

Partnership and cross-sectoral collaboration session

By Nick Whigham

Partnership was the word throughout the second day of the *Development Futures* conference.

While Joanna Hayter, CEO of [International Women's Development Agency](#), admitted that she is a touch cynical about the word, she defined partnership as the understanding and sharing of vision and values.

Personally, I had no idea there are such a diverse range of ways to approach cooperation, however the partnership and cross-sectoral collaboration session this morning provided some inspiring examples.

A common thread of the partnership-focused session was the imperative of implementing a participatory model of development and partnering with the community – not simply supplying them with a solution. Through partnership allowing communities and children to take ownership of development and empower themselves indelibly leads to the best results.

The first presentation looked at partnership in water, sanitation and hygiene and nutritionally-focused programs. Nutrition is a fundamental part of healthy living. (Sohail Inayatullah understands this very well. Whilst he attended the conference as a keynote speaker to impart his infinite wisdom as a futurist, it just so happened that his “favourite vegan restaurant in the world” – Bodhi – is just down the road!)

Alison Macintyre from WaterAid and Samantha Chivers from [RESULTS](#) delivered a presentation on the importance of a certain level of nutrition and sanitation in beating disease, infections and thwarting stunting in children amongst poor countries in the region. They stressed the importance of taking an holistic approach, and of bringing various sectors such as education and health together with NGOs, private actors and research bodies, to achieve effective results.

The virtues of multifaceted approaches were also reinforced by speakers Nguyen Anh Thinh ([ADRA](#)) and Jackie Robertson ([ChildFund Australia](#)), who spoke respectively about the developing partnerships in health in Vietnam and the links between youth participation and development effectiveness. Both spoke of the importance of engaging in a partnership-style relationship with the recipients of your assistance project, in order to achieve the most desirable – and sustainable – results.

This was to be a common thread of this partnership-focused session: the imperative of implementing a participatory model of development and partnering with the community and rather than just a service or externally driven support to them. Partnership instead allows communities and children to take ownership of development and empower themselves.

As well as partnering at the grassroots level, it was noted that while cheap and quick projects such as the provision of medical supplies can be useful, the long-term preventative projects often require much more planning and infrastructure – and thus sustained partnership with government. And that is the enduring challenge.

The take-home message from this session was that, although easier said than done, going forward, it is of fundamental importance that the development industry recognises and embraces these partnership relationships with both community and different parts of government.

