- **A case of creating “basket fund” for grass root development**
  To support the system development for the DDPS, a District Development Fund (DDF) was created in 1994, as a non-conditional investment fund for promoting local decision making and responding promptly to locally determined needs. The DDF serves as a “basket fund” for pooling together the resources of government, donors, and the private sector for development of the District. The system permitted the districts to build capacity for the administration and accountability of funds held at district level at the discretion of the DDC and with the technical advisory role of the DECs.

  **Lesson for Cameroon** – adapting the DDF system in Cameroon can speed up the on-going decentralization process in the country and provide the basis for the healthy competition and development of the districts (or divisions).

5.1.2. Kyrgyzstan

- **A Case of capacity building for wealth creation**
  This involved teams of well-trained volunteers engaging in a combination of intensive group mobilization and training for a 3 month period, with the local governments providing arable land for cultivation. Self Help Groups (SHGs) were formed to promote savings and facilitate access to credit (through the Kyrgyz Agricultural Finance Corporation). The SHGs also promoted cohesion for collective action and
mutual support. Within one year the groups had started individual or joint income generating activities, including agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, etc.

**Lesson for Cameroon** – CSOs can organize local people into SHGs, and the government can provide seed funds to microfinance institutions for onward lending to the SHGs at affordable interest rates. Access to land for agriculture can be further eased by allocating farmland for registered SHGs to share to their members.

6. **Recommendations for promoting CPPPs in Cameroon**

- Decentralization of the technical aspects of development planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and mobilization of finance should be separated from the devolution of political authority. The former can easily be initiated as part of the ongoing process of promoting good governance.
- Shared values, mutual trust, and commitment to sound local governance can promote CPPPs.
- Creating an enabling legal framework for the mainstreaming of CPPPs in the decentralization agenda will enhance attainment of broad-based commitment of citizens to local governance.
- All state and non-state stakeholders need regular capacity building for change of mindset, technical leadership, and participatory governance.

**Bibliography**

Civil society and private sector partnerships: exploring opportunities for engagement in West Africa
http://www.wacsi.org/

Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) Government, Private Sector and Civil Society for Sustainable Development: Toward a Collaborative Synergy in Latin America wagner.nyu.edu/leadership