

REMOTE PARTNERING PROGRAMME

promoting locally driven collaboration



Painting by Maria Hayes

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is seen as a key approach to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Many hopes are pinned on using partnering as the mechanism most likely to be successful in tackling the many intractable and complex challenges we face across the globe. Working unilaterally or in isolation is no longer an option. However, experience suggests that partnering is not easy even when partners are able to regularly meet face-to-face, so how much more difficult are they when, for whatever reasons, **partners rarely or never meet**? This is the reality for many partnerships. The partnering practice involved we refer to as what we are describing here as ‘remote partnering’.

Those on the partnering front line operating in a wide range of highly challenging contexts report their frustration at being at the end of a partnering ‘supply chain’ where they are largely the recipients of instructions from their organisational HQs and / or external donors. They feel (with some justification) that they are being simply tasked with bringing other ‘partners’ on board to undertake pre-conceived programmes of work. **They are treated as passive beneficiaries rather than as active partners**. This is why, for many, partnering long-distance has not felt like a genuinely collaborative or empowering process. Partnering approaches that fail to take into account the ‘remote’ dimension do little to build enthusiasm and commitment, and to really shift power to those whom the partnership seeks to serve and mobilise.

This is the challenge we are determined to address.

Programme goals

- **Promote and raise awareness** of ‘remote partnering’ as a concept that requires particular approaches and skills in order to bring about change
- **Improve remote partnering practices** both for individuals and organisations
- **Contribute to a partnering paradigm shift** within the humanitarian and international development sectors and beyond

FOUNDING AND PILOT PROGRAMME PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Act Alliance • Action Against Hunger • British Red Cross • Care International • Geneva Learning Foundation • Humanitarian Leadership Academy • International Planned Parenthood Federation • Oxfam • Partnerships Resource Centre • Partnership Brokers Association • PAX for Peace • Save the Children

Programme activities

1. Face-to-face Options – for practitioners, functional leads and decision-makers

Commissioned workshops (ranging from a 0.5-day workshop for up to 100 people to a 3-day vocational training course) that are designed to build awareness of the importance of building capacity for partnering remotely and to deepening understanding of what it takes to manage remote partnerships imaginatively and effectively. The 3-day course is designed for up to 24 participants and, in terms of design and delivery approaches, draws on the rich experience of the internationally-recognised 4-day Partnership Brokers Training – albeit with a different focus.

These options can be followed up with on-going coaching and mentoring – undertaken long-distance.

2. Remote Partnering On-line Programme (RPOP) – commissioned by organisations

A unique programme developed and run by the Geneva Learning Foundation which is a world leader in on-line learning using the Scholar platform with an established approach that can be suitably nuanced for each commissioning organisation. This can cater for up to 500 participants per cohort and enables a significant contribution to building internal coherence and partnering strategy within large organisations that may themselves be highly distributed in structure.

A fully qualified partnership broker accompanies the programme and helps to shape and steer the content. This option is designed to: impact organisational cultures, contribute to strategic change processes and build tipping points for system change around the organisation's partnering practices.

3. Certificate in Brokering Remote Partnerships for front-line practitioners

Designed for individual practitioners (either nominated by their organisations / partners or self-nominating) this course runs over a two-month period using easily accessed IT platforms. Each cohort comprises between 50 and 70 people and offers a level of 1-2-1 coaching / support from the course facilitator (a fully qualified partnership broker who is themselves a front-line practitioner with on-line training and learning expertise).

New cohorts start whenever there are sufficient numbers of applicants.



Monitoring, sharing & learning

We are committed to monitoring all Remote Partnering Programme activities and to creating new knowledge that emerges from all of the activities and to re-visiting our assumptions and frameworks on a continuous basis. We have also agreed with our founding partners that we make outputs and materials available in the public domain so that others unable to join our programmes for whatever reason may be able to access knowledge and practical tools that they can adapt to their own contexts and challenges.

FROM A COURSE GRADUATE:

The Course was an eye opener! It gave me many new ideas particularly because it addressed some of the things that often get lost when working remotely – such as taking the time to get to know each other and each other's challenges better. It was both practical and imaginative.

Resources available

The **website for this initiative** that gives access to the research findings, creativity lab and pilot on-line course results that underpin this programme – www.remotepartnering.org

A **unique on-line tool box** that seeks to support front-line practitioners to build their capacity and confidence in leading local collaboration – www.defyingdistance.org

The **Remote Partnering Work Book** – which offers a highly practical approach to remote partnering – is available for free download from www.remotepartnering.org/home

Remote Partnering – a movement for change

Building on the experience of 2 years exploring this issue and piloting an on-line capacity-building programme, it is clear that the time is right to use our lessons and insights as a spring-board for building a movement for change in global partnering practice. We believe that by addressing remote partnering in an intentional and imaginative way we can contribute to challenging and re-defining prevailing partnering attitudes and practices.

This is our response to increasing calls for more equitable, inclusive and transformational partnerships.

Our founding partners have created a Steering Group to act as:

- **Guardians** of the initial intention / vision
- **Ambassadors** promoting this work to as wide an audience of decision-makers, funders and practitioners as possible and
- **Critical Friends** to the curating team who lead the development and implementation of the programme outlined below.



FROM A PROGRAMME PARTNER:

Our staff and partners have benefited from tools, guidance and support on remote partnering and this has led to enhanced effectiveness. It is also already contributing to global learning and good practice in remote partnering.

Programme Curators

The Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) has the responsibility for curating and managing this programme on behalf of the expanding group of partner organisations. PBA has a growing global reputation for its flagship vocational training courses for those managing partnering processes as well as for its leading edge thinking about transformational partnering practices. All those involved in this programme (whether as curators, trainers, facilitators, coaches or mentors) are fully accredited and qualified partnership brokers with established reputations in this field. For more information about PBA – its activities, track record and impact – please go to www.partnershipbrokers.org.

All enquiries about the Remote Partnering Programme to info@partnershipbrokers.org