



A FRESH APPROACH TO BROKERING A REMOTE PARTNERSHIP

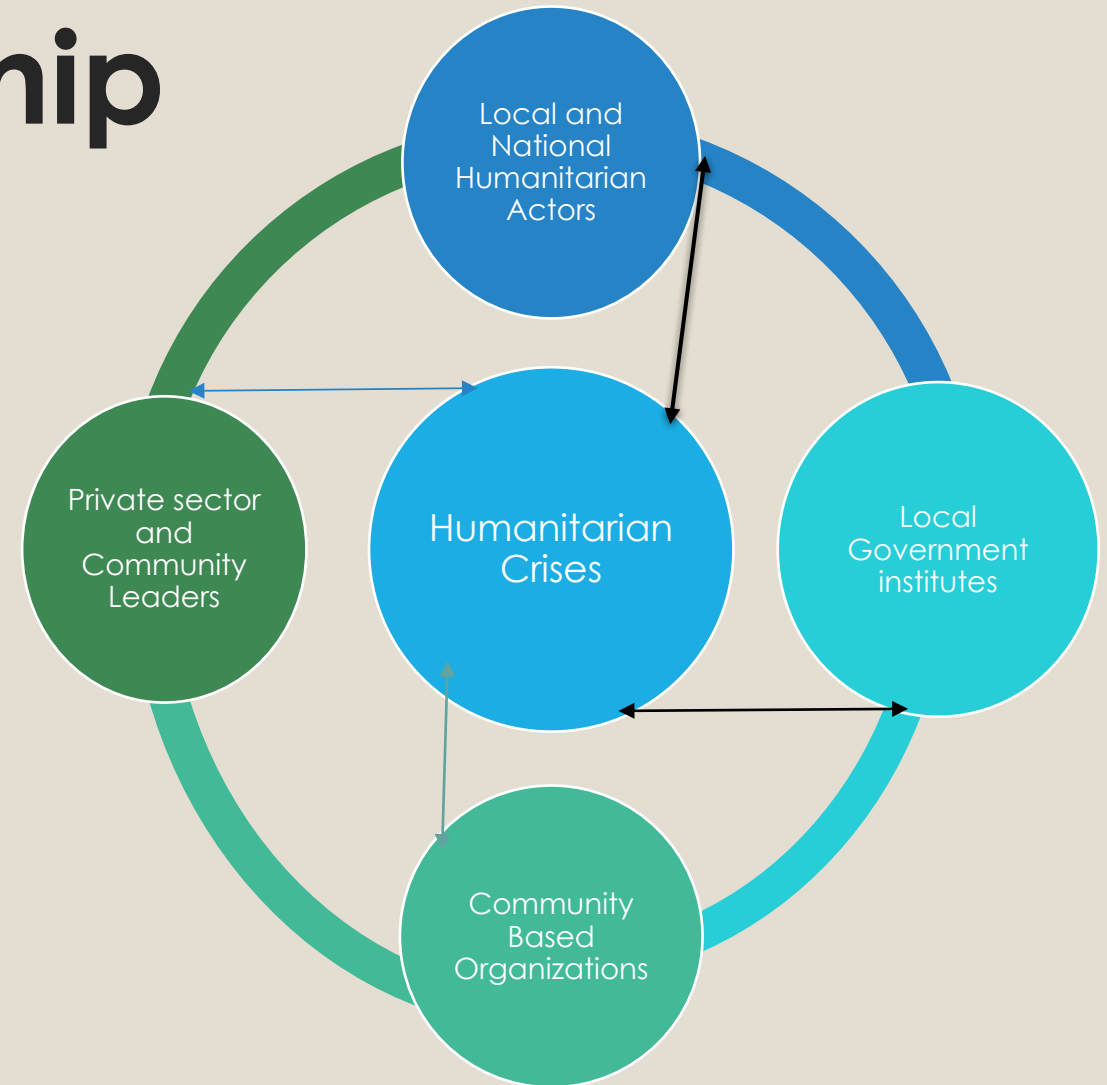
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Horizontal Partnership

Horizontal partnership is defined here by the interrelations amongst the local and national actors working in Bangladesh to advance their mutual interest.

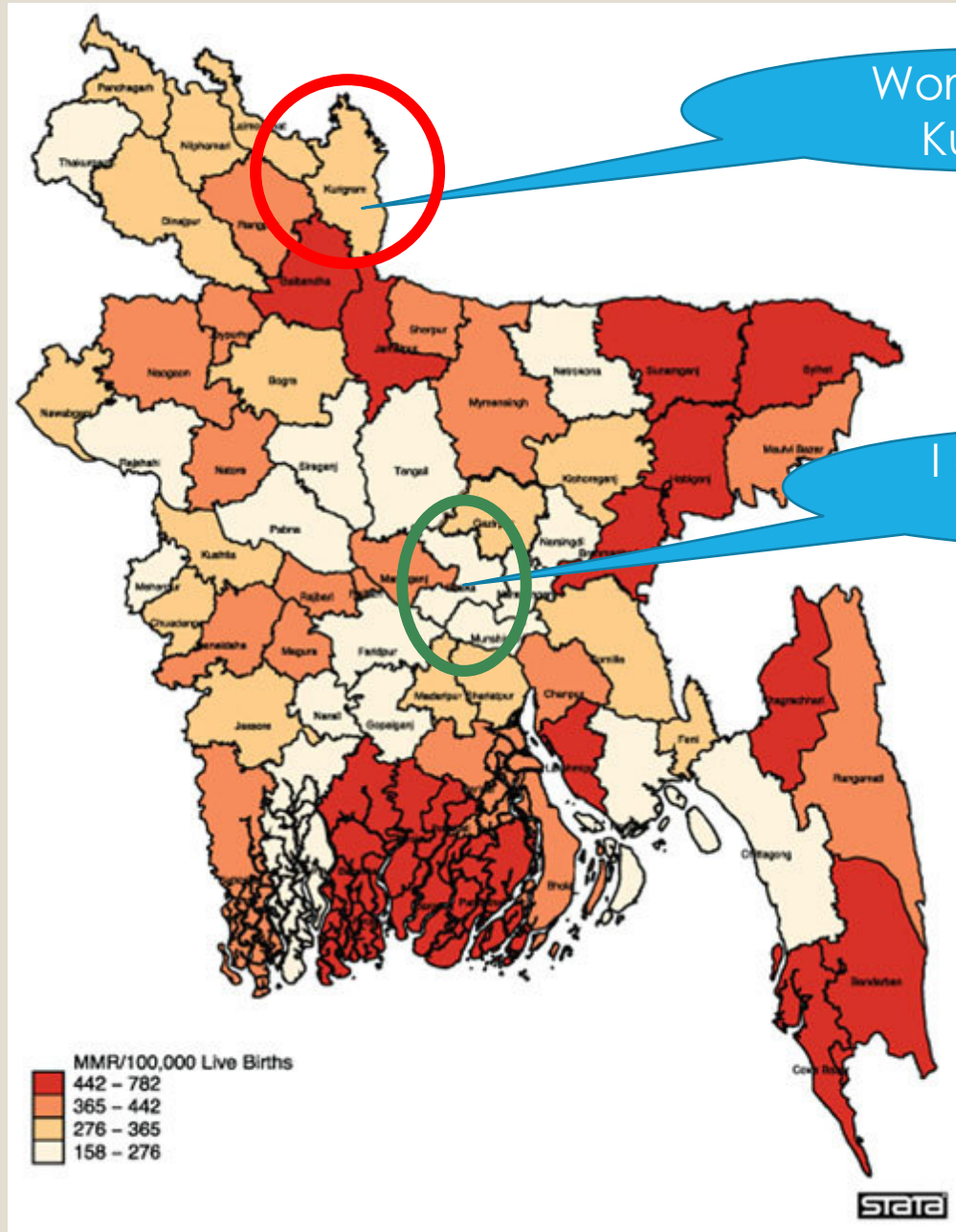
The Local Organizations share information, knowledge and intelligence with each other before, during or after crisis period.

These agencies comes together for a shared humanitarian agenda, collaborates with each through meaningful understanding and continue to work for saving lives.



Horizontal partnership experience (partnership brokering **Remotely**)

- **Context:** A complex relationship remains among local and national organization in Kurigram, a disaster prone District of Bangladesh. The relationship is competitive, further complexed by the actors and relations. Resulting in less coordination and collaboration amongst the local actors. For this remote partnership piloting I put specific focus on Kurigram district.
- **Actors:** District Administration, Local and National Organizations, INGOs, UN bodies. All the actors interplay in the relationships amongst the LNHA's
- **Factors:** Limited resources compared to demand, Donors and INGOs prefer to work with Local organizations with lesser risk, District coordination by the Government creates coordination only at the central level giving limited scope for the very local or community based organizations



Working area
Kurigram

I am based here,
Dhaka

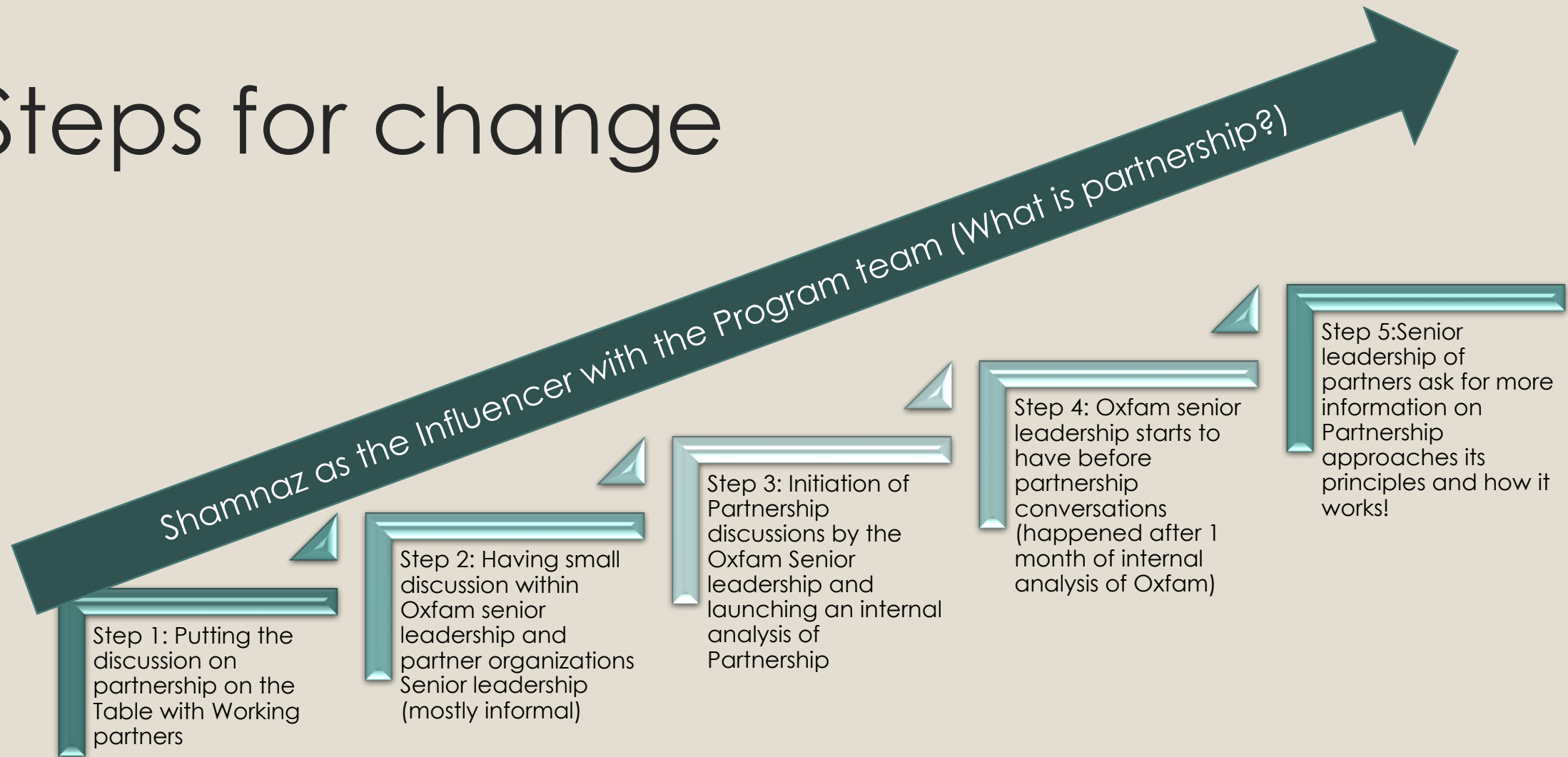
Working area: Kurigram

- Working with LNHA's in Kurigram
- Connecting through SKYPE (Bimonthly)
- Could do 1 Skype call during the partnership challenge
- Have held phone calls and conversations
- Distance from Dhaka to Kurigram: Almost 250 Km
- A disaster prone district with vulnerability to river erosion, flood, flash flood and earthquake

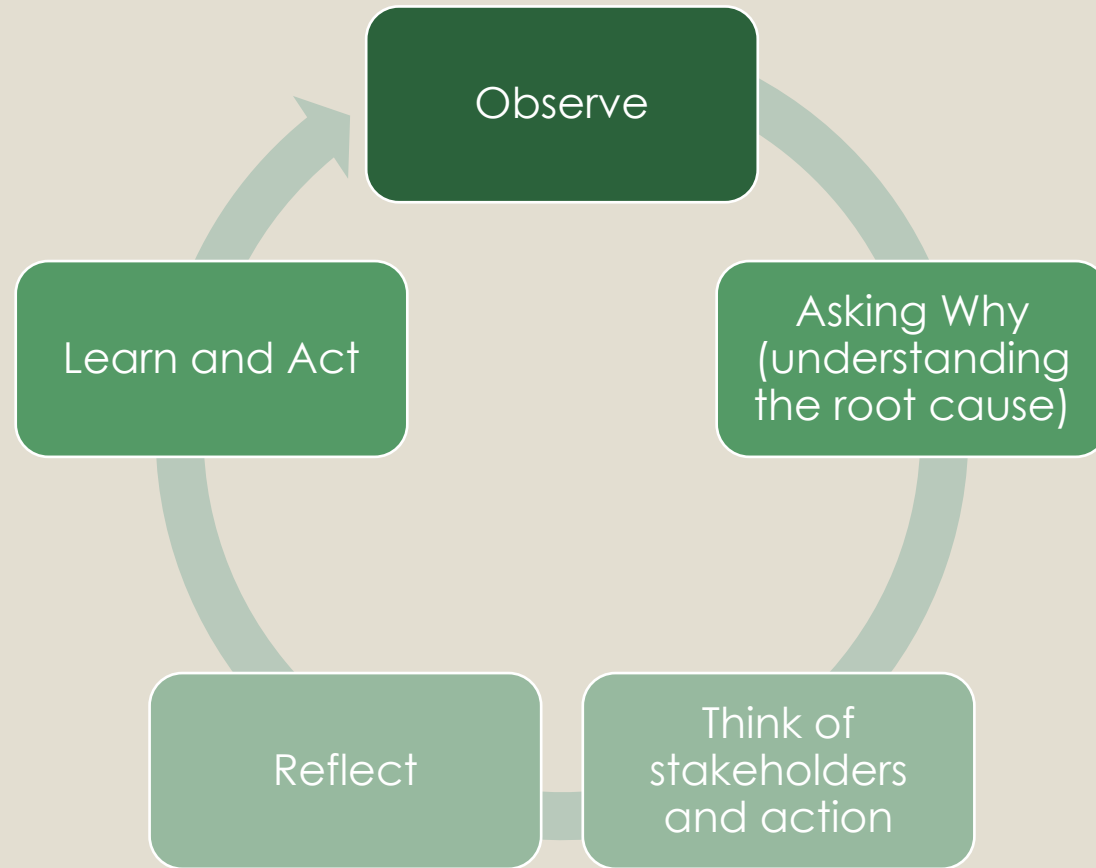
Why Brokering partnership at Kurigram???

- To ensure Local Organizations have discussions among themselves about working together
- Initiation of collaboration/ working together through formal agreements (This will cover the financial benefits, ways of working, mutual respect and accountability etc.)
- **What will Change????**
 - LNHAs through collaboration and complementarity with each other will gain greater efficiency for saving lives. Strengthened coordination among the LNHAs, greater share in the humanitarian agenda will make the government accountable to its people. The LNHAs will have interrelationships built on trust, mutual respect and shared humanitarian agenda for greater impact.

Steps for change



Approach



My key approach was to observe, trying to understand the root cause (asking why), what can be done, with whom?

After each action I reflected and learnt. Then again, went through the cycle of observing.

In addition, I also sought support from my global team to fine tune my ideas.

Challenges identified

- Partnership (true/ real ones) requires more time to build than the usual practice (Almost 3 times more)
- The partnership policy in the Local Organizations is steered by the most senior leadership (Executive director)
- To change one of the Local organization policy requires time, need to have greater consensus amongst Senior leadership people, requires investment and resources
- The local organizations do not/ have limited access to donors, rather have a dependency to have funding from INGO/ UN bodies. Having a partnership policy will leave them with limited options for future engagement.
- The Concept on equitable partnership based on the local humanitarian leadership is not yet clear. The fear of unknown is also challenge.
- Branding risk: If the Local organizations act as per the “real” partnership approach this might risk their workability relations with INGO/ UN
- Competition among the LNHAs in a District, with same/ similar expertize for limited funding
- Government led coordination gives very little opportunity for the Local organizations to coordinate and collaborate among themselves

How to overcome the challenges (pathways)

- Facilitating “Opening up (Speaking out about the challenges to work in Kurigram)” among the LNHAs
- Building trust and understanding among LNHAs
- Formal sharing and seeking support from the senior management of Oxfam but also with executive directors of LNHAs
- Linking the Localization project, ELNHA to invest in strengthen interrelationship among LNHAs
- Connecting the Senior leadership of Oxfam with Executive directors of LNHAs on value of collaborative relationship on trust

Understanding each other



Leadership vs ego

Strengthen relationship

Values and Interests...

Trust

What is in the history (Context)?

Catalysing Change

WHICH ARE THE COMMON INTEREST AREAS?

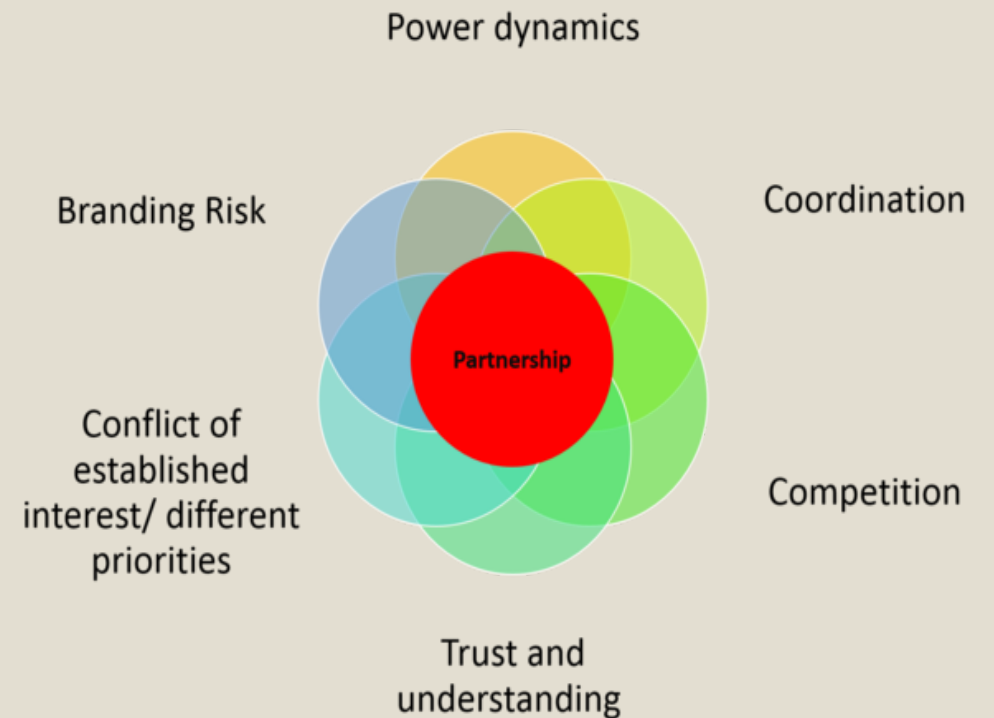
Reflections

Opportunities



How to connect these people?

Looking for all those answers I felt...



After that...

- Conversation between Oxfam Senior leadership and Executive Directors, LNHA during a meeting in Dhaka showed the light to success. They were open to the concept of “Partnership” more
- Made me hope that this can work if I continue to nudge the relationship
- Found out way to fund collaborative initiatives proposed by LNHAs together as a capacity building methodology
- This idea of funding/ investment pushed LNHAs to speak with each other more frequently than ever
- A Skype call during Bimonthly meeting held between LNHAs and myself
- Saw a flickering light of success when these LNHAs made Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a shared budget
- I felt this is the foundation to a formal partnership (Only long term hope)
- While working together, I had to resolve confusions about program implementation but to my surprise no conflicts!!!

continued...

- *These LNHAAs are still working together to implement the activities under the MOU till now with technical backstopping from me*
- *With time I see their interrelationship getting stronger, communications becoming open*
- *More sharing of information*
- *Change in the attitude of LNHAAs*
- *Change in ways of working (silo approach) to combined effort*
- *Complementarity among LNHAAs for achieving greater impact of joint activities*
- *Greater ownership by LNHAAs benefiting the vulnerable people*

Plan vs reality

- *When I planned the idea I found it very complex*
- *After starting to implement I was lost, puzzled and confused!!!*
- *Then I set aside my plan and tried to be as natural as possible*
- *Said to myself “even if I fail, I will accept it”*
- *My greatest challenge was to win my “fear” of “failure”*
- *I failed to broker partnership among LNHA's, but were able to make LNHA's to converse with each other*
- *And that made me strong, to allow the relationship among LNHA's to grow organically*

LEARNING



Partnership and partnering relations is the plant that we see on top of the Soil.

It's the roots (**trust, relationship, openness, mutual respect, accountability, shared purpose**) that keep the tree standing...

Looking at the future...

- Partnership requires patience, compassion, willingness to understand each other and being open
- As a partnership practitioner remotely, listening is very important
- Asking critical questions and making reflections are one of the ways for open conversations
- Dealing with challenges can be made easy with opportunistic approach
- Positivity and creativity can bring relativity to the context and people!



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