

**APT** works to reduce poverty in Africa and Asia by increasing opportunities for employment and income generation. We aim to provide a better opportunity for vulnerable people to improve their quality of life and address the root causes of their poverty.

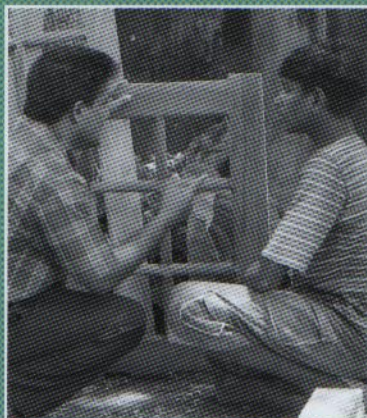
We support the development of livelihoods generated from agricultural activity and many other means, and provide specific expertise on accessing mainstream markets. We also support the cross cutting impact of livelihoods - vulnerable people often prioritising the means to meet basic needs - on many areas of development.

Targeted beneficiaries include those:

- with disabilities
- affected by HIV/AIDS
- rebuilding their lives following conflict or other disasters
- facing harsh conditions in their environment (such as pastoral or urban slum areas).

An important feature of APT projects is the strength of our partnerships with local organisations. Enabling capacity to be built to sustain impact, whether as NGOs or within the private sector, is incorporated as a key element of our work.

Countries include: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Sri Lanka.



## Partnership: what have we learnt?

### APT's approach to partnership

APT considers that effective partnership is the means to delivering the impact on poverty more efficiently and sustainably. Like many organisations we believe that partners should drive the work in response to the needs of the beneficiaries, and we use our experience and links with other partners and organisations to strengthen their ability to do this. The effectiveness of such partnerships can have a huge impact on the success - or failure - of a development programme.

APT's partners are indigenous, independent organisations. APT is different from many organisations in that rather than maintaining offices and employing our own staff overseas, we support the efforts and plans of local organisations from a UK office. This way of working is often seen as an approach used when the UK NGO has insufficient resources to support a branch or office in the country of operation and the benefits to capacity building are not recognised. In this brief note we are summarising our experience with a particular focus on this aspect, together with a more general reflection on what we have observed.

### What have we observed?

There are many benefits of a field office to Southern and Northern partners - not least the easier regular contact with a greater number of staff. Yet perhaps prompted by the resources utilised by in-country offices (and the employment terms they can offer), and their increasing numbers, these offices may crowd out the potential for the development of indigenous organisations - risking the perpetuation of dependence with related high costs.



The absence of a country office means that the Southern partner undertakes functions such as networking, co-ordination, dissemination, research and policy influence. For example, seminars and publications are held under the banner of the local partner. In networking activities - people make contact with the partner rather than our overseas office. This need supports and stimulates their capacity development in these areas and the activities themselves build the skills, awareness, status and contacts of the local partner. The step of a (growing and developing) Southern partner moving to delivering complex programmes involving all of the above, with direct funding, is then small. Such local institutions are

also better placed to operate sustainably and effectively in difficult circumstances, such as if conflict returns, or if international strategies of donors or INGOs change.

It also helps to facilitate an increased level of control by the local partner (although clearly many factors influence this): this is manifested in many different ways, including a greater acknowledgement of the partner's understanding and closeness to the target group - particularly in programme design and development. It is perhaps easier to support the capacity building of our Southern partners in the direction they choose, rather than being drawn to the strategy of an international organisation or its local office. This may require additional expertise and/or building our own capacity.

Without the resource requirement of a branch in the country of operation, it is a way of keeping the ratio of APT staff to portfolio of projects small, contributing to greater efficiency in terms of £s per 'reduction in poverty' spent.

### Increasing independence

In practise we now have two partnerships which go back to the early/mid 1990s; these partners have grown from a few people to be large national resources of experience and advice - NGOs which can raise some of their own funds, relate independently to donors, and hire APT on their own initiative. They now have a much greater resource base than APT, which we view as an achievement of the partnership. One of these partners has suggested that the 'pillars' that make a partnership effective are:

- Shared ownership of projects
- A shared vision
- Trust/Dialogue/Communication
- Institutional partnership, not individual