

# **An exploration of business and NGO perspectives on CSR, sustainable development and partnership**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the links between CSR, sustainable development and business/NGO partnership through an ethnographic study of two cases. Existing research is polarized over the extent to which business may be considered compatible with sustainable development. CSR writers suggest a central role for business in development, while critical writers suggest development objectives will always be subservient to corporate priorities. Business/NGO partnership represents a potential channel for dialogue but the existing literature on partnership tends towards an instrumental approach, which overlooks its inherent messiness, hidden dynamics and power relations. This research focuses on partnership as a potential mechanism through which business and NGO actors may negotiate and reframe their respective worldviews. It adopts an ethnographic approach to explore the macro (sustainable development) through the micro (partnership). This raises additional issues about organizational boundaries and claims to knowledge.

Fieldwork was based on participant observation and interviews carried out within Haygrove (a horticultural SME) and Concern Universal (CU, an international NGO). The case study organizations collaborate at a strategic level to create greater business awareness of and engagement with sustainable development, specifically

through the Gambia is Good (GIG) horticultural marketing initiative. Based on a grounded theory approach, a three-stage conceptual model is proposed: Firstly, the “ultimate objective” of CSR and sustainable development is to improve people’s lives through partnership. Secondly, this objective can only be achieved where three conditions (“success factors”) are fulfilled; sustainability, strengthened communities and engagement of other organizations. Finally, five preconditions were articulated, although understood differently within the two organizations.

The findings address several themes from the literature. Firstly, the business case for engagement in CSR encompasses both moral and economic dimensions. Companies (and NGOs) are effectively defined by their relationships with stakeholders, which are not separate from the organization but integral to its basic identity. Companies therefore have a moral obligation to participate in CSR activities, which – in order to be viable in the long term – must clearly add value. Secondly, while the literature suggests business tends to adopt a “weaker” view of sustainability than NGOs, the research suggests both may incline towards a “balanced” approach. Both organizations emphasize the importance of process, and the associated challenges of balancing economic development against respect for social structures and “indigenous” knowledge. Thirdly, existing research is polarized, focusing on practical outcomes or – conversely – the empty rhetoric of business/NGO engagement. This

research suggests partnership plays both a practical and symbolic role, potentially challenging the status quo at a local and systemic level. Finally, therefore, the research proposes that in negotiating and reconciling their mutual expectations and understandings, participants are engaging in “communicative action,” according to Habermas’ (1987) model. Their focus on creating shared understanding – rather than influencing specific outcomes – effectively blurs traditional sectoral boundaries. Consequently, more research is needed on how this process unfolds over time and contributes to our evolving understanding of the business and NGO sectors themselves.

Key words: sustainable development, partnership, CSR, NGO, ethnography

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## **Glossary**

AECF	Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund.
BLCF	Business Linkages Challenge Fund.
BITC	Business in the Community (UK).
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility.
CU	Concern Universal.
DFID	Department for International Development (UK).
GIG	Gambia is Good (partnership between CU and Haygrove).
Haygrove	Horticultural SME, corporate partner of Concern Universal.
IBLF	Prince of Wales' International Business Leaders' Forum.
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organizations (UK).
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises.

WCED

World Council for Economic Development.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and background

“Climate change presents a unique challenge for economics: It is the greatest example of market failure we have ever seen.”

Stern Review (2006)

Average global temperatures are expected to rise by 2-3 degrees by 2050, bringing increased risk of declining crop yields, flooding and mass extinctions (Stern Review 2006). At the same time, one billion people in the developing world live on less than a dollar a day (DFID 2007), while over 33 million people are living with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2007). Governments, business and individuals are acknowledging the scale of these global challenges and an apparent need for new approaches, including a more active role for business (Mayer 2007; Singer 2006; Trainer 2005). Consequently, even as business is blamed for its role in exacerbating these social and environmental problems, it is increasingly seen by governments, multilateral institutions and elements of civil society as part of the solution (Austin 2000; Heap 2000; Elkington 1999). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), often delivered through cross-sector partnerships between business and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), is increasingly posited as a channel for business involvement (Galbreath 2006; Brinkerhoff 2002; Googins and Rochlin 2000)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Central to the research is an attempt at understanding the nature of concepts such as CSR and NGO. However, some working definitions may be useful at this point. CSR means different things to different people but is essentially concerned with what is or should be the relationship between business and society (Crowther and Raymond-Bacchus 2004). The main question underlying CSR research is the extent to which society's demands can or should be fulfilled in practice, with researchers focusing alternatively on CSR as a

Existing research is divided over the potential role for CSR in sustainable development and the compatibility of business and development objectives more generally. CSR writers suggest a central role for business in development, arguing that companies can help tackle global challenges, while ensuring their own long-term survival (Jackson and Nelson 2004; Heap 2000; Elkington 1999). By contrast, development writers suggest business involvement is inherently compromised by the subservience of development objectives to corporate priorities (Eweje 2007; Frynas 2005; Blowfield 2004). Business/NGO partnership represents a potential channel for dialogue but the existing literature on partnership tends towards a positive and instrumental approach, which overlooks its inherent messiness, hidden dynamics and power relations (Macdonald and Chrisp 2006; Poncelet 2003). This research focuses on partnership as a mechanism through which business and NGO actors potentially negotiate and reframe their respective worldviews. This process depends on individuals' interpretation of the relationship between

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mechanism for companies to integrate ethical values, secure profitability, incorporate social demands or display a positive role in the community (Garriga and Mele 2004). The term NGO is similarly hard to define, given the diversity of the global NGO community (Martens 2002; Princen and Finger 1994). NGOs vary widely in terms of size, topical coverage, and geographic scope and represent a diverse range of organizational interests (Doh and Teegen 2002). However, in general, they are non-government, non-profit organizations that tend to coalesce around ideas or a collective commitment to some shared belief or principle (Keck and Sikkink 1998). As far back as the eighteenth century, NGOs have formed around these distinct problems or societal issues (Skjelsbaek 1971). International NGOs (INGOs) are a particular subset, which feature prominently in the development literature reviewed later in this chapter. INGOs are key actors in areas such as poverty alleviation, sustainable development, human rights and women's emancipation (Wils 1995). They tend to be large, multilayered, complex systems that are based in and receive funds from high-income countries but work for the benefit of people in low-income countries (Madon 1999).

business and society, as well as their understanding of sustainable development, CSR and partnership. Consequently, the project will address the following Research Objectives:

- 1 Review the relevant literature to examine the relationship between the concepts of CSR and sustainable development.
- 2 Explore how business and NGOs understand the concept of sustainable development.
- 3 Assess the extent to which CSR partnerships may contribute to or undermine sustainable development.

Given that these objectives focus on individuals' understandings and the way these are reflected or constructed within the organization, an ethnographic approach is adopted. This raises questions about the nature of organizational boundaries and claims to knowledge. Consequently, the final Research Objective is:

- 4 Examine the extent to which ethnography represents an appropriate methodology through which to study the macro-level issue of sustainable development.

The paper opens with a Literature Review of relevant work on CSR, development and partnership to examine the relationship between the concepts of CSR and sustainable development. This raises questions about how actors understand the relationship between business and society and the extent to which dialogue between

different sectors may influence individuals' worldviews. Consequently, "Methodology" explores how an ethnographic approach may shed light on these issues, through participant observation and interviews within Haygrove (a UK-based SME – small to medium enterprise – in the horticultural sector) and Concern Universal (CU, an international NGO). "Analysis" presents a three-stage conceptual model of sustainable development, which emerged from the data itself through a grounded theory approach. "Discussion" suggests the case study organizations adopt a broad conceptualization of stakeholders and regard themselves as effectively constituted by their relationships. Partnership emerges as a way to influence both peers and other sectors, leading to an apparent blurring of the boundary between business/NGOs. Consequently, "Conclusions" addresses the extent to which collaboration may challenge the status quo both practically and symbolically. It highlights the need for further investigation into other examples of collaboration, how economic development may be balanced against a respect for social structures and the extent to which business and NGOs may be "convinced" by example.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

**Summary:** CSR suggests a role for business in development. Critics suggest business objectives conflict with the principles underpinning sustainable development. Business/NGO partnership represents one mechanism for negotiating these different worldviews. Several questions are raised: How do actors understand the relationship between business/society? Do they see change as possible/desirable? How does dialogue influence individuals' worldviews?

### Introduction

The scale of global challenges has increased interest in new approaches to problems like poverty and climate change, including partnership between government, business and civil society. Within this context, CSR and sustainable development emerge as possible forces for change: This review considers whether the two concepts may be considered compatible through addressing Research Objective 1:

- Review the relevant literature to examine the relationship between the concepts of CSR and sustainable development.

The main themes and limitations of existing research are explored in relation to four review questions:

- How is the relationship between business and society conceptualized within the CSR literature and is this associated with a particular model of development?
- What are the key characteristics of sustainable development and how does the proposed model differ from any proposed within the CSR literature?

- To what extent do business/NGO partnerships adhere to one or other of these development models?
- How might such partnerships facilitate development at a local/systemic level?

The review covers literature on CSR, sustainable development and cross-sector partnership. CSR and partnership research tends to reflect a “business” perspective, while sustainable development tends towards an “NGO” focus. The review opens with a discussion of the evolution of CSR within the historical context of Western industrialized society. CSR has evolved into a mechanism for managing business relationships with local and national stakeholders, but there is increased interest in whether it may contribute to more profound change, for example, in helping meet the Millennium Development Goals<sup>2</sup>. This is challenged by many development writers, who suggest that the Western capitalist model that underlies CSR is inherently unsustainable. Consequently, the second section of the review examines the key characteristics of an alternative paradigm based on sustainability, which relies on a more holistic understanding of the business/society relationship. As this discussion partly echoes long-standing debates about capitalism versus socialism, the final section examines the extent to which the

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<sup>2</sup> Agreed by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, there are eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, all by the target date of 2015. For more information see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>. DFID has made the MDGs the main focus of all of its work (DFID 2006).

competing worldviews underlying CSR and sustainable development can ever be reconciled. This is explored through a consideration of business/NGO partnership as a possible arena for cross-sector dialogue and mechanism for implementing sustainable development projects.

## **The evolution of CSR and its relationship with sustainable development**

CSR dates back to Nineteenth Century philanthropy and beyond<sup>3</sup>. However, Bowen (1953) is recognized as the pioneer of modern conceptualizations of CSR: Business has a social responsibility to “pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society” (1953, 6). Evolving definitions of CSR increasingly recognized its potential as a channel for collaboration and development, with Carroll’s (1979) seminal four-part definition suggesting that alongside their economic and legal responsibilities, companies have ethical and “discretionary” obligations, met through

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in the UK corporate philanthropists including William Cadbury, Joseph Rowntree and Robert Owen were driven by both values and the pragmatic necessity of maintaining a stable workforce to provide their own social infrastructure for workers, resulting in towns such as the Lever Brothers’ Port Sunlight and Cadbury’s Bournville. Cadbury was at the forefront of what would later become the CSR movement, refusing to source cocoa grown under conditions of forced labour. The company supported the development of a sustainable cocoa industry in Ghana from the early 1900s onwards. It continues to channel support to communities in West Africa and elsewhere through various initiatives, including a strategic collaboration between the William Cadbury Trust and Concern Universal (see [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org)).

financial or practical support for particular groups<sup>4</sup>. This has been captured in ideas such as the “triple bottom line,” which suggests companies should be measured on their economic, environmental and social performance (Elkington 1994) or the balanced scorecard, which evaluates companies from the four perspectives of learning/growth, business process, customer and financial (Kaplan and Norton 1992).

In contrast to the more holistic understanding that characterized both pre-industrialized economies within and beyond Europe and the activities of the industrial philanthropists mentioned above, CSR retains an assumption that business and society are tangible and separate. Critics suggest this reflects CSR's emergence within a dominant social paradigm rooted in neoclassical economics<sup>5</sup> (Korhonen 2002). This paradigm assumes the existence of a knowable objective world and is therefore related to the “scientific” knowledge tradition that seeks to measure and explain the relationship between defined variables (Gephart 1999). However, this critique of CSR is oversimplified: Firstly, it overlooks how writers from Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill to Milton Friedman have consistently grappled with issues of morality (Secchi 2007). Secondly, it neglects how CSR not only reflects but impacts upon economic thinking: CSR's fundamental idea that businesses have

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<sup>4</sup> See Garriga and Mele (2004) and Carroll (1999) for further discussion on CSR definitions.

<sup>5</sup> A paradigm is understood to mean a “framing set of concepts, beliefs and standard practices that guide human action” (Ehrenfield 1997, 88).

broader responsibilities to society has become “mainstream” (White 2004; Pryce 2002; Wood 1991). Thirdly, in practice, companies often behave in ways that contradict the tenets of economic rationality. Nonetheless, under the currently predominant neoclassical conceptualization of CSR as “doing well by doing good,” the logical extension is that responsible behaviour should cease when it becomes uneconomic (Stormer 2003). Consequently, while pursuit of the “business case” continues to dominate the literature (Lockett et al 2006), there remains strong interest in the “moral case” for CSR (Vogel 2005).

This distinction between the economic and ethical underpinnings of CSR has weakened the field by inhibiting the emergence of any overarching general theory (Garriga and Mele 2004; Swanson 1995). Economics-influenced writers tend towards the “shareholder” view of the firm most famously espoused by Friedman (1970), who argued that the social responsibility of business is to make as much money for its shareholders as legally possible, although even this view acknowledges additional rules “embodied in ethical custom” (1970, 32; see also Economist 2005; Henderson 2005). These economics-based writers have yet to establish a definitive relationship between CSR and corporate financial performance (McWilliams and Siegel 2001; Griffin and Mahon 1997). This may be due at least in part to the inherent contradiction of examining an essentially moral concept through “counting approaches” (Korhonen 2003; Crane 1999).

By contrast, ethics-based writers adopt a “stakeholder” perspective: Shareholder property rights only meaningfully exist within an overarching community and as members of that community, companies have an obligation to contribute to the wider social good (Godfrey and Hatch 2007). Freeman (1984) defined a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives” (1984, 46). While increasingly ubiquitous in CSR, this approach is not without its philosophical and practical limitations. The stakeholder perspective is, by definition, corporate-centric, continuing the separation of business and society assumed by neoclassical economics (Key 1999)<sup>6</sup>. Stakeholders affect and are affected by the company, but they are not recognized as integral to its basic identity (Wicks et al 1994). This stems from the perspective of atomic individualism that underlies CSR and economics in general: It assumes individuals and organizations are isolatable, bounded units whose actions are driven by self-interest (Buchholz and Rosenthal 2005; Steurer et al 2005). People and institutions are bound together only by external links: Consequently, while these peripheral ties facilitate the achievement of individual goals, there is no possibility of developing a true understanding of stakeholder interests. Stakeholder theory also raises related practical problems. Companies cannot identify all their

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<sup>6</sup> Freeman’s (1984) depiction of the “stakeholder map” shows the company as the hub of a wheel, surrounded by a series of stakeholders at the ends of the spokes.

stakeholders and may pay more attention to vociferous but marginal organizations than to “genuine” stakeholders (Wheeler et al 2002; Lea 1999). Likewise, stakeholder theory provides little practical guidance for managers on how to weigh up and respond to these competing demands, providing a level of discretion that may result in ineffectiveness or opportunism (Mitchell et al 1997; Donaldson and Preston 1995; Jones 1995; Goodpaster 1991).

An increasingly strategic approach to CSR has led to greater interest in its possible role within systemic change (Thomas and Fritz 2007; Fourie and Eloff 2005). These writers suggest CSR’s significance may be both practical and symbolic, with the actions of enlightened firms inspiring more widespread changes (Senge et al 2006; Amalric et al 2004; Rondinelli and Berry 2000). By contrast, critics suggest CSR represents a token effort that effectively preserves the status quo: Companies react to NGO and consumer pressure, implementing CSR strategies to safeguard share price (Christian Aid 2004; Roberts 2003; Boele et al 2001). Under this view, companies reconcile talk of “ethical corporate behaviour” with the idea of “business as usual” through “a rather tidy affinity between a narrow use of the word ‘ethics’ and a market managerial ideology that considers questions about persons to be legitimate but questions about political economy to be largely settled”(Parker 2003, 189).

In summary, CSR has emerged within a historical context that generally assumes a separation between business and society. Despite its philosophical limitations, the stakeholder conceptualization of the firm helps drive new business approaches and raises the possibility of a more sustainable “variety” of capitalism. Companies might thereby help tackle global challenges, while ensuring their own long-term survival (Jackson and Nelson 2004; Heap 2000; Elkington 1999). The CSR literature envisages change but within the boundaries of the established social and economic order, so to assess the viability of a broader role for business, two questions require further exploration: Firstly, how do business actors understand the relationship between business and society? Secondly, to what extent do they view a fundamental change in that relationship as possible or desirable? To date, the CSR literature has overlooked the perhaps inevitable contradictions between sustainable development and business objectives. This is precisely the issue addressed by the development literature, to which this review now turns.

### **The alternative paradigm of sustainability**

Just as the CSR literature emerged within the dominant economic paradigm, so the development literature is informed by the alternative paradigm of “sustainability.” Development is concerned with the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of living standards (Sahn

and Stifel 2003; IFAD 2001). It is a holistic discipline, encompassing economics, environment, education, human rights and others. Companies, NGOs and other institutions are part of a global community, embedded within the natural environment (Korten 2006; Craig 1998). The development field emerged after 1945, within the context of post-war reconstruction, economic underdevelopment in former colonial states and political instability at a global and local level exacerbated by the Cold War (Black 2007). In the 1950s and 1960s, political, social and cultural development in developing countries was seen as dependent on economic growth (Leys 1996). By the 1970s, greater emphasis was laid on state intervention and the potential for “redistribution through growth” (Harriss 1991). However, disenchantment with the performance of governments led to the articulation of a grassroots, community-led approach in the 1980s and 1990s (Ellis and Biggs 2001). A more nuanced understanding of people’s strategies for living in developing countries highlighted their dependence on and vulnerability to the natural environment, leading to a more explicit link between development and sustainability (Carney 1998; Scoones 1998).

Sustainability has myriad definitions but common attributes include connectivity, inclusiveness, equity, prudence and security (Gladwin et al 1995). By definition, it requires systemic change and therefore a single project or organization cannot in itself be “sustainable” (Desjardines 2007). While often assumed to be a radical alternative,

sustainability represented a mainstream reaction against the radicalism of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, embodied by Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" (1962) and Schumacher's (1973) limits-to-growth economics (Castro 2004; Pearce and Warford 1993; Portney 1992). It is therefore less surprising that the dominant model remains that of "weak" sustainability. This suggests manmade or human capital can compensate for a decline of natural capital, since economic and scientific developments will find solutions for problems such as the decline in fossil fuels (Simon 1996). However, this overlooks the extent to which the drawing down of natural capital represents a "looming hazard to human life and continuing commerce" (Mayer 2007). By contrast, "strong" sustainability denies any substitutability between natural and human capital. Humans should only use nonhuman nature to satisfy vital needs of sustenance (Goldsmith 1993; Merchant 1992). This perspective rests on philosophical grounds that cannot be accepted as practical guides to human conduct and therefore remains largely the preserve of environmental activists and ecologists (Gladwin et al 1995). Growing public awareness of environmental and social challenges may lead to increased support for the notion of "balanced" sustainability, which assumes the partial substitutability of (non-critical) natural capital while acknowledging the physical limits to economic growth (Steurer et al 2005). Gellner (1988) suggests that such a development would represent a reaction to the inherent instability of the prevailing

“potlatch”<sup>7</sup> society of Western industrialized nations, in which the relationship between wealth, power and prestige has been weakened and economic expansion is driven less by the need to survive than by a desire to communicate status.

The development literature tends towards a perspective of “balanced” sustainability. The integration of this worldview is such that the terms “development” and “sustainable development” are now largely interchangeable within the literature (Hopwood et al 2005; Parris and Kates 2003). The most commonly adopted definition is that of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), articulated in the Brundtland Report:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

(WCED 1987, 43)

The notion of economic *growth* is replaced with that of economic *development*, which recognizes environmental limits (Meadows et al 1972). Economic growth means the economy is getting bigger, whereas economic development means it is getting better. Whereas economic growth within the earth’s finite biosphere is necessarily limited, economic development is not (Daly 1993). This distinction between growth and development effectively distinguishes the neoclassical and sustainability paradigms. Whereas neoclassical

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<sup>7</sup> Potlatch is the term used to describe competitive feasting and ostentatious displays of wealth, usually among particular Native American and Melanesian communities.

economics emphasizes globalization, specialization and competition, sustainability emphasizes the principles of locality, diversity and interdependency (Korhonen 2002). Process becomes as important as outcome: Only by building the capacity of individuals and communities can they become active agents in shaping their own development (Sen 1999; Thomas 1999). Consequently knowledge can only be acquired through direct participation (Holcombe et al 2004).

However, sustainable development represents an ideology largely driven by Northern actors (Ahmad 2006; Fox 2004; Lister 2000)<sup>8</sup>. Assuming that power is derived from both observable behaviour and hidden forces that constrain the agenda (Foucault 1980), critics suggest sustainable development may use the language of ecology to impose a new imperialist model (Doyle 1998). Likewise, corporate and political interest in sustainable development transforms not only the institutions and organizations, but also the notion of sustainability itself (Springett 2003; Livesey 2001). The capacity of companies to deliver development may be fundamentally flawed, since development objectives are subservient to business priorities (Frynas 2005). The doctrine of “salvation through bricks” – tackling social

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<sup>8</sup> The terminology of North/South is widely adopted in the development literature, with “North” referring to the established industrialized countries of North America and Europe and “South” meaning developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is no agreed definition of developed and developing countries but a common point of reference is the list produced by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2003). The concept of a North/South distinction is being weakened by the increasing economic and social influence of countries such as China and India (Kwaa Prah 2007; Mohan 2006).

problems through judicious use of bulldozing and rebuilding – retains strong appeal. The clinic or school remains as a symbol of corporate intervention, even if there are no funds for medical supplies or teachers (Ite 2004; Clark 2000). However, ineffective CSR not only wastes resources but may divert attention from global problems (Eweje 2007). For example, companies may leverage the credibility gained by community investment to undermine calls for better working conditions or lower prices on antiretroviral drugs (Bendell and Shah 2004; Zammit 2004). Critical perspectives perhaps overstate structural constraints compared to the individual agency of business actors. They also overlook the extent to which sustainable development represented a challenge for societies long before industrialization and globalization: For example, Diamond (2005) suggests societies from the Maya to 15<sup>th</sup> Century Greenland and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Japan have collapsed or survived based on their ability to manage the natural environment.

In summary, the development literature embraces the sustainability paradigm, which acknowledges the natural limits to economic growth. Sustainable development attempts to balance the needs of the present against those of the future, emphasizing the centrality of process and the role of communities. Nonetheless, it reflects existing power relations and potentially imposes a particular model of ecology and development on communities. These ongoing debates inhibit the emergence of a comprehensive theoretical framework, as well as the

implementation of practical initiatives. Corporate participation in sustainable development initiatives is especially problematic, since business may prioritize its own over beneficiary interests. However, suggesting an inevitable incompatibility between business and sustainable development both overlooks how individuals' actions are conditioned – rather than determined – by structural factors and overstates the uniqueness of contemporary environmental challenges. Consequently, more research is required on how business actors understand sustainability and how they use that understanding to shape practice in their company. Likewise, given the apparent inadequacy of economic measures of development, more work is required on alternative methods that might be mutually acceptable to business, NGOs and governments.

### **Business/NGO partnership as a framework for sustainable development**

The above arguments about the role of CSR in development partly echo long-standing debates about capitalism versus socialism (Michael 2003). However, there is evidence in both literature and practice of the possible emergence of a new “variety” of capitalism, which may in turn diminish the distance between the neoclassical and sustainability worldviews. It may even result in a new “hybrid” paradigm or what Lloyd (1993) terms an “ethos convergence.” As

companies negotiate this difficult terrain, NGOs become an increasingly important mediator with wider society (Millar et al 2004; Doh and Teegen 2002). NGOs are difficult to define, rendering them a blank slate onto which an expanding set of development expectations have been projected (Lewis 2005). However, one significant development has been the expansion of their focus of influence: The increasing spread and power of business since the 1980s has led NGOs to focus attention on firms as well as states. The strategy of confrontation has been increasingly joined by that of collaboration (Spar and La Mure 2004; Elkington and Fennell 1998; Hardy and Phillips 1998).

Such partnerships are actively promoted by multilateral institutions through mechanisms such as the UN's Global Compact and the World Bank's World Social Forum. They are also encouraged by national governments. For example, DFID describes partnership as "the best approach to development" (DFID 2005, 10), enabling aid to "deliver more direct benefits to the poor...without excessive transaction costs" (DFID 2004, 18). DFID invested £14.7 million in establishing the Business Linkage Challenge Fund (BLCF), which made grants to UK companies engaged in innovative business partnerships with companies or NGOs in developing countries aimed at benefiting the poor<sup>9</sup>. Likewise the multi-donor £100 million Africa

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<sup>9</sup> The BLCF was a major funder of the Gambia is Good project outlined in this research, contributing £200,000 in 2002 and a further £81,000 in 2007. The fund has now closed, although it is seen by DFID as a precursor to the AECF and other "second generation"

Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF), supported by DFID, offers matched grants to firms working with African companies/NGOs to support innovations in agricultural and financial markets and stimulate pro-poor growth. Similarly, the Irish Government is investing €4 million in Traidlinks, a non-profit organization that promotes private sector support for business initiatives in developing countries (Irish Aid 2006).

As the development context changes, Murphy and Bendell (2001) suggest that for both practical and philosophical reasons, NGOs should shift their focus on disaster relief and community development towards addressing underlying structural issues, through forcing, facilitating and sustaining change. Many development projects can and are delivered by Southern-based NGOs, while government-to-government aid further reduces funding available for Northern-based NGOs (Edwards et al 1999).

While the development literature increasingly addresses cross-sector partnership, a distinct body of partnership literature has developed as a subset of the CSR literature. Some writers adapt strategic alliance theory, suggesting increased business/NGO interaction is motivated by a desire to share risks and pool resources and talents (Berger et al 2004; Rondinelli and London 2003; Googins and Rochlin 2000). Others adopt theories of resource dependence, with partnership

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funds. Donors funding the AECF include DFID, the African Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

providing access to critical competencies companies or NGOs cannot develop alone or in a timely fashion (Selsky and Parker 2005; Waddell 2000). The partnership literature tends to be positive and instrumental (Galbreath 2006; Brinkerhoff 2002), assuming the practical benefits of partnership and focusing on specified outcomes. Nonetheless it provides an overview of the nature and evolution of business/NGO collaboration.

Interest in partnership has grown substantially since the 1990s (Sagawa and Segal 2000). The “philanthropic” approach retains its appeal for companies seeking a low engagement/low commitment approach (Seitanidi and Ryan 2007; Husted 2003), but the focus in both literature and practice is shifting towards business/NGO partnership as a strategic mechanism through which to meet corporate and charitable objectives (Smith 2003). Partnership offers companies a channel through which to improve credibility and gain access to stakeholders and NGOs a way to address social problems (Berger et al 2004). Companies contribute expertise, products or services while NGOs provide projects and knowledge. Both sides maximize gains and minimize costs (Pearce and Doh 2005). Austin (2000) describes this as the “collaboration imperative:” In pursuing increasingly strategic objectives, companies effectively move from “philanthropy” to “transactional” engagement towards “integrative” partnership. Companies may engage in all three types of engagement simultaneously with different partners, as indicated by

existing case studies. For example, The Prince of Wales' International Business Leaders' Forum (IBLF) and Business in the Community (BITC) have online databases that document dozens of business/NGO partnerships, from the philanthropic to the integrative<sup>10</sup>.

NGOs, with their focus on collaboration, are often inherently suspicious of the competitive approach that characterizes the business sector, but are also driven to partnership: Business represents an alternative source of funding at a time when NGOs are facing declining income from government and public (NCVO 2007). More significantly, increased influence over business thinking and practice may enable NGOs to more effectively challenge the rootless, opportunistic, money-driven global economy they see as underlying development challenges (Korten, 2006). Previous academic research on CU has examined this potential for partnership to challenge social attitudes and behaviour<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Case studies featured include the partnership between Kraft Foods and the Rainforest Alliance, which sources coffee from sustainable sources and preserves forest areas in Central and South America. Cadbury Schweppes has developed a partnership with the Earthwatch Institute and the Ghana Nature Conservation Research Centre to improve biodiversity levels of cocoa farms in Ghana and establish the country's first cocoa farm eco-tourism initiative. See [http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/case\\_studies/](http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/case_studies/) for more examples.

<sup>11</sup> For example, research on CU's collaboration with The Tetley Group suggested the relationship brought about changes within both organizations well beyond those envisaged in the original objectives of the project (Wadham 2005). Likewise, the International Leadership and Exchange Programme, a partnership between CU and The Leadership Trust, enables individual team members from the Trust to be seconded to CU offices overseas, helping participants develop a more holistic understanding of leadership (Thomas 2007). This need for charities to collaborate with each other and with business was articulated by the Executive Director of CU during a talk at the Centre for Charity Effectiveness, which comprised part of the fieldwork (see Appendix 2; also [www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org](http://www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org) and Williams 2007). The idea of "collaborating to

However, the extent to which partnership may change business behaviour is contested. Many suggest collaboration encourages companies to take a more sustainable approach to CSR and their core business, with partnership representing a framework within which interests are expressed and differences mediated (Warhurst 2005; Lawrence 2002; Waddock and Smith 2002; Nelson and Zadek 1999). For example, Argenti (2004) presents an analysis of Starbucks' partnership with NGO Global Exchange, which led to Starbucks investing in projects to help small farmers become Fair Trade suppliers. Shell responded to public criticism of its record in the North Sea and Nigeria<sup>12</sup> by working with Amnesty International and Pax Cristi to develop a code of conduct and independent auditing of its CSR performance (Lawrence 2002). BP funded its own research project into the strategic implications of business/NGO partnership: This generated a much-cited "marine mammal" typology of NGOs to help companies evaluate potential partners (Elkington and Fennell 1998)<sup>13</sup>. These studies suggest NGOs influence both

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compete" is also a resource issue, since 70 percent of the UK voluntary sector's income goes to just two percent of organizations: The only band of charities whose income increased during 2006-7 was that which included organizations with an annual income of over £10 million (NCVO 2007).

<sup>12</sup> In April 1995, Greenpeace organized a boycott of Shell petrol stations to protest against the company's plans to dump the Brent Spar oil platform in the North Sea. Later the same year, Shell was accused by various NGOs of complicity in human rights abuses in Nigeria, including the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and nine other human rights campaigners.

<sup>13</sup> This typology comprises a matrix that can be used to evaluate the approach of NGOs based on two sets of dimensions; polarizer vs integrator and discriminator vs non-discriminator. Using this matrix, NGOs can be defined respectively as sharks, orcas, sea lions or dolphins (Elkington and Fennell 1998, 56). This typology comprises a matrix that can be used to evaluate the approach of NGOs based on two sets of dimensions; polarizer vs integrator and discriminator vs non-discriminator.

CSR policy and core business. However, they are potentially undermined by the close involvement of the companies themselves and their reliance on retrospective interviews that contribute to an unrealistically linear account of events<sup>14</sup>. They are also dominated by large multinational companies. More focus on the experience of SMEs might uncover new models for engagement: This possibility has been recognized by government and multilateral institutions, with initiatives underway to encourage greater SME involvement in development (World Bank 2007; DFID 2006).

The literature is therefore divided. Some suggest collaboration may lead to changes in operating practices, such as Shell's General Business Principles (Mirvis 2000) and Unilever's Sustainable Food Laboratory (Senge et al 2006). However, others see these changes as largely cosmetic, since they have no impact on the worldview of business actors: NGO participation in dialogue reinforces power differentials (Macdonald and Chrisp 2006; Poncelet 2003) or brings calls for change within the dominant framework (Lister 2000). In order to understand whether partnership may really lead to a change in worldview, Jonker and Nijhof (2006) use Habermas' model to distinguish between *strategic action*, which is about influencing specific outcomes, and *communicative action*, which involves

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Argenti's description of Starbucks' successful resolution of the fair trade crisis differs from that offered by Global Exchange on its website, which suggests the NGO was still attacking the company's approach to ethical sourcing in 2004 and has continued to do so (see [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)).

creating a shared understanding of a given issue. The negotiation and reconciliation of business and NGOs' mutual expectations and understandings, requires communicative – rather than strategic – action. Existing work tends to examine partnership as strategic action, in which companies and NGOs prioritize specified objectives (Pearce and Doh 2004; Lawrence 2002). This leads to a focus on the drivers to partnership and whether stated objectives have been achieved, to the exclusion of how actors on both sides – through communicative action – move towards a shared understanding of the issues at stake. Current research, therefore, tends to overlook the unstated influence that partnership may have on both sides. However, such an understanding is fundamental to assessing whether partnership can support wider systemic change.

A weakness of the partnership literature is this absence of attempts to link micro and macro levels of analysis. Brown (1991) suggests that sustainable development is fundamentally an institutional problem: Successful development initiatives require the existence of strong local organizations that can mobilize resources to sustain activities and link to other organizations at the local level and beyond, providing a channel through which local and national policy may be implemented. Others agree that institution building is a key requirement for sustainable development (Linton 2005; Holcombe et al 2004). Ashman (2001) suggests that only with government support

can initiatives cover larger geographical areas and include more socially isolated groups.

In summary, business/NGO partnership may represent a channel through which models of CSR and sustainable development are articulated and potentially reconciled by diverse actors. However, existing literature raises the challenge of how to get beyond the “stated” views of participants to “hidden” understandings of the two concepts. Such a level of understanding might shed light on whether dialogue influences the worldviews of individuals within companies and NGOs, and whether differences lead to creativity or remain a source of tension. It would also address other questions raised earlier in this review, namely how do actors understand the role of the company within society? What is “sustainable development” and how might it be measured effectively? To what extent can individual projects contribute to wider systemic change? Existing research has not sufficiently explored these themes as they are relatively inaccessible. The present research project therefore approaches these questions through ethnography, which attempts to uncover “hidden” processes, by bringing into focus “marginal” issues and connecting the micro with the macro (Linstead 1997). The implications of this approach are addressed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

**Summary:** Ethnography facilitates exploration of how business/NGO actors construct their understanding of society, sustainability and partnership by providing access to the “hidden” processes at work. The subjective and fragmentary nature of ethnography presents challenges in terms of defining organizational boundaries and establishing trustworthiness. Consequently, a reflexive/collaborative approach is adopted.

### Introduction

The previous chapter suggests that the existing literature overlooks how individuals understand and experience CSR, sustainable development and partnership. Such an approach might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which CSR partnerships may ultimately contribute to or undermine sustainable development. The present research therefore attempts to reconcile this micro and macro level of analysis through the use of ethnography to develop a holistic understanding of the culture of business/NGO partnership and place it in a broader context. This chapter explores the implications of this choice of methodology. It opens with a discussion of the extent to which the concept of the stakeholder – or, more broadly, the “other” – underlies theoretical approaches to CSR, sustainable development and partnership. The second section then outlines how ethnography may facilitate a clearer understanding of how the “other” is understood by actors in business and NGOs, as they internalize and socially construct their notions of society, sustainability and partnership. Thirdly, the process of data collection and analysis are introduced, followed by a

discussion of the potential limitations of the research approach. Finally, the ethical challenges of ethnography are addressed.

### **The significance of the “other” in CSR, sustainable development and business/NGO partnership**

Within the CSR literature, stakeholder theory has contributed to a more holistic understanding of business, in which the firm addresses the interests of various “others,” that is, its stakeholders (Buchholz and Rosenthal 2005). However, stakeholders are understood as separate from the company and their interests may sometimes contradict those of the business (Wicks et al 1994). A more relational approach, which focuses on how business actors internalize the perspective of the “other,” might potentially overcome these contradictions. The present research aims to shed light on this internalization process, which takes place at both individual and social levels.

Sustainable development emphasizes the inter-relatedness of business and society and the cooperation required in overcoming multifaceted challenges (Hart et al 2003). It is by definition concerned with the “other,” that is, communities across the world and future generations. Challenges are seen as requiring cooperation at a local, national and global level (Korten 2006). This process might, however,

enable dominant actors to effectively “colonize” areas of particular countries in the name of environmental protection and development (Banerjee 2003). Consequently, this research asks how business and NGO actors make sense of diverse sources of knowledge and whether bottom-up approaches, developed in partnership with communities, can contribute to sustainable development at a global level.

Business/NGO partnership is a framework within which understandings of the “other” and their worldview are articulated and negotiated. Just as businesses are defined by their relationships with stakeholders, NGOs are defined by their relationships with communities, peers and donors<sup>15</sup>. Like companies, NGOs are forced to engage actively with these “others” – including business – by an ever-changing context. However, partnership in itself does not necessarily bring a better understanding of the respective partner or sector (MacDonald and Chrisp 2006; Poncelet 2003). Consequently, it cannot be assumed that partnership will necessarily lead to wider social change. The only way that the “hidden” outcomes of partnership can be evaluated is through a more nuanced understanding of its influence on both sides and whether it leads to shared understanding (Jonker and Nijhof 2006). This research

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<sup>15</sup> A fundamental difference between business and nonprofit organization is that while both must understand and manage their stakeholders, NGOs typically have more such relationships (Williams 2006; Bruce 2005; Kotler and Andreasan 2002). More colourfully, Edwards (2000) likens these “multiple accountabilities” to a medieval torture rack.

therefore focuses on the culture of the participating organizations and how actors articulate and experience partnership within that context.

## **Constructivism and ethnography as a way to understand the “other”**

This holistic understanding of business, NGOs and partnership implies a constructivist approach, focusing on how individuals internalize and socially construct their notions of society, sustainability and partnership. Constructivism is “a theory of knowledge with roots in philosophy, psychology and cybernetics” (Von Glaserfeld 1995, 8) and assumes knowledge is constructed by the individual through interaction with their environment. In contrast to positivism, which assumes a knowable objective world that can be measured and explained, constructivism argues that neither objects nor structures can exist independently of our theorizing about them (Murphy 1997). The very notions of “business” and “NGO” thereby become problematic, since they are not separate, isolatable units<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> To what extent can we even talk about an individual business or NGO as an identifiable entity? This paper takes the ontological position that any organization can be understood as a coalescence of multiple stakeholder relationships. While both businesses and NGOs must understand and manage these, NGOs typically have more such relationships (Williams 2006; Bruce 2005; Kotler and Andreasen 2002). More colourfully, Edwards (2000) likens these “multiple accountabilities” to a medieval torture rack. The potential value of business/NGO partnership lies precisely in enabling each organization to more effectively understand and meet the needs of their respective stakeholders. Consequently, Collins (2005) rejects the “naïve imposition of the ‘language of business’” on NGOs (2005, 2), suggesting both sectors should instead focus on achieving “greatness” through a common focus on initiatives about which they are deeply passionate, at which they excel and through which they may generate long-term resources.

There are multiple interpretations of constructivism: “Radical constructivism” suggests knowledge is received through the senses or through communication and is actively construed by the individual (Von Glaserfeld 1989). By contrast, “social constructivism” suggests that what constitutes “truth” or “reality” is the result of consensus among the members of a group (Schutz 1962): Most famously, Berger and Luckman (1967) suggest individuals develop typifications of each others’ actions, which are habitualized into roles. These roles become institutionalized and develop their own meaning for the individuals and society as a whole. Consequently knowledge becomes embedded within the institutional fabric and structure of society and “reality” itself is therefore socially constructed.

This research considers how individuals in the case study organizations socially construct their ideas about CSR, sustainable development and partnership and asks how these are institutionalized, addressing Research Objectives 2 and 3<sup>17</sup>:

- Explore how business and NGOs understand the concept of sustainable development.
- Assess the extent to which CSR partnerships may contribute to or undermine sustainable development.

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<sup>17</sup> Research Objective 1 was addressed in the Literature Review: “Review the relevant literature to examine the relationship between the concepts of CSR and sustainable development.”

These objectives attempt to understand individuals' motivations, understandings and experiences and place them in a wider context, which is essentially a definition of ethnography. Ethnography is both process and product, based on a two-stage process of "thick description," that is participant observation followed by interpretation and analysis (Tedlock 2000; Geertz 1973). Participant observation assumes the researcher forms relationships, participates in activities and is overt about their research role (Burgess 1984; Gold 1958). It also deconstructs borders between the researcher and subject during the second stage of research, with their impact acknowledged and reflected upon within the ethnographic text (Van Maanen 1988). Although ethnography originated in the social anthropological tradition exemplified by writers like Malinowski and Douglas, there is also a tradition of ethnographic research in management. It has been adopted perhaps most famously by Roy (1967) in "Banana Time" and Lupton (1963) in "On the shop floor," as well as by Dalton (1963), Watson (1994) and (Delbridge 1998). The common element between these studies is their attempt to understand individuals' perceptions of the way their organizational world is constructed and place these in context. Since only one study reviewed for this research was ethnographic (Poncelet 2003), the final Research Objective is:

- Examine the extent to which ethnography represents an appropriate methodology through which to study the macro-level issue of sustainable development.

## **Data collection and analysis**

### **Data collection: Fieldwork**

Data was gathered from one company (Haygrove) and one NGO (Concern Universal, CU). The two organizations are partners in the Gambia is Good (GIG) project, which aims to develop sustainable livelihoods among small gardeners in The Gambia. Both organizations were known to the researcher, having been the subject of previous research (Wadham 2005). Consequently, access was straightforward and the relevance of the organizations to the research questions was clear. Data was collected through participant observation (CU) and interviews (Haygrove).

Fieldwork with CU was based around three events, based on opportunity and research interests (see Appendix 1). Selectivity is inherent to participant observation, since it is impossible to observe every possible setting or every situation within a setting, meaning ethnography paints a partial picture (Jorgensen 1989). The first event was a two-day workshop with US-based NGO Project Concern International (PCI) to assess a possible strategic collaboration (July 2007). In exchange for access, the researcher produced a post-workshop review paper, preparation of which facilitated additional insight into CU's culture. The second event was a CU networking

evening (September 2007), at which people from business and charities shared experiences of cross-sector collaboration. The event included discussion of the extent to which businesses may add value to development, the choices they have in responding to global challenges, and the opportunities and challenges of partnership, including the need for new models of leadership. The third event was a seminar at City University (October 2007), where the Executive Director of CU was a speaker. This also afforded an opportunity to engage with other staff and interview Richard Harvey, the former CEO of FTSE insurance company Aviva, who is taking a gap year with CU in Africa<sup>18</sup> (see Appendix 3 for further information on all three events). Numerous conversations with participants also took place over the fieldwork period. However, like the fieldwork events themselves, these involved almost exclusively people holding relatively senior positions within the organization. Fieldwork with Haygrove centred on seven interviews in August 2007 (see Appendix 4). Participants were two directors, three people who had visited GIG, a staff member who had expressed interest in volunteering for

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<sup>18</sup> From September 2007-September 2008, Richard Harvey and his wife Kay will be working alongside CU and its partners in Malawi, Kenya and Mozambique. While the collaboration aims to meet the participants' expectations of spending a worthwhile and inspiring gap year, it also offers CU the opportunity to make progress in specific areas, such as transforming its funding and business model, engaging more effectively with business and raising the profile of CU and other organizations' development work. In particular, the collaboration aims to influence opinion on priority issues such as disaster preparedness, business engagement with charities and respect for African communities as full partners in their own development. Consequently, CU has actively sought to exchange learning on the experience with other voluntary organizations, such as through the event at the Centre for Charity Effectiveness in October 2007. See [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org) for more information.)

Haygrove Development and a former manager who had been involved in developing GIG's quality manuals.

The decision to combine research methods was based on time constraints and the respective preferences of the case study organizations, but also afforded a learning opportunity. Interviews were simple to organize and complete. At Haygrove's request, the questions and research outline were circulated in advance, with each interview lasting about an hour. However, this structured approach may have prematurely closed off potentially fruitful avenues of enquiry (Miles and Huberman 1984). The participants perhaps tailored their answers to the researcher's interests, although this was impossible to measure beyond an uneasy sensation that "something was missing." Participant observation with CU overcame these limitations but generated others. Perhaps most significantly, some voices predominate, while one workshop participant was omitted altogether. As in any social setting some people talk more than others and will therefore feature more frequently in transcripts, but there is also a more fundamental issue about how to recognize contributions that fall outside the main categories that emerge during data analysis. More positively, ethnography accorded well with CU's organizational approach: The organization's "bottom-up" approach to strategy means it uses a range of approaches to understand the needs of communities and partners and place these in a wider context (Williams 2007b).

## Data analysis

Ethnographic data do not lend themselves to straightforward analysis (Bryman and Bell 2003). The most commonly adopted strategy is that of grounded theory, which is “theory...derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 12). It contrasts with the strategy of analytic induction and is favoured by ethnographers because it emphasizes meaning and context (Jorgensen 1989). Although the exact nature of grounded theory is contested<sup>19</sup>, it comprises three key elements. *Theoretical sampling* is the collection, coding and analysis of data: This helps the researcher decide what to collect next to develop their emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Consequently data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously. Despite limited time for theoretical sampling, fieldwork nonetheless provided access to a range of actors and situations. In grounded theory, *coding* occurs as data is collected and represents the first stage in the generation of theory (Miles and Huberman 1984). Fieldnotes were written up immediately and codes attached manually to the data, as well as to documents and e-mails. The codes were derived from participants’ own categories. About 150 codes were reduced to 120 after repeated refining. *Theoretical saturation* means theoretical sampling continues until no new relevant data emerges for a given category and it is satisfactorily defined (Strauss and

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<sup>19</sup> The views of its original exponents, Glaser and Strauss (1967) later diverged, as discussed by Charmaz (2000).

Corbin 1998). The data was repeatedly analyzed until categories were effectively identified. Patterns were sought and led to a conceptual model.

Many writers claim to use grounded theory, but evidence that they have done so is uncertain, partly because it is difficult to use (Bryman and Bell 2003). Writing up was time-consuming and analysis was very challenging. It was difficult to identify patterns in the mass of data and to understand what was really important. However, some categories were highlighted as important by participants or within the fieldwork diary, which recorded particularly animated discussions. The subjectivity of these categories has implications in terms of the claims to knowledge that can be made for an ethnographic study, as discussed in “Challenges.”

### **Fieldnotes**

Fieldnotes are the ethnographers’ main resource for collecting and analyzing data. Mental notes, jotted notes and full fieldnotes together record the results of theoretical sampling (Bryman and Bell 2003). They also represent the raw material from which theoretical categories will emerge. Fieldwork essentially represents a kind of progressive focusing, which the ethnographer must systematically manage to avoid being overwhelmed by the volume of data collected (Silverman 2005). A comprehensive strategy of notetaking was adopted, whereby fieldnotes systematically described everything

observed during each fieldwork event (Wolfinger 2002). Although about 150 pages were generated for analysis, this still represents only a partial record of the research settings, reflecting the researcher's own knowledge and beliefs, which were therefore made explicit in annotations, fieldwork memos and the research diary.

Even adopting a comprehensive strategy, the issue of what to write was not straightforward and "getting started" proved challenging. The first entry – documenting the welcome dinner for CU's workshop participants – comprises three closely-typed pages of amorphous information. It was not clear how the swiftly moving conversations might eventually come to bear on as-yet unformulated research questions. By contrast, on the second day of the workshop, clear themes were emerging, but the relevant sections of the fieldnotes focus on the content of particular conversations while overlooking background information (such as who was sitting where, how people chose to use coffee breaks) that might have better illustrated organizational culture. Both experiences suggest the unforgiving nature of fieldnotes: The researcher only has one chance to "get them right" (Jackson 1990).

## **Challenges and limitations of the ethnographic approach**

Alongside the practical problems discussed above, ethnography raises a number of more fundamental challenges; namely those of relativism, boundary setting, access and the trustworthiness of data.

### **Relativism and claims to knowledge**

The Literature Review suggests constructivist studies remain the exception. Locket et al (2006) found positivistic methods informed 80 percent of all CSR papers published in leading management journals from 1992-2002. Likewise, the partnership literature's focus on its strategic potential inhibits widespread use of constructivist approaches. Even within the development literature, constructivism is under-represented. Despite claims of a paradigm shift, sustainable development has emerged largely in response to economic rationality: It adopts similar methodological approaches precisely to facilitate engagement with the "mainstream" (Banerjee 2003). The most common philosophical criticism of constructivism is its relativism: That is, if knowledge is socially constructed, to what extent can knowledge gained from one organization/context be translated into knowledge of another? Constructivists, in turn, have reservations about studies that seek to generalize, questioning the selection of cases, who was interviewed/observed and the wider social context within which events unfolded. The paradigmatic origins of these differences make resolution unlikely so perhaps we should assume

any claim to knowledge can only ever be tentative. According to Popper (1965), even one contrary example is sufficient to undermine a theory so all theories – positivist and constructivist – are merely provisional.

### **Defining boundaries**

Anthropologists have long been vexed by questions of exactly what constitutes a particular village or tribe<sup>20</sup>. This problem of boundary setting is more acute in organizational ethnography, which is by definition likely to be partial (Rosen 1991). In addition, “globalization” destabilizes the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places, making it difficult to identify who should constitute a study’s informants (Gille and O’Riain 2002). If Haygrove and CU’s symbols and knowledge are shared across multiple sites in several countries, can an ethnographic focus on a single setting be justified? In fact, the research settings represented a productive source of insights into wider global processes: In addition, Haygrove’s head office and CU’s international coordination office clearly had meaning to their members as social constructions, while also illustrating the organizations’ position within a network of external connections.

For example, although CU is a decentralized organization with policy largely set by the constituent country programmes, the UK office

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Evans-Pritchard (1951) on the Nuer in Sudan or Chagnon (1977) on the Yanomami in Brazil.

coordinates and articulates views and policies across the organization (see Appendix 2). Fieldwork within the UK office therefore generated useful insights into the organization as a whole. Nonetheless, given that community participation is central to CU's culture, the project's inability to hear voices from those communities was a clear limitation. Consequently, subsequent research will include fieldwork with communities engaged in the Gambia is Good project and other actors within and beyond the organization.

### **Access**

Access to Haygrove and CU was facilitated through previous fieldwork, but practical limitations necessitated compromise: Fieldwork in Haygrove was based on interviews, while that in CU adopted a micro-ethnographic approach, using key events to provide insight into the culture of the organizations (Wolcott 1990). The participant observer is effectively a stranger who occupies a place in the social structure of the group and the position adopted will affect the level of access and nature of knowledge acquired (Plane 2000). The role adopted in CU was that of a "knowledgeable outsider" who produced reports for participants after the three events. This role facilitated access to participants and enabled more questions to be asked than might otherwise have been appropriate. By contrast, no obvious role emerged within Haygrove: The perceived one-sidedness of the exchange was a factor in the decision to pursue interviews rather than participant observation.

Participants' expectations were a source of particular anxiety, given hopes of securing a lengthier period of fieldwork. People were understandably interested in the researcher's own knowledge and views of CSR, sustainable development and partnership, but my experience was often significantly less than their own. Likewise, several people with experience of academic research were interested in my ethnographic approach, which led to clumsy conversations about how to engage in research when you don't know what you're looking for! Consequently, subsequent research will focus attention where possible on the researcher's "day job" as a member of staff, rather than the nature and content of the research project.

### **Trustworthiness of data**

All qualitative research is subjective, since respondent and researcher influence the collection and analysis of data. Critics suggest ethnography amplifies this subjectivity, as the ethnographer makes constant choices about what to include or exclude (Bryman and Bell 2003). Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest the acknowledgement of multiple realities underlying qualitative research means it cannot be evaluated according to the measures of validity, reliability and generalizability, which are used to evaluate quantitative research. They suggest instead criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity. Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) suggest trustworthiness in fact comes from authenticity: Ethnography must

demonstrate that the researcher was both present and genuine to the experience. The research attempts to make explicit the fieldwork undertaken and reflect the underlying context in any observations. Trustworthiness and authenticity require reflexivity. A transparent approach was therefore adopted and the researcher's possible impact acknowledged. In addition, participants reviewed and commented on both individual quotes and successive drafts of the research.

## **Ethical considerations**

At least four key ethical issues emerge in management research (Bryman and Bell 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994). Within each, ethnographic research presents particular challenges.

### **Harm to participants**

Harm may be difficult to avoid where a critical approach is adopted. The present research reflects a critical approach to CSR: This was made clear in the research outline submitted to Haygrove and CU, enabling them to consider potential implications in advance. Research may also cause harm to individual participants: Sources may be recognizable even where attempts are made to conceal their identity (Parker 2000). Participant observation perhaps increases the likelihood of capturing an unguarded or misarticulated comment that could prove embarrassing or damaging to the participant, even

where it is only seen by others within the organization. Consequently, all quotes were checked with participants prior to being circulated in a complete draft.

### **Lack of informed consent**

People have right to know they are subject of research project and must give informed consent (De Walt and De Walt 2002). However, this does not necessarily imply a formal process, rather the fullest possible disclosure of the goals and potential uses of research (Fluehr-Lobban 2003). Researchers must therefore understand the information needs of their potential research subjects and provide information in such a way that will enable them to understand what participation will involve (Wiles et al 2005). As in this case, this may mean including information about the researcher, their views and the funding of the research (Scraton 2004).

Negotiating access provided a valuable learning opportunity in itself. Haygrove's MD was skeptical about the ethnographic methodology and the accompanying lack of clear research objectives, providing insight into the company's "no-nonsense" culture. In contrast, CU participants requested extensive information, including clarification about the broader context of the research. This illustrated the extent to which the organizational culture values both academic research<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As well as the previous study cited (Wadham 2005), CU has been the subject of another PhD project (Williams 1996) and several graduate and postgraduate studies since the early 1990s. Learning is a key element of CU's 2006-9 strategy:(see Appendix 2).

and open communication. Both organizations provided feedback on the research proposal, identified likely fieldwork opportunities and interview subjects and commented on successive drafts. The implications of this collaborative approach to research are addressed in “Discussion.”

### **Invasion of privacy**

The ethnographer alternates between different roles: The participant may on occasion believe they are sharing a confidence with a colleague when in fact they are providing information to a researcher. De Walt and De Walt (2002) suggest researchers actively encourage this conflation of roles, since it is when people forget the researcher’s ulterior motives that they begin to share the insights and information to which only “insiders” gain access. The limited nature of the present fieldwork meant it was unlikely that participants would “forget” the reason for the researcher’s presence. Nonetheless, a handful of comments appeared to be made “off the record” and were therefore not included despite being of potential interest, raising questions about the possible “censoring” role of the researcher (Warren 2000).

Privacy refers also to groups and cultures. The idea of “cultural privacy” pertains especially to “indigenous” communities but also applies to organizations (Fobes Brown 2003). It is defined as the right of possessors of a culture to shield themselves from unwanted scrutiny and is doubly problematic. Firstly, culture is by nature shared

and therefore at least partially public. Secondly, it overlooks the researcher's responsibility to engage critically with the organization and its culture. The collaborative nature of the present research ensured participants could raise any concerns about violations of individual or organizational privacy. However, this approach brings the possibility of the researcher being co-opted or of the analysis reproducing the power relations of the organization (Lather 1992; Sangren 1988).

### **Whether deception is involved**

Bernard (2006) suggests participant observation always involves an element of deception and image management. Madison (2005) describes this more positively as "world travelling." The researcher travels to different worlds – belonging to a whole society or a small group – and performs differently there. They may do so simply out of civility or respect, but must learn the different rules of this world and decide whether or not to play by them. The participant observer may also exaggerate their naivety in order to encourage greater openness among participants and facilitate sharper analytic insights (Coffey 1999). The role adopted within CU in particular facilitated the process of "world travelling:" The researcher was effectively compelled to learn the organization's "rules of collaboration" in order to carry out a designated role.

In summary, ethnography potentially facilitates a clearer understanding of how business and NGO actors understand and socially construct their notions of society, sustainability and partnership, by providing more access to the “hidden” processes at work. However, the subjective and fragmentary nature of ethnography requires a transparent approach that demonstrates the authenticity and trustworthiness of any claims to knowledge. The ethical challenges of ethnography are partly mitigated by the collaborative approach adopted. Consequently, the prominence of the researcher at every stage of the present research is acknowledged and an analysis of how this impacted on the findings is attempted.

## Chapter 4: Analysis of the data

**Summary:** Haygrove is a horticultural SME, collaborating with an international NGO (Concern Universal). Fieldwork generated a three-stage conceptual model of sustainable development, comprising an ultimate objective, three success factors and five pre-conditions. Although understood and articulated differently, these are based on sufficient common ground for the partnership to work.

### Introduction

The fieldwork generated a conceptual model that indicated the ultimate objective of CSR and sustainable development is to improve people's lives through partnership (Diagram 1). This objective can only be achieved where three conditions ("success factors") are fulfilled: Sustainability, strengthened communities and engagement of other organizations. Finally, five preconditions were articulated within Haygrove and CU, although understood differently within the two organizations. This chapter presents an overview of the two case study organizations, before discussing the findings behind this conceptual model.

### The cases

Data was collected from two case study organizations, Haygrove and Concern Universal, to explore how business and NGOs understand CSR, sustainable development and partnership<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> For more information about the case study organizations, see [www.haygrove.co.uk](http://www.haygrove.co.uk) and [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org). Unless otherwise stated, background information is taken from these websites.

## **Haygrove**

Haygrove is a horticultural SME, based in Ledbury, Herefordshire. Established in 1988 as the Managing Director's university project, Haygrove is now the UK's leading organic fruit producer. It has a turnover of £25 million and grows 120 hectares of soft fruit across seven sites in the UK, Central Europe and South Africa. In 1996 it diversified into polytunnels and other equipment, manufactured at its plant in Poland. Its tunnels cover 50 percent of the UK strawberry crop and are exported worldwide. Haygrove employs 600 staff in the UK: Fifty are based permanently at the headoffice, while 550 are seasonal agricultural workers. About half the seasonal workforce returns for one or more seasons, while several have since joined the company in administrative, management or partnership roles (Davison 2007). Despite its expansion, the company remains appealingly unceremonious. Located up a single track road, the head office is surrounded by fields and packhouses. Depending on the time of year, pickers walk between the buildings, the fields and the campsite where they live for the season. In Reception, a noticeboard is covered with articles from the agricultural press, along with invitations to staff social events and pictures of work the company supports in The Gambia.

In 1996 the company established Haygrove Development, with the aim of creating:

“an innovative, practical and ultimately influential example of how a specialist business and a specialist charity can work together to improve the lives of the poor in less fortunate countries.”

(Haygrove 2001a)

The development division is separate from the company's commercial operations and generates no income for Haygrove. It focuses mainly on the Gambia is Good (GIG) partnership with Concern Universal (CU), which has established a fair trade marketing company to develop sustainable livelihoods among small gardeners in The Gambia. Through the development division, Haygrove has to date invested about £125,000 in GIG, exclusive of management time. GIG is also supported by Haygrove Sidlesham, an independent horticultural company that works in partnership with Haygrove and was instrumental in setting up the Gambian initiative. Both companies are also core business supporters of CU, operate Give as You Earn schemes and support other local and international projects.

GIG started operations in 2003 but links already existed between the two organizations: The Executive Director of CU is close friends with the two Haygrove directors. He formerly worked for the company and remains a non-executive director. However, the partnership was driven by wider organizational objectives and both boards were involved from the beginning (Williams 2007b). Haygrove was committed to adopting a more strategic approach to its development activities, previously confined to sponsoring individual projects.

Likewise, CU was planning to replicate modest but encouraging success with business (Wadham 2005). Haygrove and CU signed a Memorandum of Understanding and after intense discussions and a visit by the MD of Haygrove to The Gambia in 2001, this was chosen as the site for collaboration. CU had a country programme there and existing relationships with producers, local partners had identified a need and Haygrove's technical expertise could potentially add value. In 2002 Haygrove Development received a £200,000 grant from DFID's now-defunct Business Linkage Challenge Fund (BLCF), which was key in enabling the project to go ahead.

GIG's aims are to improve the yield and quality of locally grown fruit and vegetables to provide growers with access to the demanding local hotel market (Haygrove 2001b). Results to date are outlined in box below, but also include:

- Introduction of grading system to improve quality/prices.
- Irrigation developments, reducing time spent fetching water.
- Introduction of seed store, enabling growers to plan ahead and acquire seeds on demand.
- Diversification into new crops.

(Haygrove 2006)

GIG had its first break-even month in January 2007 and is on track to meet its financial and development objectives by 2008 (Haygrove 2006)<sup>23</sup>.

### **Concern Universal**

Concern Universal (CU) is an international development organization working with communities across Africa, Asia and Latin America to help them find sustainable solutions to poverty and inequality. Its vision is “a world where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.” It supports “practical actions that enable people to improve their lives and shape their own futures” (CU 2007a). CU emphasizes partnership, creativity and responding to local needs:

“CU fundamentally defines itself through its relationships with its key partners and ultimately with the beneficiary communities themselves.”

(CU 2005)

This is reflected in an unusually decentralized structure<sup>24</sup>. Expenditure is directed to beneficiary countries and most of its approximately 450 staff are locally recruited and based across its 12 countries of operation, including Malawi, Bangladesh and Brazil. The country programmes effectively comprise the organization, having a high level of autonomy to develop and manage their own activities, as long as these are consistent with the overall mission, values and

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<sup>23</sup> It is also worth noting that GIG was the only project to benefit from a second round of BLCF funding, receiving an additional grant of £81,000 in 2007 (Williams 2007b).

<sup>24</sup> By contrast, many other NGOs employ more people in the North than the South. For example, Christian Aid employs 550 people, of whom 160 are based in its 16 “field offices” (Christian Aid 2003).

strategy of the organization (CU 2007a). People across CU provide functional expertise and devolved leadership (Williams 2005). Based in Hereford, the international coordination office maintains a core staff of nine, who support the country programmes<sup>25</sup>. These programmes are delivered through around 60 in-country and international partners (Williams 2007a). With approximately £10 million p.a. income and expenditure, CU is relatively small compared to some well-known international NGOs such as Oxfam or CARE International. However, in terms of the UK voluntary sector as a whole, it is a relatively large organization<sup>26</sup>. Donors include DFID, the European Union and the World Food Programme. It has had growing experience of working with business since the 1990s, as illustrated by its collaborations with Haygrove and The Tetley Group (CU 2006)<sup>27</sup>.

#### **CU's development approach: Gambia is Good**

In The Gambia, growers follow the conventions of subsistence farming; using traditional methods to farm traditional crops. The

<sup>25</sup> The number of UK-based staff is growing significantly as CU has created an in-house fundraising team. This currently comprises 10 people and recruits individual supporters, thereby building CU's overall constituency in the UK. This contrasts with the approach of many other UK-based (mainly larger) organizations, which tend to use external fundraising agencies. CU's fundraising strategy perhaps reflects what members call its "shoe leather" approach to its work more widely, which consists of building and maintaining personal relationships with partners, donors and others in order to create awareness of its work and the priorities of its communities/partners across its countries of operation (Williams 2007b).

<sup>26</sup> The number of UK voluntary organizations grew from 98,000 in 1991 to 169,000 in 2004 and organizations with an income of £1-10 million are considered "large organizations" (NCVO 2007). The same report suggests the UK NGO community – and the wider voluntary sector – is increasingly dominated by a relatively small number of "brand name" organizations. For example, 0.2 percent of general charities now generate almost 40 percent of the sector's income.

<sup>27</sup> More background on the collaboration with The Tetley Group is provided below, in Wadham (2005) and at [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org).

typical result is poor yields, poor quality and seasonal flooding of the market, with growers often unable to sell their produce. At the same time as this excess produce is going to waste, produce from Europe and neighbouring Senegal is being imported to meet the needs of The Gambia's tourist industry, which demands specific products that meet exacting quality standards. The key challenge is therefore one of marketing rather than production, which is the focus of Gambia is Good (GIG), CU's partnership with Haygrove,.

The project translates the needs of hotels, restaurants and supermarkets into detailed production plans for growers. Since 2003, GIG has mobilized 800 growers across the North Bank and Western Division, who now sell 20 tonnes of produce per month during the tourist season. They have replaced over-produced vegetables with in-demand produce like courgettes, iceberg lettuce and broccoli, whose retail prices are up to 10 times higher. In 2006, GIG diverted £34,000 of sales away from imports and into the hands of local, small-scale producers. In addition, GIG's collaboration with The Travel Foundation facilitated the launch of the GIG open farm, which is used to demonstrate best-practice and generate additional revenue through produce sales and tourism. As most produce is now grown locally using specially selected varieties (also provided by GIG), the project delivers better quality and cheaper product to market.

Ebrima Jawara, a young grower from Gambia's North Bank, describes his view of the project:

"I cannot even compare today with back then. The only way I can say it is that if then I was travelling at 50 kilometres per hour, now I am travelling at 100. Last year I bought one pack of tomato seeds for 600 dalasis. When I finished harvesting I had earned 22,000. I couldn't believe it but I still have the receipts to prove it! In other villages, the youths have all left to try and find money in the city. Here this does not happen any more. They can see that it is possible to earn good money and stay with their families."

(Adapted from case study at [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org))

CU has an "entrepreneurial" approach (Williams 2007a). Individual country strategies inform the development of the organization's overall vision, mission and values (CU 2007a). Articulating this approach, CU's Operations Guide deliberately learns and borrows

from Mintzberg's (1994) distinction between deliberate and emergent strategy:

“A strategy has to be flexible enough so that all relevant opportunities can be embraced but not so flexible that a quasi ad hoc approach is adopted. It is also important to keep strategies wide enough to allow for innovative and relevant projects and ideas to emerge.”

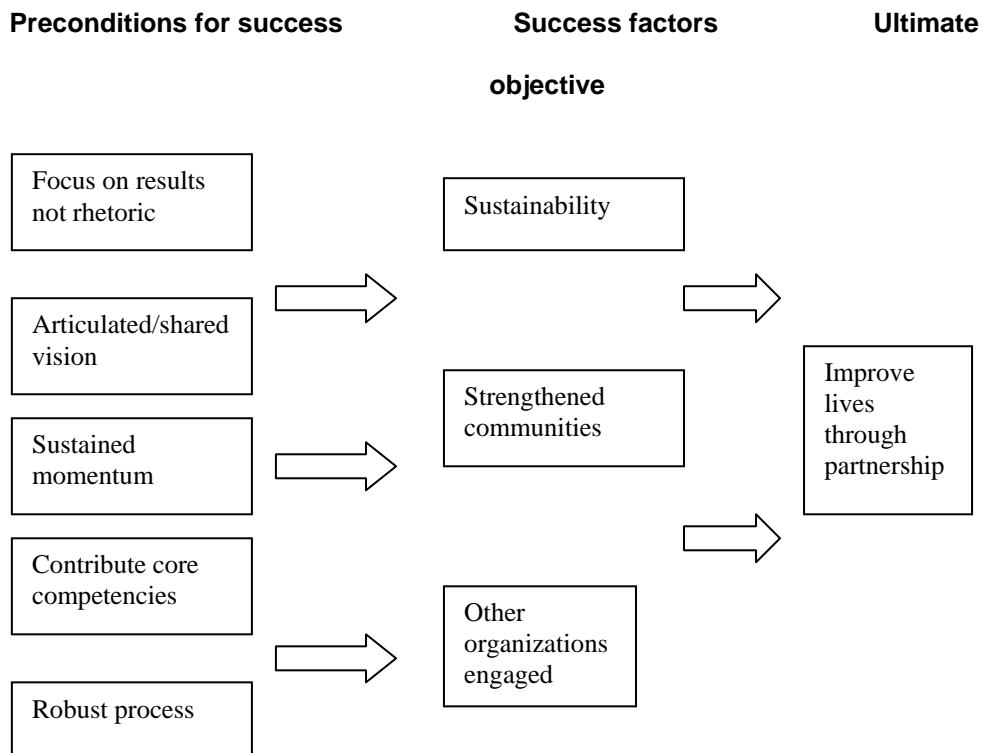
(CU 2007a, 22)

This is reflected in CU's approach to partnership with business. For example, CU's partnership with The Tetley Group grew out of an organizational strategy to build partnerships with business, but the development of the partnership in Malawi and the UK also reflects the way in which both sides responded to emerging opportunities over the lifecycle of the partnership (Wadham 2005). It combines on-the-ground projects, added value activities (such as a management development programme) and traditional fundraising and brought potential for identifying and scaling up opportunities. The relationship with Tetley illustrates CU's focus on shared learning, with extensive information published online. Other cross-sector initiatives also attempt to share knowledge. The West Africa Farm Experience provides businesspeople with first-hand experience of issues related to global food production and development (CU 2007b). Likewise, CU is engaged in collaborative climate change initiatives, such as a UN-sponsored project to articulate NGO responses and research into

carbon neutral development projects, which has specifically evolved from its work in The Gambia<sup>28</sup>.

## Findings

The rest of the chapter presents the findings behind the conceptual model outlined in Diagram 1.



**Diagram 1: Participants' conceptual model of sustainable development**

<sup>28</sup> CU has also supported the work of the Centre for Charity Effectiveness on business/NGO collaboration, focusing on the similarities and differences of effectiveness in business and voluntary sector contexts (see [www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org](http://www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org)).

## **What is the ultimate objective of sustainable development?**

The ultimate objective of sustainable development was articulated as improving people's lives:

"I understand Nelson Mandela once used the comment that vision with action will change the world. Driven by the communities and partners we exist to serve, Concern Universal's an organization that's trying to change the world. We're committed to reducing poverty and inequality."

(Executive Director, CU)

"The core driver for us is to make a difference...and ultimately to have a legacy of what we've done in our working lives...that when we look back we've made an impact, albeit a small impact on a huge area."

(Director, Haygrove)

Actors in both organizations said this could not be achieved by one organization acting alone.

"We can and do get our voice heard at all sorts of levels, notably regarding business at a very senior level via Richard and Kay Harvey's 'gap year' with CU. I think that the voice and influence we have in all sorts of forums, with our partners often to the fore, is important to facilitating positive societal change. This advocacy is deliberately rooted in our practical experience."

(Executive Director, CU)

"It's critical that you work with a partner. You can't go blundering in thinking you're doing something marvellous. You end up creating a project that's not sustainable and pulling out and leaving everybody in a worse state or offering something and failing to come up with it."

(Director, Haygrove Sidlesham)

Partnership is therefore a central element of sustainable development to actors within both organizations. There is a recurring theme of partnership as leverage, creating influence beyond the

organizations and beneficiary communities concerned, sometimes expressed in quasi-evangelical terms.

The researcher's prior knowledge enables some tentative observations about how stated views on sustainable development and partnership may reflect actors' "hidden" understandings. Haygrove's culture indicates a long-standing interest in people and communities. Firstly, participants emphasize the company's approach to people at least as much as its core business:

"It's having [people] from completely different backgrounds bringing something new about how things are done in their countries and sharing experience and ideas."

(Accounts Assistant, Haygrove)

"The team ethic's really important so the whole working for each other culture is important and we're trying to hold onto that as we get bigger."

(Director, Haygrove)

Secondly, a focus on sustainable development is discernible in the history of the firm. Haygrove Development was established in 1996, but was apparently a manifestation of an earlier vision:

"[In 1988] the plan really was that we'd go off on our separate walks in life and gather some street cred and having gathered some street cred try and do something with it."

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

CU effectively defines itself in terms of its relationships with communities and partners. It has partnerships with NGOs including Colombia's Social Pastoral, the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP), Project Concern

International (PCI) and Aidlink and with trusts and foundations including the William Cadbury Trust. Since the 1990s, CU has worked in partnership with businesses like Tetley, Bulmers, Diageo and Mitsubishi. CU's partnerships with NGOs concentrate on projects, while those with business focus on encouraging deeper understanding of development challenges through joint activities and advocacy work (Wadham 2005). Consequently, partnership is fundamental to how individuals within CU understand the organization and explain it to others.

“Partnership is at the heart of what CU does and is the means by which we aspire to achieve our vision... At the core of CU's partnership approach is a deep sense of value and respect for the processes involved in relationship building.”

(CU 2005)

“We work with not through partners. It's not all about implementation.”

(Fundraising Director, CU)

This derives from a similar focus on people to that of Haygrove:

“You need to have the right people on the bus at every level...They need to have...a commitment in the heart to enable development in an appropriate way, working with the community and in partnership. And they need a commitment in the head to have a businesslike approach in order to ensure an effective and efficient level of implementation.”

(Executive Director, CU)

This brief analysis suggests that Haygrove and CU participants understand sustainable development as improving lives, with partnership potentially facilitating both local and systemic change. However, it clearly raises a question about what “improvement” looks

like. This goes to the heart of participants' understanding of the nature of sustainable development and the potential role of companies and NGOs.

**Success factors: What does “improvement” look like?**

When asked to describe how they would know whether attempts to “improve lives” were being successful, participants suggested three main indicators – sustainability, strengthened communities and engagement of or with other organizations – articulated in different ways. However, underpinning their comments was a common emphasis on the significance of feedback from communities themselves, whether these are seen as “beneficiaries” or “customers.”

***Level of sustainability***

Participants agreed successful development projects must be sustainable but there was discussion about what sustainability means. For Haygrove participants, financial break-even is fundamental:

“I don’t think it’s OK [for the project to run at a loss]...If for the next five years we’re putting money in just to keep it going then something’s wrong.”

(Director, Haygrove Sidlesham)

The significance of financial sustainability stems at least partly from its significance to others:

“The only way to persuade businesses that they need to take an interest in the developing world is by example, and where they can see they’d benefit...full stop.”

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

Interestingly, the BLCF (and since its closure the AECF) requires that applicants’ project proposals are provided by the corporate partner and take the form of a business plan, with specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Consequently, the monitoring/reporting reflects this businesslike approach: GIG’s indicators include “negotiate and deliver on supply contracts with 8 to 10 tourist establishments” (Year 2) and “achieve 5 percent return on sales” (Year 5). However, the project proposal and evaluation also represented specific development objectives, most significantly that of “providing poor people with a fair and equitable price for their produce” (Haygrove 2002).

For Haygrove participants then, financial sustainability is balanced against “development returns.” However, participants struggled to articulate the relationship between them and one suggested development returns are ultimately constrained by market forces:

“If you don’t give hotels the continuity of supply they’ll switch to another supplier...We’ll always give first refusal to our growing base, so if one of our producers can grow it to the standard we require then we’ll buy from them otherwise we’ll import it.”

(Director, Haygrove)

Within CU, sustainability is clearly about achieving developmental returns in a way that does not degrade the environment:

“Communities have a valid structure and the challenge is to keep people doing what they’re doing in a sustainable way. Is development giving everyone Western lifestyles? No it’s not.”

(Finance Director, CU)

The environment on which communities depend constantly features in the background of discussions. Appropriate and often simple innovations can make a cost effective and lasting impact in sustainable development terms:

“Years ago we were standing by the bank of a dam...we were looking down at the base of the embankment and there was a little seepage of water. And I said to [my colleague] ‘if you put a shallow well, a little hole, there it would capture that seepage.’ And we did it and now all the dams we do have that facility...It’s not rocket science but it works.”

(International Director, East and Southern Africa, CU)

CU’s programmes are built on these small-scale interventions. The community-focused approach is explicitly aiming at sustainability since community involvement in decisions about where to site wells or how to implement a micro-credit programme is understood as directly contributing to development returns (CU 2006).

Financial sustainability was acknowledged, but follows on from these development returns:

“If initial funding is harnessed for a specific initiative and results in effective work being undertaken in a given location or country, then success can lead to success and create an opportunity to increase the scale, scope, influence and impact of the organization’s work.”

(Executive Director, CU)

### ***Strengthened communities***

Successful development was seen as dependent on empowering beneficiary communities to help themselves. Haygrove participants emphasized the development of an entrepreneurial approach:

“The people that you talk to are thinking like business people. They maybe keep 40 percent of their profits to invest the next year. You know, they’re buying a donkey or a new water pump. They’re really getting thinking on that.”

(Quality Assurance Manager, Haygrove)

Participants acknowledged that developing this entrepreneurial culture may conflict with the desire to respect community priorities, a key element of sustainable development:

“It was quite confusing on occasions as to what we were trying to do... My immediate view when I go into a farm is that I want things to be humming and perfect and high yield...We’re trying to raise them to a level of competing with global suppliers...but in a way that manages to keep their social structure.”

(Technical Manager, Haygrove)

By contrast, CU actors took social structure as a starting point: NGOs share their knowledge and experience but it is communities that decide whether to adopt them:

“What is unique in every situation is the process through which that community will acknowledge and address its own issues. Not because they will necessarily come up with a unique response but because they have to be given an opportunity to own their own problem and solution.”

(International Director, East and Southern Africa, CU)

This community-based approach is fundamental to CU’s culture, but also represents a Unique Selling Point (USP) for potential donors<sup>29</sup>:

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<sup>29</sup> The term “USP” was in fact employed by four CU actors.

“We have a clear focus on the communities we’re working to support and our partners that we’re working with. That’s how we frame our approach. If there’s a relevant response that we can provide then we’ll do it, whereas a lot of the donor world thinks in sectors. In some ways it’s a real challenge for us but also an opportunity to present an alternative perspective.”

(International Director, Asia and Latin America, CU)

### ***Other organizations engaged***

The third success factor raised is the extent to which other organizations are engaged or inspired by the partnership. For Haygrove participants, such engagement would secure both the future of the GIG initiative and a broader-level change, as expressed powerfully by the MD:

“[We want] to try and give an example firstly to others within horticulture and maybe one day beyond horticulture of...specifically an SME rather than a plc working with an NGO to bring business thinking using the specialism of the SME to [an area of work] where business wouldn’t normally take it. We can make a big impact... through good solid results without any tarting up at all... by making others think and hopefully attracting them to involvement as well.”

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

CU participants also suggested the involvement of others is key to driving broader-level change. CU seeks to persuade the NGO networks that influence development policymakers, thereby impacting on-the-ground work by other agencies:

“Everyone talks about it but the reality is that [many actors] completely disregard local capacity. We try to make sure that local capacity is represented all the time and involved in emergency response when disaster occurs.”

(International Director, West Africa, CU)

“The reality in terms of emergency response over the last ten years is that the international organizations are getting it

wrong. They're using one prototype response for all emergencies. You could be in the middle of an urban centre surrounded by concrete and you still get seeds and tools...We need to be a part of those wider networks...so we can start to challenge some of these issues.”

(International Director, East and Southern Africa, CU)

In summary, participants highlighted three main factors that would demonstrate whether attempts to “improve lives” were being successful. Firstly, actors from both Haygrove and CU emphasize sustainability, recognizing that financial and developmental aspects of sustainability may sometimes conflict. Secondly, both organizations emphasize the need for “strengthened communities.” However, for Haygrove participants this means developing an entrepreneurial approach, whereas for CU actors it means empowering communities to recognize and address their own problems. Finally, both organizations underline the need for engagement with others, prioritizing their peers above organizations in other sectors.

### **What do participants acknowledge as the fundamental elements behind the partnership process?**

Participants identified five elements, articulated differently within Haygrove and CU.

#### ***Focus on results not rhetoric***

Participants in Haygrove and CU expressed distrust of rhetoric and a belief in letting results speak for themselves.

“I would think that most people in fruit horticulture in the UK know that we’re doing something [in The Gambia] but we’ve never advertised it to anyone or said anything, just the odd conversation here and there. But they’re interested and they’ve found out. I’m sure if we picked up the phone now and said ‘would you like to know a bit more?’ some of those people would be interested. Far more than being another speech at a conference.”

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

CU participants showed similar reticence:

“In a way, we’re uncomfortable just talking about CU. There’s that relationship-base to our work in terms of how we work with partners but that also informs how the core of CU interacts with the country programmes.”

(International Director, Asia and Latin America, CU)

Consequently, stories about communities are seen as key to engaging a wider audience, with partnership representing a way to increase the store of narratives:

“Working in partnership with organisations like Haygrove provides additional learning and stories. Through partnership we can speak to more people. If they are the ‘right’ stories and they are used in the ‘right’ way they will ultimately help enable greater change.”

(Executive Director, CU)

## ***Vision***

Haygrove participants suggested vision was fundamental to the evolution of GIG:

“There’s more to Haygrove than just the building of a company... I think we all worry about what we’re doing in business and the impact we’re having on the wider world and so it’s great to be involved with something that’s...giving back.”

(Technical Manager, Haygrove)

Participants suggested engagement represented simply the “right thing to do:”

“We should all have that sense of responsibility for our neighbour, whether that’s in the next village, in the same country or worldwide... I think it’s instinctive.”

(Director, Haygrove Sidlesham)

One participant suggested this inclusive definition of stakeholders may be reflect the nature of the horticultural business:

“There’s a certain amount of feel for people overseas or relationships with people overseas...We work hands-on in the soil and you can’t get away from that...The essential thing for us is our hands, our noses, our feel for plants and of course that’s the same wherever you go.”

(Technical Manager, Haygrove)

CU also holds a broad conceptualization of its stakeholders:

“CU has an openness, an inclusiveness that I think has been there from the beginning.”

(International Director, West Africa, CU)

For both organizations, sustainable development is about achieving step-change rather than incremental improvement, with partnership representing a key element:

“Rather than business being for profit and NGO being not-for-profit, I hope the two institutions merge into one over the next few decades. We’re trying to create an example of that merger.”

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

### ***Sustained momentum***

Both organizations acknowledged the challenges involved in maintaining enthusiasm and involving people across the organization:

“We’d like to get more people inspired by it. It’s quite a cost...so it’s that question of how to inspire people without necessarily taking that step and putting them on a plane out there.”

(Director, Haygrove)

Within CU, discussions about strategy are always taken back to the rest of the organization. “I’m all the time feeling very conscious of how our country directors would feel about this” one participant acknowledged during a break at the strategic collaboration workshop with PCI.

An entrepreneurial culture creates an expectation of continued innovation, which may generate enthusiasm but also frustration: Several Haygrove participants speculated that similar projects would be established in other countries, while individuals in CU were excited about increased collaboration with other NGOs on disaster preparedness and climate change. The extent to which the organizations may pursue these initiatives in future is as yet unclear.

### ***Contribute core competencies***

Participants suggested that added value lay in the organizations’ respective skills and a culture that facilitated their transfer. Haygrove brings experience of supermarkets’ supply and quality requirements,

which is transferable to the Gambian hotel market. Five people from Haygrove visited GIG in March 2007. One worked with growers on new grading and packing systems:

“They put their tomatoes in a big 50 litre bucket and they have to travel about 40 miles to the city in 40 degrees. Half of it is waste before it gets there...We got them shallow trays that stack up...and we reduced the wastage 30 percent only by doing that.”

(Quality Assurance Manager, Haygrove)

Participants from CU indicated that on-the-ground skills – water/sanitation, HIV/AIDS and disaster preparedness – represent only part of their skills base:

“We’re trying to understand competencies not just in terms of the core business of what we do but our competencies overall: Competencies in community and partner development, project management, drawing on local knowledge, decentralized leadership, networking, entrepreneurship.”

(Finance Director, CU)

This was echoed by participants within Haygrove, who readily acknowledged CU’s understanding of The Gambian business environment:

“We were more naive commercially...We felt that the whole approach to buying locally would be inspiring to the hoteliers...They just didn’t catch that vision...CU told us that but it took a couple of visits to understand.”

(Director, Haygrove)

### ***Robust process***

Both organizations emphasized “means” and “ends.” Focus on partners and communities was fundamental to CU’s reputation and position:

“Fundamentally our approach is driven by communities...We go into a place and ask who do we know here? What can they tell us about what the needs are?...It’s the flexibility and the responsiveness that we have that I would guess [some other organizations] don’t have.”

(Finance Director, CU)

Likewise, Haygrove participants compared their approach to others.

“We’re really keen to try to make it happen by applying our business principles in a development context.”

(Director, Haygrove)

The partnership approach requires compromise, with CU adopting elements of business language and culture:

“[CU Gambia team members are] far more business-oriented than they were two or three years ago...When you go there now...the measures are different. They’re into KPIs and all manner of lingo that was very foreign to them not long ago.”

(Managing Director, Haygrove)

Conversely, discussions about the coverage of administration and management costs have been a source of occasional tension between Haygrove and CU<sup>30</sup>.

In summary, fieldwork with Haygrove and CU suggested a three-stage conceptual model of sustainable development. Firstly, the ultimate objective is to improve people’s lives and this can best be

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<sup>30</sup> The issue of administration costs is sensitive for most charities. Historically overhead costs have often been considered negatively by UK and European funders as an “optional extra.” Through representative bodies such as the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organizations (ACEVO), and donor organizations like New Philanthropy Capital, the UK voluntary sector has increasingly adopted a model of Full Cost Recovery. This aims to ensure that all the costs associated with a project, such as leadership, research, and financial management, are funded by donors. Progress towards achieving Full Cost Recovery is included in CU’s strategy 2006-9.

achieved through partnership. Secondly, partnership is only successful where it enables sustainability, strengthened communities and the engagement of other organizations. The way participants articulated these factors differed substantially. Haygrove actors placed more emphasis on financial sustainability and the development of entrepreneurial spirit. By contrast, CU actors emphasized the relationship between development returns and further donor investment and the importance of empowering communities to take ownership of problems and possible solutions. However, both Haygrove and CU prioritized the engagement of peers over other sectors. Finally, these three factors themselves depend on five pre-conditions that are understood differently within Haygrove and CU. As with the ultimate objective and success factors, differences in the way actors from the two organizations articulate these are based on sufficient common ground for the partnership to work. The following chapter considers the extent to which these findings confirm or challenge key ideas identified in the Literature Review.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

**Summary:** The research suggests a broad understanding of stakeholders, with the organizations effectively constituted by these relationships. A balanced view of sustainability prevails, along with a focus on process. Partnership represents a way to influence both peers and other sectors. It also increases an apparent blurring of the boundary between business/NGOs.

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter suggests a high level of agreement about sustainable development's objective and the success factors and preconditions that make it possible, along with the significance of partnership throughout. These ideas are articulated in different ways within Haygrove and CU, but based on sufficient common ground for the partnership to work. In order to understand the significance and implications of these similarities and differences, this chapter returns to a number of themes identified in the Literature Review and relates them to the research findings.

### **How do actors understand the role of the company within society?**

Haygrove participants suggested that taking an active interest in development was simply "the right thing to do," even though the GIG project is geographically remote from the company's operations. Their responses therefore lie towards the "ethics" side of the CSR continuum (Godfrey and Hatch 2007; Driver 2006). Participants imply

a relational understanding of the firm, that is, rather than being isolatable from its multiple stakeholders, Haygrove is in fact constituted by its relationship with them (Buchholz and Rosenthal 2005): Participants repeatedly referred to Haygrove as a people-focused company, with jobs often created around individuals and business opportunities emerging from relationships<sup>31</sup>. This echoes CU's people-focused approach: Most staff are recruited in-country and expatriates live within local communities. The research also confirms that the identification of stakeholders is potentially problematic (Lea 1999; Boele et al 2001): The nature of both Haygrove and CU's work generates an especially inclusive definition, while a focus on developing a model for other organizations effectively converts them into stakeholders, even though they may not be explicitly identifiable (Boutilier 2007).

Any attempt to distinguish between the economic and ethical dimensions of CSR is essentially artificial (Godfrey and Hatch 2007; Driver 2006). Haygrove participants consistently underline ethics as a driver but return to ideas like efficiency and market access to explain GIG's approach. Nonetheless, participants themselves seek to separate ethics and economics: The possibility of financial return was

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<sup>31</sup> Key business initiatives for Haygrove include a factory in Poland and a farm in South Africa, both of which are well established and stem from relationships with former pickers who had been promoted within Haygrove to increasing levels of responsibility in the UK before branching out internationally. The horticultural enterprise in South Africa supplies fruit to Marks and Spencers and secured funding in 2007 to help small farmers improve quality and yield through an African Fair Partner initiative.

discounted and some expressed discomfort when pressed to assess the “value” of GIG for the company. Although GIG is run as a business division<sup>32</sup>, it is seen as qualitatively different from Haygrove’s for-profit activities. Likewise, CU actors recognize that companies have a dual interest in engaging in development: Consequently, CU’s approach to partnership aims to capture or sustain individual interest in the “human side” of individual projects, while demonstrating tangible “business-like” results. The research therefore implies an interpretation of the “business case” that bridges the prevailing economic/ethics distinction: Companies have a moral obligation to make a wider contribution to society: They will acknowledge that obligation if its potential value to and impact on beneficiaries is clear, even if the tangible benefit to the company is harder to identify. This differs from the widespread argument that CSR is driven by perceptions of bottom-line benefits (Vogel 2005; McWilliams and Siegel 2001; Mitchell et al 1997; Keim 1978) or improved licence to operate (Moir 2001; Warhurst 2001).

However, this interpretation of the business case underestimates how inertia or competing priorities may lead to lack of engagement, raising an apparent need for greater government participation. Whereas many writers suggest governments should step up regulation (Christian Aid 2004; Korten 1995), this research suggests facilitation as an appropriate strategy to encourage business

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<sup>32</sup> For example, it represents a standing agenda item for quarterly Haygrove board meetings.

engagement (Fox et al 2002). This is precisely the approach favoured by the UK Government:

“DFID acts as a catalyst and facilitator, rather than intervening directly in market operations.”

(DFID 2005, 10)

Enforcement tends to encourage uniformity and a focus on inputs as companies seek to demonstrate compliance (Lim and Phillips 2007). By contrast, facilitation enables a variety of responses, encouraging companies to demonstrate the outputs and outcomes for beneficiaries. This is more likely to ensure CSR strategy prioritizes community needs and confirms the potential of partnership as a bridging mechanism (Millar et al 2004). Haygrove and CU highlight the partnership’s role in linking communities both to institutions and the wider world, through providing access to markets (Haygrove) and micro loans and advocacy (CU).

### **What is “sustainable development” and how might it be measured effectively?**

For actors in Haygrove and CU, sustainable development is about improving lives. To have a long-term impact, development must be community-led to ensure it continues once any external funding cycle has ceased (CU 2007b). Likewise, projects must be environmentally appropriate to ensure any benefits are not cancelled out by damage to soil or natural resources (CU 2006). However, participants’

articulation of sustainability and its measurement varied considerably: Business actors emphasized financial measures, while NGO actors focused on development returns. This possibly reflects the comparative clarity of financial compared to development measures: CU actors are comfortable operating with the ambiguities of non-financial measures, whereas people within Haygrove gravitate towards the familiar. While this may suggest an attempt to treat the culturally rooted values of CSR as universal (Frynas 2005; Blowfield 2004), the actors themselves acknowledge the limitations of financial measures in a development context and suggest it perhaps represents a familiar mechanism through which to make sense of the unfamiliar. So are these differences indicative of a more significant distinction in the way individuals understand the notion of sustainability itself?

Previous research indicates companies and NGOs tend to adopt “weak” and “balanced” models of sustainability respectively (Neumayer 2003; Gladwin et al 1995). Closer consideration of their respective use of language implies Haygrove and CU in fact share a similar, balanced view of sustainability, which acknowledges the physical limits to economic growth (Steurer et al 2005). This may partly explain the difficulty both organizations have in generating a clearly defined vision of the future: The balanced view of sustainability assumes economic development cannot exceed environmental carrying capacity, thereby raising questions about the

standard of living that is achievable given the earth's limited natural resources (Hart 1997; Wackernagel and Rees 1996; Daly and Cobb 1994)<sup>33</sup>. Again, the research suggests that NGO actors acknowledge the inevitability of these ambiguities, while business actors tend to be unsettled by them.

Sustainable development is also defined by its emphasis on process (Daly 1996; Redclift 1987). Actors consistently spoke of projects respecting local priorities and strengthening communities, suggesting their approach follows that identified by Sen (1999) and Thomas (1999), in promoting values and norms that enable people to shape the course of their own development. Likewise, it confirms Sagawa and Segel (2000) and Makita's (2007) view of sustainable development projects as a source of access, knowledge and flexibility for beneficiary communities. Consequently, although both groups of participants consistently refer to "entrepreneurialism," this appears to represent a shorthand for a vision of development that goes well beyond the economic. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that this approach is in itself based in a particular ideology (Mosse 1999; Irwin 1995).

This focus on communities corresponds to one of the defining characteristics of sustainable development identified by Korhonen

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<sup>33</sup> Assuming the global population continues to grow at current rates, Prahalad and Hart (2000) note six billion people consuming at the level of the typical American would require roughly three planet Earths to support the resulting material use, energy expenditure and waste production.

(2002). As well as locality, actors also highlighted his two other principles of diversity and interdependency. Firstly, partnership represents a way to increase *diversity*, through encouraging people to plant new crops or take advantage of micro-credit facilities. Secondly, actors recognize the *interdependence* between communities, companies, NGOs and governments and attempt to increase awareness and broaden participation. Korhonen suggests a contrast between these three principles and those of the economic paradigm (globalization, specialization and competition). However, the research suggests that business and NGOs are negotiating a path between the two. For example, both organizations recognize their interdependence with other organizations, but may collaborate and compete with them, sometimes simultaneously<sup>34</sup>. Likewise, the model of measurement adopted reflects a wider movement discernible within DFID and possibly other international development departments, which attempts to blend the principles of business and sustainable development<sup>35</sup>. This suggests that understanding sustainable development from a broader historical perspective (Korten 2006; Diamond 2005) and acknowledging the possible

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<sup>34</sup> For example, the Executive Director of CU suggested that at the same time as the organization may be collaborating with a given NGO to implement a project in Kenya, it might be competing with the same charity for the best on-street fundraising pitch in a particular town in the UK. This is captured in the title of his paper “When to collaborate and when to compete” (Williams 2007a), presented during the fieldwork event on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

<sup>35</sup> CU is advancing its approach to impact measurement through its 2006-9 strategy. For example, it combines business and development measures in its micro finance project in Malawi, which has provided 21,000 loans to villagers since 1993. Significantly, this conspicuously business-focused project was one of only a handful of NGO initiatives mentioned during a recent speech by the Secretary of State for International Development to the NGO community (Alexander 2007).

coexistence of the economic and sustainability paradigms may ultimately enable a compromise solution to emerge.

### **To what extent can individual projects contribute to wider systemic change?**

Participants suggested partnership may have an impact beyond the boundaries of a specific project. For Haygrove, GIG is explicitly conceived as a potential model for others to follow. For CU, partnerships with companies like Haygrove and Tetley bring possible opportunities to both increase their on-the-ground impact among existing and new beneficiary communities, and influence the policy debate. Partnership therefore holds an aspirational quality. The literature suggests that by nature, NGOs seek to drive social change (Sagawa and Segel 2007; Anderson and Rief 2005; Edwards et al 1999). However, a lack of relevant literature may indicate it is more unusual for a company to do so.

Haygrove and CU therefore see partnership as representing both a practical and symbolic challenge to the status quo (Senge 2006; Rondinelli and Berry 2000). This challenges the critical view of business investment in development as an attempt to facilitate “business as usual” (Christian Aid 2004; Boele et al 2001). Rather, the research indicates an expectation that individual actions might

inspire revisions to the terms of the productive system that ultimately result in institutional change (Amalric 2004)<sup>36</sup>. The extent to which Haygrove and CU's partnership may ultimately challenge or reinforce the existing order has yet to be seen. Nonetheless, the research suggests that smaller companies are more likely to focus on the added value of their intervention since cannot afford to treat CSR investment as an expensive public relations exercise. Consequently, it is argued that broadening the agenda to take account of SME approaches might uncover new and diverse models of development but also result in a less entrenched discussion since – unlike multinationals – SMEs are unlikely to be seen as either saviours or villains (Nelson 2002).

### **How does dialogue influence the worldviews held by individuals within companies and NGOs?**

This discussion should be prefaced by an acknowledgment of the limited fieldwork undertaken, which constrains attempts to understand the impact over time of the dialogue process. However, the observations of participants themselves go some way towards enabling a greater understanding of the unfolding influence of

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<sup>36</sup> The potential for business/NGO partnership to challenge rather than consolidate existing power and productive relations was echoed by a Nigerian speaker at one of the fieldwork events. Citing the support of Dangote Transport and Niger Mills for her NGO's work on HIV/AIDS in Cross River State, she suggested business has a particular role to play in countries where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, corruption is endemic and the economy requires stimulation at a grassroots level (Akpaso 2007).

dialogue on both sides. The worldview of companies and NGOs working together to encourage sustainable development was already shared among participants in Haygrove and CU. However, the delivery of that vision – and securing the engagement of other individuals within the two organizations – has undergone constant negotiation since 2001. There has been an apparent shift among individuals within CU: Participants consistently employed business terms such as “USP,” “core business” and “market-driven” in discussing CU’s approach to its work. However, the extent to which any influence runs the other way is less immediately apparent, although Haygrove participants recognized they had been surprised by the extent of CU’s understanding of the business environment in The Gambia. NGOs might therefore be useful to business in unforeseen ways, with collaboration on CSR activities leading to further benefits to both sides in other operational areas (Heap 2000; Waddell 2000).

The nature of the dialogue process indicates that Haygrove and CU are engaged in communicative rather than strategic action (Habermas 1987). Despite stated objectives, dialogue is focused on defining the nature of sustainable development and how to balance community structures against the changes implied by increased entrepreneurialism. By contrast, CU’s engagement with peer organizations through international and local/regional networks tends more towards strategic communication: Participants from CU

effectively try to convince other NGOs to adopt a more community-focused approach to their work, or to align their development and disaster response activities more closely. This comparison is instructive, raising three observations with regard to existing research. Firstly, while partnership is seen as a way to engage organizations from other sectors (Googins and Rochlin 2000; Murphy and Bendell 1999), this research suggests both companies and NGOs may be equally if not more focused on influencing organizations within their own sectors. Secondly, the similarities in approach and understanding between Haygrove and CU may support the assertion that collaboration is effectively blurring the boundaries between sectors (Selsky and Parker 2005; Heap 2000; Sagawa and Segal 2000)<sup>37</sup>. Finally, this research indicates that differences in approach may be underpinned less by differences between sectors as between diverse national or regional cultures (Ahmed 2006; Edwards et al 1999; Lewis 1998).

## **Do differences lead to creativity or remain a source of tension?**

The partners acknowledged the value of what each brings: Haygrove recognized CU's expertise in The Gambian business environment

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<sup>37</sup> This is likely to be increased by increased cross-sector engagement with issues related to climate change. For example, CU and Haygrove are jointly pursuing a project to explore the possibility of harnessing carbon trading to create additional development returns for communities. This involves learning from both businesses and NGOs in order to facilitate engagement with other organizations across both sectors and within government.

and in working with communities; CU valued Haygrove's technical skills and leveraging of financial support; CU's local partners such as Cares Initiative in Nigeria recognized the added value CU brings in terms of capacity building, resources and advocacy (Akpaso 2007); while CU acknowledged local partners' on-the-ground knowledge and creativity. These differences represent a potential source of strength to the respective partnerships, so are celebrated rather than minimized by participants. This reflects the findings of Senge et al (2006), Pearce and Doh (2005) and Lawrence (2002), who all represent differences as a source of value rather than a barrier to partnership. However, where such differences occur at an underlying rather than operational level, they may become a source of tension. For example, the MD of Haygrove expressed frustration at the level of waste within the project, even as he acknowledged that it was unavoidable. This supports Lewis' (1998) contention that ambiguity can be a source of both creativity and danger: If one or both partners are sufficiently disturbed by an unresolved issue, it may threaten the partnership itself.

The apparent breaking down of the distinction between business and NGOs brings the need for a clearer understanding of differences both within and between sectors. The potential for mistrust and enduring power differentials between business and NGOs should be recognized (Macdonald and Chrisp 2006; Poncelet 2003), but a more balanced view of the relationship may be needed. Firstly, despite

differences in culture and approach, Haygrove and CU both articulate a “balanced” view of sustainable development, seek to strengthen communities and engage other organizations. Secondly, the tendency to portray development as the preserve of NGOs, albeit with the support of business, minimizes the extent and significance of business involvement, while also overlooking the negative impact of some NGO efforts. CU participants recounted tales of inefficient and counter-productive development initiatives they had witnessed: Ineffective development is not only wasteful but creates dependency and damages communities (Fowler 2000; Green and Matthias 1995). This would again suggest the need for a less dogmatic understanding of the intrinsic qualities of business and NGOs, which acknowledges the extent to which both reflect particular socio-historical conditions (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006).

### **Methodological limitations**

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that ethnography is the most basic form of social research, since it has a long history and “bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life” (1995, 2). The value of ethnography therefore lies in its potential for capturing “the essence of human life as it is experienced” (Bate 1997, 24). However, it thereby raises the possibility of the ethnographer “rushing frenetically

around trying to capture bubbles before they disappear forever into the ether” (Bate 1997, 24). It is inherently opportunistic and unsystematic. The first challenge of this research project was therefore to synthesize a complex and chaotic story, presenting phenomena in new and revealing ways by providing a “punchline” or “new sort of truth” (Bate 1997; Hammersley 1992; Langer 1953). In this case, the punchline is that a new model of business/NGO collaboration is potentially emerging, which provides on-the-ground benefits to communities, but also potentially challenges the current status quo of the relationship between business and society. The MD of Haygrove suggested that this would sound “out with the fairies for most businesses,” thereby confirming its potential interest as a theme for the research.

As this implies, the second challenge encountered was the partiality of ethnography. In any social setting, some people talk more than others or are more persuasive and fieldwork must take account of this. Within an NGO especially, particular individuals are likely to have a passionate – often articulate – commitment to the “cause” (Salm 1999). Some participants had an extensive knowledge of the issues under discussion while others did not and this was difficult to capture. This partiality means ethnography should not be seen as providing unique knowledge or insight but rather as coexisting with other forms of knowledge (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Mosse (2006) suggests the intensely social nature of ethnographic fieldwork is now

broadly acknowledged, but writing remains a solitary process: However, what ethnographers know is inseparable from their relationship with those they study. Consequently, this research was a collaborative project at the stages of both fieldwork and writing up. This was achieved through a grounded theory approach, with participants effectively identifying areas of interest, which were consolidated into categories labeled with their own terms. Participants were also involved in the writing up process, providing feedback on the emerging conceptual model and commenting on successive drafts. The collaborative approach cannot write out power inequalities between the researcher and the researched, any more than the “writing culture” movement of the 1980s was able to do so through replacing the anthropologist’s voice with that of subjects’ personal narratives (Clifford and Marcus 1986). However, it at least recognizes the relational nature of ethnographic knowledge and the right of participants to object to what is said about them (Mosse 2006). Anticipating and incorporating participants’ concerns forced the research to question the validity of its assumptions and clarify generalizations, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the final account.

The main objection incorporated was a perceived absence of sufficient background on the two cases to warrant the conclusions drawn. Fundamental to establishing knowledge claims in ethnography is the ability to create a sense of authenticity and

plausibility (Golden-Biddle and Locke 1999), so Chapter 4 was significantly expanded to take account of this objection. Likewise, extensive footnotes were added to accommodate participants' wish to clarify details and acknowledge the role of other individuals and organizations. The final challenge of ethnography encountered during the project was therefore the practical problem of condensing ethnography into a confined wordcount. This is a problem for ethnography more widely since limits are enforced by journal editors regardless of the methodological approach of the piece (Cassell et al 2006). As with the other challenges encountered throughout, the project provided an opportunity to experiment and learn ahead of a larger ethnographic study.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

**Summary:** Collaboration represents a practical and symbolic challenge to the status quo and further investigation may highlight other examples of practice outpacing research. Engaging other organizations is key, but more work is needed to assess whether business/NGOs may be “convinced” by example.

### **Introduction**

This research has argued that the scale of global challenges has increased interest in new approaches, including business/NGO partnership. The CSR literature identifies such partnerships as a possible force for change, while the development literature suggests a possible contradiction between CSR and core business activities. These positions have contrasting paradigmatic origins, so this research has focused on the extent to which partnership may represent a channel through which business and NGO actors may negotiate and reframe their respective worldviews. It explored the nature of the relationship between business and society and business/NGO understandings of sustainable development, in order to assess the potential compatibility of CSR and sustainable development. The ethnographic methodology adopted itself raised questions about how best to explore and present these ideas. This brief chapter therefore returns to the four Research Objectives identified at the outset and suggests some tentative conclusions as well as areas for future research.

## **1 Review the relevant literature to examine the relationship between the concepts of CSR and sustainable development**

The respective literatures on CSR and development reflect their emergence within the competing paradigms of neoclassical economics and sustainability respectively. Two debates are particularly relevant to this research. Firstly, CSR writers identify a potential role for business in sustainable development but envisage any changes within the boundaries of the established social and economic order. By contrast, many development writers suggest the contradictions between sustainable development and business objectives render CSR incompatible with sustainable development. This research suggests that both companies and NGOs may see a role for CSR in sustainable development. It also challenges the assumption that business seeks to preserve the status quo: Both Haygrove and CU see collaboration as a practical and symbolic challenge to existing models of business and development. This raises the need for further research on how individual companies and NGOs may be engaging in activities that run counter to the prevailing view in the literature: An alternative model of development may already be emerging in practice that requires further exploration.

Secondly, both the CSR and development literature suggest investment in development projects represents one way in which companies seek to manage their stakeholder relationships. However, the CSR literature suggests companies meet stakeholder demands

through such activities, while the development literature suggests companies emphasize business over development priorities and CSR projects are therefore inherently unsustainable. This research suggests that the apparent incompatibility between business and community interests are a function of the atomic individualism that underlies stakeholder theory. By contrast, rather than being isolatable from its multiple stakeholders, both Haygrove and CU are in fact constituted by their relationships with them. Consequently, in its development activities, Haygrove prioritizes community over corporate needs: The company has no commercial presence in The Gambia, there is no financial benefit to the company, and the possible reputational and recruitment/retention benefits are at best unclear. However, further research is required on the extent to which other organizations may adopt this relational perspective and the practical impact it has on the way they understand themselves and their stakeholders.

## **2 Explore how business and NGOs understand the concept of sustainable development**

Existing literature suggests NGOs tend to a stronger view of sustainability, while companies assume the substitutability of economic and natural capital and anticipate that human ingenuity will overcome environmental challenges. This research suggests both business and NGO actors may incline towards a “balanced” view of sustainability, which recognizes the physical limits to economic

growth and implies a significant change in individual, corporate and government behaviour. This raises additional questions, including how individuals deal with possible conflict between business and development objectives in their work.

The balanced sustainability perspective emphasizes the importance of process. For CU this means community-responsiveness, while for Haygrove it means helping people remain in horticulture. However, the “ends” are as important as the “means:” Both organizations emphasize that any potential alternatives to urban migration must be viable and meaningful, since attempts to stem rural depopulation would otherwise be pointless. Likewise, both organizations recognize the challenges presented by a community-based approach, which is inherently more time consuming than more traditional top-down project. However, there is agreement that only by communities “owning” development activities can they become sufficiently embedded to become sustainable. This raises the need for further research on how organizations balance cultural changes – in this case rural entrepreneurialism – with a respect for indigenous knowledge and practices.

Existing work suggests that business tends to understand development in economic terms, whereas NGOs are more focused on developmental returns. This is partially borne out by the research. However, just as Haygrove participants acknowledged the possible

conflict between financial sustainability and development returns, so CU actors suggested successful development activities would be likely to generate increased financial sustainability. Both sides acknowledge the challenge of evaluating development returns, which raises the need for more research on how sustainable development can more appropriately be measured.

### **3 Assess the extent to which CSR partnerships may contribute to or undermine sustainable development**

The CSR and development literature is divided over the extent to which CSR represents an attempt to facilitate change or a pragmatic strategy to meet perceived obligations. This research suggests collaboration is directed at facilitating change. However, participants anticipate skepticism among their peers and emphasize the importance of creating a practical example of collaboration at work. Consequently, further research might explore the extent to which such a “pilot” does in fact engage other organizations.

The partnership literature points to a blurring of the sectoral boundaries between business and NGOs and suggests that partnership represents an attempt to influence organizations in other sectors. By contrast, this research suggests both companies and NGOs may be equally if not more focused on influencing organizations within their own sectors. Whereas their relationship with each other is directed towards communicative action (defining

the nature of sustainable development or balancing community structures against the changes implied by increased entrepreneurialism), their relationship with their peers is directed towards strategic action. For Haygrove, this means convincing other companies to engage in development, while for CU this means encouraging a more community-focused approach to development globally. A more nuanced understanding of the two sectors is perhaps required, with more research needed on the changing nature of the business and NGO sectors and the relationship between them.

The polarization within the literature may partly result from the way in which large multinational companies (and big name NGOs) dominate the agenda on CSR and sustainable development. This research suggests that smaller organizations bring a dynamism and flexibility that eludes larger organizations. As well as bringing the possibility of new approaches, increased involvement of such organizations might also move the debate onto a less entrenched discussion. However, while such organizations might add significant value, the research suggests the “business case” for engagement is unclear. For people within Haygrove, engagement with communities is simply the “right thing to do,” as long as the company adds value and the project is financially sustainable in the long term. If examples like that of Haygrove/CU are to take hold, further research is required into the

extent to which other people across the business sector recognize and respond to this “hybrid” business case.

#### **4 Examine the extent to which ethnography represents an appropriate methodology through which to study the macro-level issue of sustainable development**

Ethnography studies social and organizational processes at a micro level and attempts to place these in a wider context. It therefore offers possibilities for the study of macro level issues like sustainable development. Power emerges as an issue – power within and between organizations, sectors and regions. Given that power relations often lie hidden within an organization and its structure, ethnography represents an effective way to explore, for example, whether NGOs are more susceptible than companies to changes in their worldview. However, further research over a longer timeframe is required to assess these possibilities.

Ethnography is by nature partial: Both process and product is influenced by some actors more than others and by the level of access available. However, it provides a level of insight into an organization that may be hard to achieve by other means. Likewise, ethnography represents only one form of insight, which coexists with other forms of knowledge. Given that what ethnographers know is inseparable from their relationship with those they study, a collaborative approach facilitates a transparent and reflexive

approach to writing up as well as fieldwork. While the research captured some of the differences in the way individuals understand the concept of sustainable development and its implications, further research is needed on how people's and organizations' understandings develop over time as a result of the changing relationship between business, NGOs and communities.

## Appendices

## **Appendix 1: Research schedule and participants**

### **4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

St. Owens Chambers, Hereford

Strategic collaboration workshop between Concern Universal (CU) and Project Concern International (PCI)

#### Participants:

Paul O'Hagan, International Director, West Africa (CU)

Gerry Carthy, International Director, East and Southern Africa (CU)

Catriona Lennox, Fundraising Director (CU)

Samson Hailu, Country Director Malawi (CU)

Blaise White, Finance Director (CU)

Matthew Lake, International Director, Asia and Latin America (CU)

Ian Williams, Executive Director (CU)

David Hitchener, trustee (CU)

Ciaran Cosgrave, trustee (PCI UK)

John Berman, Director of HIV/AIDS Programmes (PCI)

Mark O'Donnell, International Director (PCI)

George Guimaraes, Director (PCI)

Ian Vale, Facilitator (The Management Centre)

Helen Wadham

### **13<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

Haygrove, Ledbury

Interviews

#### Participants:

Angus Davison, Managing Director

John Berry, Director

Graham Moore, Technical Director

Lysandro Canais, Quality Assurance Manager

Darya Nefedova, Accounts Assistant

### **23<sup>rd</sup> August 2007**

Telephone interviews

#### Participants:

Alan Hale, former Sales Manager (left Haygrove in 2005)

Kathy Evans, Director, Haygrove Sidlesham

### **29<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

Leadership Trust, Ross-on-Wye

Unlocking your potential to do good business

Participants:

120 people from businesses and charities, mainly based in the West of England.

**10th October 2007**

Centre for Charity Effectiveness, Cass Business School, London  
Charity Talks 2007: When to collaborate and when to compete?

Speakers:

Ian Williams, Executive Director (CU)

Richard Harvey, Former CEO (Aviva) and volunteer (CU)

Caroline Copeman, Senior Visiting Fellow (Centre for Charity Effectiveness)

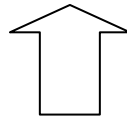
Participants:

70 people, mainly middle and senior voluntary sector managers.

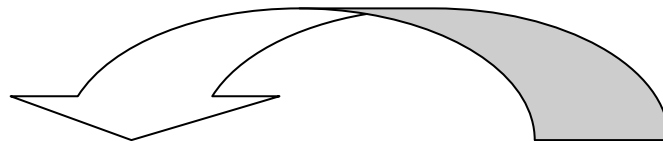
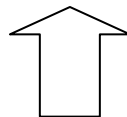
## Appendix 2: Further information on Concern Universal

### Vision, mission, values and strategy 2006-2009 (adapted from Concern Universal 2006)

**VISION:** Our vision is a world where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.

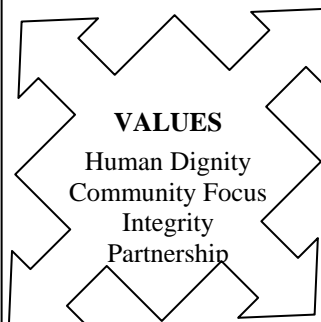


**MISSION:** Concern Universal works in partnership to challenge poverty and inequality.  
We support practical actions that enable people to improve their lives and shape their own futures.



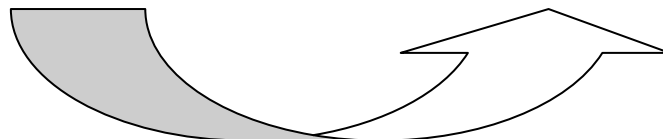
**COUNTRY STRATEGIES**  
**Locally-driven development:**  
**10 country programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America**

- Partnership and local capacity strengthening
- Emergency prevention, preparedness and response
- HIV/AIDS prevention & care
- Gender equity and women's and children's rights
- Water and sanitation
- Livelihood strategies



**ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY**

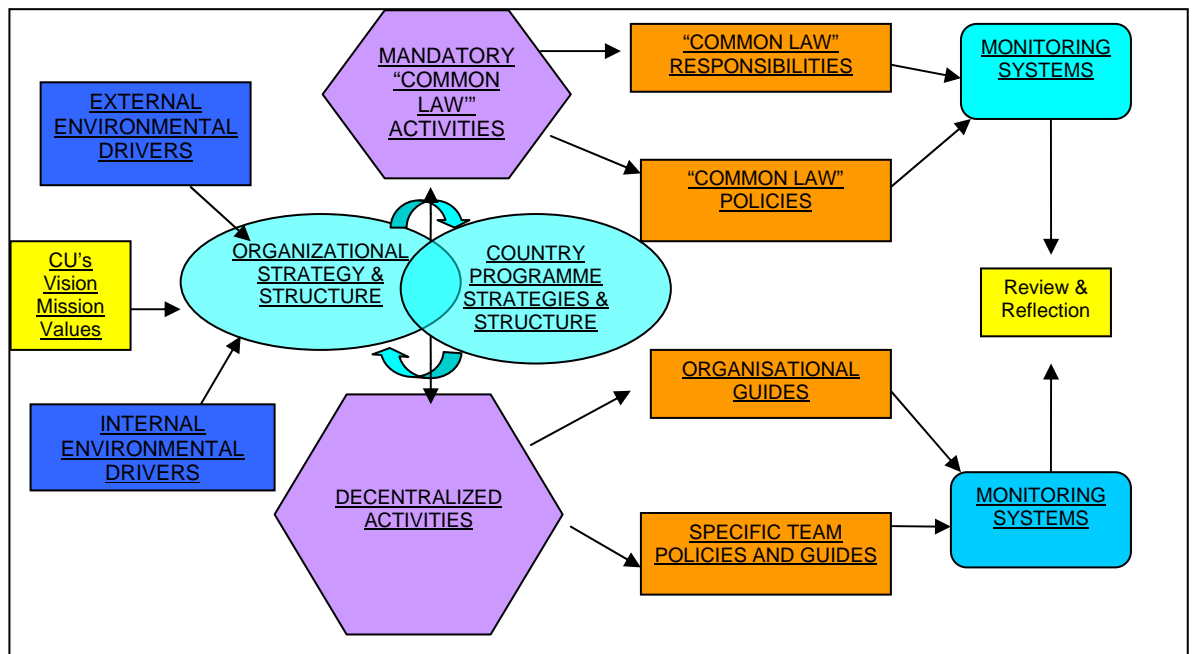
- Improving programme effectiveness**
- Impact
  - Learning
  - Advocacy
- Channelling more resources**
- Funding
- Strengthening organizational capacity**
- Governance
  - Human Resources
  - Communications
  - Systems and IT



### Governance of CU (adapted from Concern Universal 2007a)

CU's core management unit is the Country Programme. This means that Country Directors and their teams can manage their respective programmes as they see fit, as long as this is consistent with the overall mission, values and strategy of the organization. Nevertheless, there are some tasks that Country Directors are expected to undertake, and in this case the International Directors (i.e. the line managers) have the responsibility to ensure that Country Directors complete these tasks. These are identified in CU's Common Law responsibilities. "Common Law" is the term used to describe the core "have to do" responsibilities of all Country Programmes and specific teams to the organization as a whole. In a devolved organization such as CU, a certain level of consistency is vital to hold the organization together as one unit. Additionally, CU must meet minimum statutory requirements (e.g. from auditors, the Charity Commission, etc). While Common Law and risk management are clearly related, Common Law is not solely risk management by another name. The Common Law standards have been identified as a result of a number of internal and external environmental drivers, as the diagram below highlights.

### Concern Universal: Summary of strategy, structure and operation



### Appendix 3: Additional information on Concern Universal fieldwork events

#### Fieldwork event 1:

**Strategic collaboration workshop between Concern Universal (CU) and Project Concern International (PCI) (4th-5th July 2007)**

#### *Programme*

<b>4/7/07</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Detail</b>
8.15	Introduction	Introductions, route and ground rules.
8.30	Strategic Alignment – comparative analysis	Where is there alignment and divergence between the two organizations considering governance, management and technical areas? Where are there potential synergies, which will demonstrate real added value and improved performance?
10.00	Break	
10.15	Drivers for change	Map the drivers for change for both organizations. Identify the aims/outcomes that will address these drivers.
12.30	Lunch	
13.00	Strategic framework VMVC	Identify a strategic framework of vision, mission, values and competencies for the future alliance. What do both parties want the relationship to achieve? What difference will it make and what time-line should be applied?
14.30	Break	
14.45	Strategic Framework continued	Establish how vision, mission, values and competencies link and identify core business activity.
15.45	Dashboard data	Identify key indicators for measuring success and how they are connected and over what time-line.
17.00	Close	

<b>5/7/07</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Detail</b>
8.15	Introduction	Review of previous sessions
8.45	Structural options	Identify all possible options Establish principal options Comparative analysis of options against criteria such economies of scale, customers, funding, competencies, key success factors, governance and leadership.
10.30	Break	
10.45	Evaluation of options	Evaluate options advantages, implications, resources and risks.
12.30	Lunch	
13.00	Review 1	Dependant upon previous sessions output
14.30	Break	
14,45	Review 2	Dependant upon previous sessions output
16.00	Close	

**Strategic collaboration workshop, Hereford 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> July 2007**  
***Summary notes (prepared for CU by Helen Wadham)***

The aim of the strategic collaboration workshop was to facilitate a discussion about the opportunities and challenges presented by a possible collaboration between Project Concern International (PCI) and Concern Universal (CU). A number of key issues emerged:

1 There is a high level of strategic alignment between PCI and CU, but also significant differences that require further exploration. While key drivers for PCI and CU are different, both share a focus on demonstrating impact and increasing unrestricted income.

2 The two preferred models for collaboration – joint venture and strategic alliance – could be pursued simultaneously.

3 A joint venture on disaster preparedness could add value to the work of PCI and CU and serve as a platform from which to develop a strategic alliance in the longer term.

4 The event was characterized by a high level of openness and the need to continue to build trust in any future collaboration was acknowledged.

This paper is intended to serve as a record of the key ideas that emerged over the two days, as understood by an independent observer (Helen Wadham), in consultation with members of PCI and CU. As such, it represents an individual perspective on the content and spirit of the discussions and is not intended to represent an authoritative set of minutes.

**Participants**

PCI: Ciaran Cosgrave, John Berman, Mark O'Donnell, George Guimaraes

CU: Paul O'Hagan, Gerry Carthy, Catriona Lennox, Samson Hailu, Blaise White, Matthew Lake, Ian Williams, David Hitchiner

Facilitator and observer: Ian Vale and Helen Wadham

**Fieldwork event 2:  
Unlocking your potential to do good business (29th September  
2007)**

***Programme***

- 19.00 – 19.30: Welcome drinks and refreshments
- 19.30 – 19.50: Ian Williams, Sara Howe and Rupert Cadbury  
Welcome and introduction to the evening and speakers. (Ian – 5 minutes)  
Rationale for business/NGO partnership - 'unlock your potential to do good business & Tetley / CU example (Sara – 10 minutes)  
The relevance to Trusts and Foundations & WAC / CU example (Rupert – 5 minutes)
- 19:50 –20:00: Dr Mfon Akpaso: Cares Initiative, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- 20:00-20:10  
Haygrove Angus Davison & John Berry, Director's
- The 'journey' of the development of the 'Gambia is Good' initiative; the challenges involved with this and the wider opportunity for the engagement of SMEs with international development
- 20.10-20:40: Refreshments: drinks
- 20:40-20:50 Margaret Thomas, Director of Innovation and Development, Leadership Trust  
Development of the Trust's 'International Leadership and Exchange Programme.' Results to date
- 20:50-21:10 Richard and Kay Harvey  
Leadership lessons learned from being Group CEO of Aviva plc. Gap Year with CU, including the inspiration for a Gap Year; first impressions – visit to Kenya, Mozambique and Malawi; the challenge and opportunity for businesses to engage effectively in international sustainable development
- 21:10–21.25: Q&A
- 21.25–21.30: Nicola Mushet, Chair of CU – Thanks and Close.

## **Speakers**

### **Richard and Kay Harvey**

Richard Harvey, recently retired Group Chief Executive of Aviva plc, the leading international savings investments and insurance group, and his wife, Kay, a person with wide experience including teaching, have announced that they will be joining CU on 1<sup>st</sup> September. This will be for a 'gap year'.

- Hear what inspired them to do this;
- The lessons Richard learnt from being a CEO for ten years;
- How they aim to make a lasting difference to international development.

Aviva plc is one of the world's largest businesses with 59,000 employees serving over 40 million customers; it has sales of £41.5 billion per annum and assets under management of £364 billion.

### **Sara Howe, Communications Director, Tetley**

Sara will set the scene explaining how effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can help 'unlock your potential to do good business'. She will also describe Tetley's partnership with CU. For each of the past three years, 40 water points have been created in villages with CU in Southern Malawi, each one serving at least 250 people. Tetley team members have been actively and directly engaged with the work. Sara says:

*"What we do is driven by the complex needs of our varied stakeholders. Shareholders want good financial returns, consumers want to buy products from companies they see as 'socially responsible' and increasingly, I find that our people, too, want to do things right and work for a company that does things right."*

### **Dr Mfon Akpaso**

Dr Akpaso, is from the Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria. She graduated as a medical doctor from Calabar University in 1997 and is now Executive Director of CU's partner organization *Cares Initiative*. She is also a lecturer at Calabar University.

### **Angus Davison and John Berry**

Angus Davison is the founder of Haygrove, a leading manufacturing, horticultural production and marketing business based in Ledbury. Alongside fellow Director, John Berry, a presentation will be given by them about the journey of Haygrove's engagement with development and especially the role that small and medium sized businesses can play. Hear the inspiring steps that were taken to create 'Gambia is Good' a highly innovative marketing initiative in The Gambia, West Africa.

**Rupert Cadbury, Trustee, William Cadbury Trust**

Hear the amazing story of the founder of the William Cadbury Trust and how the Trust is today working in the most effective way possible to make a lasting difference. Rupert will explain about William Cadbury's work with CU to meet the needs of people living in 5 countries in West Africa, plus carry out development education work with schools 'on our doorstep' in the UK. Rupert is a trustee of William Cadbury and formerly held senior roles in business including: Group Computer Operations Manager, APV plc and Rockwell International plus Commercial Director, Titusfield Ltd

**Margaret Thomas, Director of Innovation and Development, Leadership Trust.**

In the context of Leadership Trust's wider work, an insight will be given to the Leadership Trust's 'International Leadership and Exchange programme' with CU. This involves an exchange: team members from Leadership Trust are seconded (for short periods) to spend time internationally with CU; CU team members participate in courses at the Leadership Trust.

**Nicola Mushet, Chair, Ian Williams, Executive Director, Concern Universal.**

Nicola has worked extensively in international development. Ian has been Executive Director of Concern Universal since the late 1990s and is a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Charity Effectiveness, Cass Business School. Ian will welcome everyone and put the evening in context. Nicola will close the evening and thank speakers.

***Unlock your potential to do good business:  
Key learning points by Helen Wadham for Concern Universal***

**Background:** Businesses are increasingly made aware – by consumers, staff, NGOs (Non Government Organisations)/charities and the media – that they have a role to play in addressing global challenges like poverty and climate change.

Concern Universal has proved that it is possible to build dynamic partnerships with businesses, it can be done and please consider seriously how you could get more involved. Please visit [www.concern-universal.org](http://www.concern-universal.org) to find out more about how businesses such as Tetley are working in partnership with us.

**Business can add value to development:** The most significant problem within developing countries may not be a lack of resources, but leadership and limited access to markets. Partnership with business can help develop both. While the focus is often on the role of “big” business, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) create substantial opportunities and are built on specialist, often transferable, knowledge.

**Businesses have choice about how to respond:** Growing public and media interest in CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is driven by improved communications but also by a fundamental shift within society: People increasingly take injustices more personally. ICT (Information Communication Technology) is excelling the pace of change dramatically. Businesses can choose to ignore this pressure or take a compliance-based approach. However, partnership provides both sides with potential for growth and change, enabling the business to leverage benefits through associated activities. In addition, businesses should understand people will increasingly judge potential employers on their CSR record.

**Partnership requires significant investment but delivers most rewards:** Identifying the right partner is critical and businesses should consider their fit with potential NGO partners in terms of strategy, approach and people. NGOs should help provide an effective bridge with developing country communities. While businesses might instinctively approach large NGOs, they may have high overheads, while smaller NGOs may be more efficient and better integrated with communities.

**Partnerships must deliver sustainable solutions:** Any project must reflect community needs and priorities. Business development initiatives can create financial independence in the long term but require significant support. This is unlikely to come from government sources, but may provide a good strategic fit for CSR investment. SMEs in particular can provide technical knowledge and flexible

support to help communities develop their skills and access markets, potentially enabling the business to have a long-term impact that belies their size and profile at home.

**Challenges arise at every stage:** Key challenges include money and leadership. Running costs may be significant and require a constant focus on ensuring the initiative is as efficient as possible. Investment of management time will be required, but will be reduced if good local leadership for the project can be developed or secured. However, challenges also come from macro issues such as agricultural subsidies and government interference, which require changes at the policy level. Businesses can be important instruments of positive change on an advocacy level as well as practically helping make a difference in communities in developing countries.

**Partnership may require new model of leadership:** Successful development requires community involvement and leadership. This is likely to be “grassroots” leadership, rather than a traditional “top-down” approach. As in business, the key to success lies in finding and retaining good people, developing effective communication and ensuring that people within the organization are able to deal with problems that occur both immediately in front of them and at the point of delivery.

**Fieldwork event 3:  
Charity Talks 2007 (10th October 2007)**

***Invitation***

*Charity Talks: When to collaborate and when to compete?*

The 4th in this year's series is a Charity Talk with a difference. Government and other funders are increasing pressure towards collaboration and partnership working within the not-for-profit sector but also with the private sector in delivering many services, particularly social care services. This raises challenging issues around mission drift, resources, skills, expertise and independence. The Chief Executive of Concern Universal, Ian Williams talks about their experience and Cass' Senior Visiting Fellow Caroline Copeman looks at the wider sector implications. And demonstrating cross sector partnership in action, Ian will be sharing the platform with the former Group Chief Executive of Aviva plc, Richard Harvey, who is currently taking a sabbatical year from the private sector with his wife Kay to play a key role in Concern Universal's African work particularly in Malawi and Kenya. (Please see attached Press Release for further details).

Following the Charity Talk there will be an opportunity to network with speakers and fellow attendees whilst enjoying a glass of wine and light refreshments. To book a place please [visit our website: http://www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org](http://www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org)

**Press release 11<sup>th</sup> June 2007:  
City CEO makes surprise choice for gap year in Africa**

Richard Harvey, Group Chief Executive of Aviva plc, the international savings investments and insurance group, has announced that he and his wife, Kay, will be joining the international relief and sustainable development charity, Concern Universal, on a voluntary basis for one year, following his retirement on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

Richard and Kay will travel to Kenya, Mozambique and Malawi in the autumn to meet the Concern Universal teams there and gain an understanding of the realities of development work in these countries. They then plan to live for extended periods in Malawi and Kenya working in rural communities on a range of projects including the installation of sustainable clean water supplies, micro-finance programmes and education in schools on issues such as HIV/Aids, health and sanitation.

Richard brings the organizational, financial and communications expertise you would expect from a FTSE CEO, along with a personal hands-on interest in building, engineering and woodwork. Kay has already had significant experience as a volunteer across a number of community organizations in the UK and New Zealand, and, as a teacher of P.E. and English as a foreign language, is well-placed to support education projects for Concern Universal.

Concern Universal's mission is to deliver sustainable change that enables people in developing countries to improve their lives and shape their own futures. It has over 500 staff and volunteers that work with partners across the globe to facilitate development and emergency work which reaches more than 1.5 million people per year in some of the world's poorest countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Richard Harvey said: "We are in the fortunate position of having both the energy and freedom to take the gap year we never had – this is a timely opportunity for us to live and work for a substantial period in Africa. In the financial services industry we worry about people living longer and out-living their savings. In Malawi, the problems are very different. Life expectancy is estimated to be about 37 and decreasing.

"We looked at volunteering our services to a number of organizations but it was the nature and scale of Concern Universal that appealed to us; the chemistry with the people was good, its cost effective reputation in developing countries excellent; it was large enough for us to make a genuine contribution, but at the same time had the feel and personal approach of a smaller organization that we were looking for. Their down-to-earth approach will give us the

insight and practical experience needed to make a meaningful contribution to the charity sector in the longer term.”

Dr Ian Williams, Executive Director of Concern Universal, commented: “Concern Universal is well known in parts of Africa, but not so well known in the UK. We’re delighted that Richard and Kay have chosen us as their charity in a field where there are other, more high profile charities that they could have chosen.

“Partnerships with the corporate sector are increasingly important for organizations like ours, and it is a great opportunity for us to share our work with Richard and Kay. More and more people like them are taking a gap year much later in life and we hope to provide Richard and Kay with a hands-on and inspiring experience that will encourage others to follow suit. They will be facing some uncomfortable issues, and will no doubt raise some challenging questions. We will learn a lot from each other and it will help us engage much more effectively with businesses and business people in future.”

## **Appendix 4: Draft questions for Haygrove interviews**

1 Could you expand a little on your experience to date with Haygrove and your previous background before you joined the company?

2 What would you say are the defining characteristics of Haygrove as a company? i.e. the way you do things, the way decisions are taken? What kind of background do you look for when you're recruiting people?

3 How would you describe Haygrove's approach to corporate responsibility? (perhaps as compared to other companies you know of)

4 How would you describe Haygrove's relationship with Concern Universal? What has been your own experience of that relationship?

5 How would you describe any effect that the Gambia is Good project has had on Haygrove? How do you see the project in, say, five years time?

6 Do you have any thoughts about the role of business in developing countries?

7 How might this research produce something of value to Haygrove?

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