TOGETHER FOR DEVELOPMENT:

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN NORTH AMERICAN ACADEMICS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

THE NORTH AMERICAN OBSERVATORIO PROJECT 2018

NEXT GENERATION
COLLABORATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
a CCIC-CASID program

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CCIC is Canada's national coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) working globally to achieve sustainable human development. Our members represent a broad range of CSOs working in international development and humanitarian assistance — from faith-based and secular groups to labour unions, cooperatives and professional associations. CCIC seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

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The Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID) is a national, bilingual, interdisciplinary and pluralistic association devoted to the promotion of new knowledge in the broad field of international development. CASID is a membership-based organization.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North-American Observatorio project focuses on global commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 17. The present report builds on previous efforts under the Next Generation initiative to identify and compile the knowledge on collaborative partnerships in the Canadian context, asking whether similar trends can be seen across North America and whether differences between the institutional environments in Canada and the US affect the frequency and effectiveness of collaborative partnerships.

Academic and civil society organizations are complementary organizational types with very different strengths and skills. Collaborations that bring these two groups together can increase development effectiveness by enabling partners to draw on one another's skills.

With partnerships so important to development effectiveness yet often difficult to initiate and manage, the Canadian Council of International Co-operation (CCIC) in partnership with the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID) recently launched the "Next Generation: Collaboration for Development" program. It seeks to address various aspects of academic/practitioner collaborations in development and ways to strengthen them.

The research undertaken in the North American Observatorio project found that throughout North America collaboration between development practitioners and academics can take a variety of forms, including collaborative research projects, practitioner placements in academic contexts, and input on training programs by CSOs. The success of these collaborations is determined in large part by the quality of the relationship between academic institutions and CSOs, which is in turn influenced by a variety of factors including the trust established through transparency and clear lines of communication. However, larger structural factors also play a role in determining the frequency and effectiveness of collaborations. These factors include government priorities, the strategic orientation of funding agencies, and the presence of organizations playing supportive roles. The broader academic and CSO cultures also shape the nature of collaboration. For example, development studies institutions with a highly critical or theoretical approach are less likely to be attractive partners for CSOs with the strategic priority of effecting tangible change.

Over the course of the research, two case studies emerged that are having an exceptional impact on the nature of academic-practitioner collaborations. The long-standing partnership between Catholic Relief Services and Purdue University is exemplary in its fully institutionalized approach while the Sustainable Development Solutions Network is breaking new ground in knowledge sharing between north and south, academic and CSO. Both cases illustrate innovative and effective approaches that point toward the collaborative possibilities still waiting to be discovered.

INTRODUCTION:

WHY A NORTH-AMERICAN OBSERVATORIO?

A previous study published in September 2017 by the Next Generation program (See Box What is Next Generation?) titled *Improving our collaborations for better development outcomes*, revealed a lack of information in the Canadian context with respect to the broader institutional environment and how it can influence the frequency and success of collaborations between academics and practitioners. These findings suggested that follow-up research that broadened the geographical scope might yield further valuable information on the institutional environment, while also enabling comparisons across national borders with respect to academic-practitioner collaborations. Building on the existing national-level Next Generation program, the North American Observatorio project broadens the scope of inquiry to the regional context to highlight similarities and differences between the regions that can support or hinder collaborations.

WHAT IS NEXT GENERATION?

Next Generation: Collaboration for Development is a three-year IDRC-funded program being carried out by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) in partnership with the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID). The program has the broad goal of identifying methods and promoting conditions for enhanced and sustained collaboration between civil society organizations and academia working in global cooperation. Next Generation is part of the overall shift among development actors toward increased collaboration and cooperation, and toward an ever-growing awareness of the imperative that partnerships be equitable, transparent, and based on shared goals. These collaborations take a wide range of forms, link multiple sectors, and involve a vast array of opinions, approaches, and worldviews.

Like the *Next Generation* program, the Observatorio supports the SDG agenda, and in particular SDG 17, by expanding awareness of, access to and collaboration across multi-stakeholder partnerships among development practitioners and researchers. It recognizes the diversity and complementarity of their functions and seeks to enhance further dialogue around development theory and practice.

SDG 17 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

"Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" (United Nations 2015). SDG 17 includes three key targets related to knowledge-sharing and partnership-building that are particularly relevant to this study. In particular, "multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilized and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals" is an excellent characterization of academic-CSO collaborations.

Building upon the Next Generation work in the Canadian context, the present research sought out experiences in academic-practitioner collaboration in the United States and Canada, looking at the region as a whole and at the two jurisdictions comparatively. More specifically, it sought to address the following questions:

1. What differences in terms of **funding mechanisms**, **institutional supports, networks, and structured opportunities** for academic-practitioner exchanges exist between the two countries?
2. How might these influence the **frequency** or **effectiveness** of collaborations?
3. Are there **differences in academic organizations and scholarly associations** that might affect collaborations?

This study involved loosely structured phone or in-person interviews with six experts working in development practice in the US. These experts included two representatives from InterAction (CCIC's US equivalent), a representative from the Global Development Section of the International Studies Association (ISA), two representatives from the Sustainability Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and a representative from Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Other organizations contacted include the Washington Chapter of the Society for International Development (SID-W) and Humentum. However, no representatives from these two organizations were available for an interview.

Key success factors and challenges

When successful, partnerships between academics—whether associated with universities, colleges, think tanks, or other research institutes—and practitioners working in civil society organizations (CSOs) contribute to the effectiveness of research, policy and practice that promotes human rights, poverty reduction, and sustainable development (Shucksmith 2016, Smales 2016). Academics, with their expertise in producing objective, rigorous and highly trustworthy knowledge, are an ideal complement to the practical, applied work of development practitioners (Green 2017b, Shucksmith 2016). Working in tandem, these two groups have much to gain from one another in terms of delivering high-quality programming and producing rigorous evidence with real-world impact.

For these reasons, since the mid-1990s there has been a growing emphasis in academia and beyond on the importance of partnerships between, within and across sectors and disciplines (Van Huijstee, Francken, and Leroy 2007). In the development field, as in other sectors, this trend has been amplified by increasing calls from funders both for research with demonstrable impact on real-world problems on one hand, and for evidence-based development practice on the other (Cottrell and Parpart 2006, ESRC 2018, Williams 2013).

At the same time, research investigating partnerships within or between the two sectors has found that collaboration isn't happening nearly as much as it could or should (Tiessen and Smillie 2016). Research has also revealed a variety of challenges associated with collaboration, such as large differences in approach and culture, and insufficient or unclear communication between partnering organizations (Cottrell and Parpart 2006, Roper 2002, Green 2017b, Shucksmith 2016). Collaborations that run smoothly and produce effective results tend to be equitable partnerships based on open communication, transparency, and shared goals (Chernikova 2011, Olivier, Hunt, and Ridde 2016, Green 2017a).

ACADEMIC-CSO PARTNERSHIPS IN NORTH AMERICA – TWO NATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

Canada and the United States of America are two neighbouring countries with significantly different histories, cultures, demographics, geographies, and institutional environments.

The United States Context

In 2016, according to OECD Compare your country tool, the US government was by far the largest provider of official development assistance in the world, contributing $33.59 billion in assistance funding (as compared with $24.67 billion from Germany, the second largest contributor). Yet this figure represents only 0.18% of annual US Gross National Income (GNI)—significantly below the UN target contribution of 0.7% of GNI and well below historical US contributions through the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Indeed, since the 1970s, the US proportion of overall development assistance funding from the members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee has fallen steadily.

Official Development Assistance is defined by the OECD as "government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries". US Foreign Assistance extends beyond this to include "aid given by the United States to other countries to support global peace, security, and development efforts, and provide humanitarian relief during times of crisis. It is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative for the United States and vital to U.S. national security" (foreignassistance.gov 2018). By way of example, in 2016, the Obama administration announced a budget that included $42.4 billion in US Foreign Assistance spending over the upcoming year out of a total budget of $4.14 trillion (about 1%) (Bearak and Gamio 2016). Sixty (60) percent of total Foreign Assistance spending, $25.6 billion, was earmarked for Economic and Development spending (including global health programs ($8.6B), economic support fund ($6.1B), migration and refugee assistance ($2.8B), development assistance ($3B), disaster assistance ($2B) and other initiatives). Meanwhile, $16.8 billion (40%) was dedicated to security (including foreign military financing ($5.7B), the Afghanistan Security Forces fund ($3.4B), coalition support funds ($1.4B), international narcotics control and law enforcement ($1.1B) and the counterterrorism partnerships fund ($1B)) (Bearak and Gamio 2016).

In the US context, the global health sector in particular has blurred the academic-CSO divide, with some of the key work in the field coming out of applied university research. With much health research directed specifically to the resolution of pressing current problems, academics have faced strong imperatives to create partnerships with health care practitioners.

The Canadian Context

In 2016, Canada's Official Development Assistance was $3.93 billion US, or 0.26% of the year's GNI according to OCDE. Both the total contribution and the percentage of GNI declined markedly from 2015, when Canada contributed $4.28 billion US, or 0.28% of its GNI. This decline occurred despite the election of a Liberal government in 2015, which came to power with a progressive platform advocating climate action, gender equality, stronger environmental regulations and reinstated funding for the arts.

In terms of academic-CSO partnerships, the Canadian context was established in a literature review conducted in 2017 as part of CCIC's Next Generation project. Overall, the review found a shortage of knowledge and information on the specific topic of academic-CSO collaboration in international development and humanitarian assistance in Canada. However, relevant research from Canada and elsewhere clearly showed that collaboration takes a variety of forms, including university-CSO research collaboration, university secondments for CSO experts, and student study placements (Chernikova 2017). The research also showed that collaboration can be improved through attention to clear communication and the differing needs and priorities of the organizations (Cottrell and Parpart 2006, Green 2017b), by developing longer term partnerships that enable research co-creation, and by creating "embedded gateways" to facilitate access to academic institutions (Shucksmith 2016). The knowledge gap on academic-practitioner collaboration in Canada has begun to be addressed in recent years through the initiatives of a handful of scholars (e.g., Tiessen and Smillie 2016, Mougeot 2017) and the financial commitment of the International Development Research Centre. In particular, a study commissioned by IDRC's former Special Initiatives Division (Chernikova 2011) was later included in Putting Knowledge to Work, an edited collection published last year that directly addresses the topic (Mougeot 2017b), while another article introduces the useful concept of knowledge interfaces (Zingerli, Michel, and Salmi 2009).. An overview of IDS programs in Canada serves as an insightful commentary on the culture of these departments (see Cameron, Quadir, and Tiessen 2013). This study demonstrates that "the name "International Development Studies" is perceived by some as implying a colonial and modernisation-oriented focus on teaching students how to make development happen, without questioning the colonial origins of the concept of development itself".

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THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Key characteristics of the US context.

Competing interest. Academics are concerned about intellectual property and the ownership of research results, particularly with publication directly linked to tenure and promotion. These concerns are heightened in the US, where less than 25% of university instructors have tenured jobs while over 75% hold casual, part-time contracts that may pay less than $20,000 a year (O'Hara 2015, 2016). With secure academic jobs increasingly scarce and competitive, authorship of peer-reviewed publications is a pressing priority for US academics that isn't shared by their CSO counterparts.

Liability of US Universities. Like many large institutions, US universities are risk averse and take seriously the possibility of personal injury, property damage, impropriety, infringement of intellectual property rights, etc. that could arise from any given project and are wary of complications relating to liability when additional actors are involved. In the highly litigious institutional context of the US, such concerns can prevent partnerships or discourage them through hefty bureaucracy.

Resource scarcity. Financial concerns also play a role, in that universities may take a hefty cut of research grants, creating a disincentive for CSOs to get involved.

Polarised political environment. Questions of how to address sustainability-related concerns are political in every context, but in the polarized political environment of the US, sustainability-related matters are heavily divided along party lines. Many CSOs have a large advocacy component and academics and/or their institutions, which rely on the financial contributions and networks of wealthy donors and alumni, may want to steer clear of heavily politicized terrain to avoid controversy and loss of support.

The influential role of alumni networks. Alumni networks play a significant role, both in terms of university funding and opportunities for student engagement. By maintaining contact with alumni, universities help secure capstone projects and other placements for students at alumni organizations.

Leading role of the global health sector. In the US, the global health sector is particularly geared toward applied research that addresses current practical problems and global health researchers are emerging as leading innovators in the development of collaborative academic-CSO partnerships to solve these problems, supporting an ecosystem of collaborations between academics, international health CSOs, and/or southern practitioners working on the ground in local communities.

The lack of an umbrella association for IDS. Founded in 1959, the ISA is an interdisciplinary association "dedicated to understanding international, transnational and global affairs". The ISA's Global Development Section, which is most relevant to the present research, has an explicitly theoretical orientation, which positions it very differently from the Canadian Association for Studies in International Development (CASID), the equivalent scholarly association in Canada. CASID's official publication, the Canadian Journal of Development Studies, "is meant to be a policy-focused publication written by academics and professionals".

The splintering of the contested IDS academic field into multiple disciplines. In the academic sector, the general discomfort with the label IDS, combined with ongoing shifts in development priorities and concerns, has contributed to the splintering of international development studies programs into a raft of similarly-themed, but differently-labelled departments such as political science, geography, area studies, food studies, urban studies, forced migration, and other topics of current concern. The minor role of development within the ISA combined with comments by a representative from GDS raised a number of questions about the state of IDS in the US context (see box A content analysis).

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE US/ CANADIAN ACADEMICS IN IDS DISCOURSE

Are there proportionally fewer development studies programs in the US than in Canada? If so, does this signal a greater reluctance to engage with the semantics of "international development"? Are topics related to the SDGs being taken up in departments other than IDS and if so, how are the approaches the same or different?

To test these assumptions, we gauge the involvement of US and Canadian academics in IDS discourse international through participation on the editorial boards of leading IDS journals. Within the 26 most cited development journals listed by the Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SJR), a scan of their editorial boards demonstrated that US academics represent 31% of their editorial boards.

While the majority of IDS journals are based in the UK (15 out of 27, according to SJR), this quick analysis shows that US academics play a leading international role in advancing and curating knowledge and discourse specifically related to international development research, policy, and practice. Canada, in keeping with its population size, plays a relatively small role (less than 5%) despite its numerous strong IDS programs. A content analysis would yield a more complete picture of the nature and quantity of literature produced by scholars in various countries.

"Within the 26 most cited development journals listed by the Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SJR), a scan of their editorial boards demonstrated that US academics represent 31% of their editorial boards."

THE PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EFFECTIVENESS: FUNDING LANDSCAPE IN CANADA AND US

While initiatives to increase the effectiveness of academics working in global development are not equivalent to the comprehensive, international efforts taking place within the CSO realm, a variety of measures have sought to encourage the production of applied research with real-world impact. Apart from the explicitly collaborative focus of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) Connection program, large federal funding agencies in North America do not seem to have prioritized these collaborations. Research funding agencies in both the US and Canada include provisions for collaborative work, often described as interdisciplinary, yet neither approach has as robust a framework as the one the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC-UK) has developed to advance research impact through encouraging collaboration. ESRC offers resources to help researchers identify what impact is and how to achieve it, encouraging research produced *with* rather than *on* people, and urging researchers to embrace sharing information rather than disseminating results. To achieve impact, ESRC advocates collaborative and co-productive forms of research, such as those involving "user organisations as co-investigators" and "learning events with research partners" and provides guidance for collaboration and lessons for collaborative research (ESRC 2018).

Canada: the role of the Tri-Council funding and beyond

In Canada, support for academic-practitioner collaboration is built into granting opportunities from several Canadian funding agencies. Tri-council funding from SSHRC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) offer various grants that support such partnerships. In particular, the SSHRC Connection Program "aims to support knowledge mobilization activities—such as networking, disseminating, exchanging and co-creating research-based knowledge—as an important element of publicly engaged scholarship, and as a means of strengthening research agendas" (SSHRC 2017). Among the grants offered through this program are three that specifically promote "research, research training and knowledge mobilization carried out by new and existing formal partnerships that demonstrate mutual co-operation and sharing of intellectual leadership" (SSHRC 2017).

Canada's 2018 federal budget emphasized the importance of bringing together researchers and businesses, according to a recent announcement by NSERC. Under the new budget, "Engage Grants, Industrial Research Chairs, Connect Grants, Strategic Partnership Grants for Networks and Projects, Experience Awards Grants, and the existing Collaborative Research and Development Grants [are] consolidated into a single grant program". This announcement ensures the continuation of the academic-business partnerships fostered under NSERC funding programs, albeit in a more streamlined form.

While NSERC encourages partnerships "among the academic, private and public sectors," its business orientation is much more explicit than SSHRC's. The home page of its website offers drop-down menus tailored for each of three groups: Students and Fellows, Professors, and Businesses. Not-for-profit organizations are not eligible partners under NSERC partnership funding, although NSERC invites interested NGOs to "bring their own resources to the research project or program" in order to "contribute to guiding the research and disseminating the results for the public good".

CIHR, Canada's federal funding agency for health research, comprises 13 institutes: "networks of researchers brought together to focus on important health problems" (CIHR 2015). This structure "encourages partnership and collaboration across sectors, disciplines and regions" enabling "partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health care system" (CIHR 2015, 2018). Despite this emphasis on collaboration, CIHR does not explicitly promote collaboration in its Foundation, Project or Priority-driven research grants. Funded activities may involve collaboration, but none of CIHR's funding programs appear to specifically target partnership building.

In addition to these federal funding sources, funding through several other agencies creates incentives for collaborative work. For example, funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) may specifically promote collaborative partnerships through their current Canadian Collaboration for Innovative Research and Knowledge Sharing award; while Mitacs, a non-profit organization with the specific mandate to build partnerships between academia and industry, recently opened up their research funding (match funding) to non-profit organizations to support collaborations between academics and CSOs.

US federal agencies: lack of explicit references to academic/CSOs collaborations

The US federal agencies that offer funding relevant to the field of global development do not appear to encourage collaborative partnerships involving academics and practitioners to the same degree. Most of them focused on interdisciplinary approaches rather than focusing on community engagement or multi-stakeholder partnerships, which would include collaborations outside the academic circles. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) offers twenty-five grants that feature "collaborative" in the title, another nine grants with titles that include "partnership," five with titles that include "interdisciplinary" but no grants with titles that included "transdisciplinary," "multidisciplinary," or "connection" (NIH n.d.). While these findings seem to suggest that NIH encourages collaborative and interdisciplinary partnerships, these 39 grants account for only 3.1% of the 1233 NIH grants on offer at the time the search was conducted. With such a large number of grants on

offer, and with specialized language used throughout the titles and summaries of these grants, it is difficult to comment on the degree to which NIH funding advances collaborative research between academics and practitioners in the global health field. Further research is needed for more conclusive results.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) "gives high priority to promoting interdisciplinary research and supports it through a number of specific solicitations". NSF defines interdisciplinary research as "a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice". While it is evident that NSF values interdisciplinary work, a more focused, in-depth study is necessary to determine the degree to which NSF funding encourages collaborative partnerships between academics and practitioners.

While the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) offers a grant for collaborative research, the funding supports "groups of two or more scholars engaging in significant and sustained research in the humanities. The program seeks to encourage interdisciplinary work […] Projects that include partnerships with researchers from the natural and social sciences are encouraged". The NEH also offers two connections grants: a Humanities Connections Planning Grant and a Humanities Connections Implementation Grant. In all of these three grant programs, NEH encourages interdisciplinary research, yet none of these programs appear to encourage or require non-academic involvement in its research funding. Finally, the Public Humanities Project grant program "encourages projects that involve members of the public in collaboration with humanities scholars or that invite contributions from the community in the development and delivery of humanities programming".

Unlike the research funding agencies, USAID emphasizes multi-sectoral partnerships as a way of maximizing development impact. However, its partnership approach appears to be predominantly focused on private sector engagement. The emphasis on private sector engagement likely derives from USAID's need to diversify its funding sources in an era of decreasing government spending on international development. USAID notes that the 1600 partnerships it has developed with private-sector organizations are expected to generate some $16 billion in additional, non-US government funds. The growth of private partnerships with USAID is part of broader shifts in the way in which global development finance occurs; increasingly, "USAID is leveraging private investment and applying non-traditional approaches to finance the achievement of our goals". While there are undoubtedly many development benefits to be gained from these partnerships, the tight connection between government and private industry does raise questions about the degree to which USAID facilitates the overseas expansion of US corporations and whether this role conflicts with other development priorities, as well as aid and development effectiveness principles.

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TWO CASE STUDIES HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION PARTNERSHIPS

The two case studies illustrate the diverse forms that collaboration can take. They range from loose affiliations, to complex institutional arrangements involving strategic restructuring and large-scale shifts in organizational direction and goals. Less formal affiliations include the CSO staff training and capacity development programs created by academics and facilitated by SDSN (see "Case Study: Sustainable Development Solutions Network"). Tighter alliances might see an academic embedded within a CSO, a CSO placed in a university secondment, or might enable a CSO to draw on academic expertise in program review and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). Finally, strategic restructuring can involve fundamental transitions in the strategic direction of both the CSO and academic institution as the partnership is formalized and subsequently becomes integral to institutional structures and operations (see Case Study: Catholic Relief Services and Purdue University).

CASE STUDY I:

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES AND PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Who?

With over 7000 staff located in over 100 countries around the world and over $900 million in programing revenue, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is one of the largest global development organizations in the United States. Purdue University is a major research university located in Lafayette, Indiana.

What?

In 2007, researchers from Purdue University working in Burkina Faso and Afghanistan struck up an ad hoc alliance with CRS field staff. Over the past decade, what was initially an ad-hoc affiliation has strengthened into a formalized, long-term institutional partnership involving a complex web of actors at both institutions.

Benefits.

Over the course of this evolution, several key benefits became clear. **Universities** can gain access to physical infrastructure, institutional support, and the relationships that the NGO has established with local governments and communities through their collaborations with the NGO. Partnerships may offer academics the opportunity to scale up innovation and add to the impact of their work.

From the NGO perspective, access to rigorous evidence and knowledge is a major benefit to be derived from university partnerships. Thanks to their productive partnership with Purdue University, CRS has been able to improve the effectiveness of their programs, access different publishing venues and gain new audiences, and play an active role in thought leadership. Using rigorous, trustworthy evidence generated through their university partnership, CRS has also been able to influence policy and build its credibility as a serious advocate for effective change.

The opportunities created **for students** through the partnership benefit both Purdue University and CRS. By providing students with volunteer, mentorship, and field placement opportunities, CRS makes a valuable contribution to applied learning. Student internships can also lead to long-term employment at CRS; the internship approach enables CRS to vet potential employees, removing much of the risk of employment.

Key structural factors.

In general, the US government provides approximately two-thirds of CRS's total funding with the remainder coming from private donors, foundations, and the private sector. The majority of funding received is competitive and must be applied for continually. University partnerships add a competitive edge to this funding, not only because funders increasingly require external research partnerships, but also because they build rigour and evidence into CRS's programming. Both CRS and Purdue are now accustomed to applying for competitive grants and appreciate the importance of what they offer one another. Whether written by Purdue or CRS, funding applications are stronger when a credible third party is involved in training, implementation, and the rigorous collection and analysis of data and evidence.

Several key turning points led to the emergence of this partnership. First, the transformation of CRS' organizational strategic plan, which led to the scaling-up of the collaborations, was driven by a change in leadership at CRS. The new CEO, who joined CRS from a leadership position in academia and brought with her a different institutional understanding and an awareness of the value of university collaboration, felt that more benefit could be derived from what was at that time an informal partnership. Furthermore, the CEO made a significant commitment to expanding the relationship, which was in turn matched by administrators at Purdue. These commitments led to a formalized partnership that laid out terms of engagement, including safety, liability and responsibility.

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN

- Strong commitment. Thanks to CRS's commitment to learning and improvement, CRS has not experienced the problems with conflicting objectives that other CSOs have noted, for example, when confronted by an academic's objective documentation of project shortcomings (when a success stories are needed to appeal to donors).
- Priority on Learning. CRS places importance not only on program/project implementation, but also on the ability to back up claims with rigorous evidence. Their commitment to working with Purdue on MEAL sets the tone that the organization values quality and that research is part of learning and improved practices.
- Staffing decisions and the role of "hinge actors". CRS was able to foster and develop this commitment to learning in large part through key staffing decisions. These include hiring an Executive Director with experience in academia and creating a University Liaison position. Both of these staff members helped move the collaboration with Purdue from temporary and ad hoc to long-term and institutionalized. Both of these staff members, but specifically the University Liaison employee, played the role of "hinge actors." Much like the "bridging experts" described elsewhere (Chernikova 2011), hinge actors are people with experience working in both types of sectors. As such, they are able to translate the differing languages and cultures from one sphere to another, helping to maintain clear communication and smooth the process of building a relationship and institutionalizing the partnership.
- Financial resources of a large-size organisation. CRS was able to draw on financial resources that far exceed those of smaller organizations, enabling it to carry out the meetings, discussions and legal counsel needed to institutionalize the partnership and create a full-time position dedicated to maintaining the partnership.

CASE STUDY II:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK (SDSN): CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Who?

SDSN is an international non-profit networking organization operating under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. Working from offices in Paris, New York, and Delhi, SDSN connects knowledge-producing institutions and facilitates the flow of scientific and evidence-based information between a wide variety of stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the private sector. Its current membership includes some 700 universities, think tanks, and other research and knowledge-creating entities who produce work with a high level of academic rigour. These members are organized into sub-networks that self-organize regionally and nationally.

What?

Among other activities, SDSN helps democratise learning by making curricular learning widely available through a catalogue of massive open online courses (MOOCs) on its academic platform. This is free and universally accessible for anyone who wants to take a course. The SDG Academy, run from SDSN's New York office, is an initiative to "create and curate free, graduate-level online courses on sustainable development." It does this through a massive open online education platform that offers a curriculum of interactive courses on sustainability issues.

Another branch of the SDG Academy is SDSN's University Partnership Program, "designed to encourage the uptake of SDG Academy courses in existing and new programs on sustainable development in universities around the world". The program provides "universities and academic institutions with privileged access to the SDG Academy course materials to tailor and use in their own education programs" and encourages developing country universities that may lack resources for course or program development to integrate SDSN's online courses into blended learning programs. SDSN accepted ten universities into its 2017 pilot program, though interest was much greater.

SDSN also offers a range of other knowledge products, such as SDG indicators, advocacy and accountability tools and knowledge tools. Together these provide an independent measure of accountability that can be highly useful to CSOs, enabling them to produce unofficial but highly reliable data. SDSN offers how-to guides on a variety of pertinent topics, including broad issues in multi-stakeholder partnerships, how to achieve SDGs on campus, and how to implement SDG-oriented training. It is currently in the process of creating more materials for specific communities or organizations.

Benefits for stakeholders.

While universities have shown much interest in SDSNs knowledge-sharing platforms, there has been an even greater response from development companies and non-profit organizations interested in these professional development opportunities for their staff. The fully online courses, modelled on traditional university courses, are an effective and efficient way to deliver professional training materials to the extensive staff of larger organizations.

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN

- Ecosystem to build knowledge and increase capacity. SDSN is a model of complex and overlapping partnerships that draw together academics and practitioners in northern and southern countries. Widespread international interest in SDSN programs indicates that it fills an important niche in the development ecosystem by linking novel learning and training opportunities with the individuals and groups that need them.
- Access to resources for academic institutions in low-income countries. The high level of interest in SDSN's University Partnership Program suggests that there is a strong desire among under-resourced universities for knowledge from universities that are well-equipped to produce and share it. This program could prove to be a valuable asset in global learning and knowledge exchange in years to come.

ROLE OF FACILITATING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE US

Various organizations in North America have the mandate of facilitating partnerships between development actors. However, their work is not necessarily geared toward facilitating academic-CSO partnerships. Examples of these facilitating organizations include the following: InterAction, "the largest alliance of U.S. based international NGOs and partners", which currently has about eight or nine university members; the Society for International Development, whose global membership includes "bilateral and multilateral institutions, private sector partners, non-governmental officials, technical assistance specialists, consultants, diplomats and academics"; and Humentum, whose 330 members (including three universities and numerous research institutes) "represent the dynamic mix of all those leading development work today: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for-profit companies with an expertise in international development, sector experts with deep roots in global issues, nonprofit policy organizations, and academic institutions advancing sustainable development".

These networking and capacity-building organizations could play a powerful role in facilitating academic-CSO partnerships, yet it is unknown to what extent this is currently taking place. In the case of InterAction, no research has been done on collaborations between academic and CSO members; similar knowledge gaps are likely present in the other cases as well. Various researchers are currently investigating the role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs, including through corporate social responsibility initiatives, public-private partnerships, social enterprises, or as participants in multi-stakeholder work. A CSO or foundation may be an important bridge body that facilitates liaisons between other entities. Further research could help inform future activities and initiatives and help guide the work of these organizations to play an effective bridging or linking role.

Despite the varied nature of academic-practitioner collaborations and despite their potential to make a large contribution to development effectiveness, little literature and few resources seem to be dedicated to the topic. The absence of resources dedicated to academic-practitioner collaborations stands in contrast to the wide range of resources available to facilitate collaborations more generally. Support structures, networking platforms and training platforms for CSOs and academics tend to be separate, with organizations such as SDSN catering to academic organizations while others, such as InterAction, are geared mainly towards CSOs. Yet while InterAction, Humentum, and SID are dedicated to capacity building and knowledge exchange among civil society organizations working in development, their memberships are primarily comprised of practitioner CSOs and their activities are tailored accordingly. Bridging these hubs has the potential to provide information and support for academic-CSO partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For funders:

- Explicitly target non-academics and civil society organizations as partners and co-investigators in grant programs that aim to support collaborative work.
- Create new funding windows that are open to applied research and practitioner-academic collaborations. These findings should have incentives to target economic and societal impact which would benefits to individuals, organisations and/or nations
- Encourage research produced with rather than on people, and urging researchers to embrace sharing information rather than disseminating results.
- Develop and offer resources to help researchers identify what impact is and how to achieve it.

For facilitating organizations (platform, coalition, network):

- Test pilot programs to enhance collaborations between CSO members and academic research partners (in particular in areas of applied research), such as secondments, placements, research partnerships, etc. Document and make available the findings from these pilots.
- Invest in building the capacity of CSO members to engage in effective partnership with academia and learn new research methodologies.
- Map formal partnership agreements between CSO members and academic institutions, to learn more about how they have evolved, where each see the benefits and value to the relationship, and what outcomes and impacts have been identified to date.
- Hire staff with a strong academic background who can navigate academic institutional structures and act as bridges or hinge-actors to build partnerships with academic institutions; use these partnerships to enhance the rigour of evidence generated from CSO programs.
- Use successful partnership to lobby academic funding institutions for more windows open to academic-practitioner collaboration.
- Foster collaborations between platforms of practitioners and platforms of academics to identify potential areas of shared value, building on the experience with SDSN in the US to expand similar collaborations with SDSN-Canada.
- Explore some of the resources available on the SDSN massive open online course and promote the most relevant to member organizations, encouraging members to make space for learning. Work with SDSN-Canada to develop courses catered to Canadian-specific needs.
- Foster a culture among member organizations of learning from both successes and failures, and objective and rigorous research. Starting by compiling multi-case case studies, platform organizations can initially absorb some of the risk of admitting failures, until member organizations are more comfortable with this process of program development and evolution.

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