

# Partnership Policy and Guide

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<b>Related documents:</b>	<i>2015-2018 Strategic Plan</i> <i>Child Safeguarding Policy</i> <i>Non-discrimination Policy</i> <i>Gender Policy</i> <i>Ethical Code</i> <i>Code of Good Governance</i> <i>Complaints and Feedback Policy</i> <i>Quality Management Policy</i> <i>Child Participation Standards</i>

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# PART 1: POLICY

## 1. Introduction

We understand partnership as a working relationship based on shared objectives, rewards and risks. This Partnership Policy and Guide defines why and how Educo works in partnership with other organizations, which implies a joint conception of programs and projects, a shared commitment to contributing resources and mutual accountability.<sup>1</sup>

This document provides the guiding principles, general framework and relevant tools which illustrate the key features of our partnering process. As such, it does not include detailed operational procedures, since every partnership occurs within specific circumstances and is highly context-specific.

This Partnership Policy and Guide is aligned with the following documents:

- 2015-2018 Strategic Plan
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Non-discrimination Policy
- Gender Policy
- Ethical Code
- Code of Good Governance
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Quality Management and Social Responsibility Policy
- Child Participation Standards

## 2. Rationale

For Educo, working in partnership with other organizations is essential for building a more just world for children. Only by building effective partnerships based on commitment, equity and respect will we be able to achieve our strategic goals and have a lasting impact.

Applying a Child Rights-Based Approach, Educo works with three types of stakeholders: rights holders (children and adolescents), secondary duty-bearers (families, communities, civil society, the private sector, etc.) and primary duty-bearers (States and international bodies).

Each and every one of these actors should be agents of the desired change, undertaking direct actions to address rights violations and gaps, reinforce institutional mechanisms and build the capacities of the communities and civil society in their respective spheres. The role that children play, that is, their degree of implication and responsibility, will vary in function of their maturity levels.

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<sup>1</sup> The Partnering Initiative (2011). *The Partnering Toolbook*.

**Diagram 1: Educo's Approach to Change**



### 3. Guiding Principles

Educo's principles are operating standards that guide our actions, including our partnering process.

**Participation:** all of our actions guarantee and promote the right to participation of children and those who support them, in pursuit of full citizenship.

**Non-discrimination:** our work is built upon the belief that all children should have the opportunity to fulfill their rights, irrespective of their or their families' national, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, economic position, differences in ability or any other status.

**Transparency:** we base our work on honesty, responsibility and maximum access to information regarding the management of resources and the impact of our actions, in pursuit of the highest level social and economic accountability.

**Dynamic spirit:** we have the capacity to adapt and be creative in our response, seeking innovation and quality in our action. Within the framework of our partnering process, this principle translates to an innovative, creative and responsive approach, and an openness and willingness to learn from new experiences and change orientations when necessary.

Moreover, our partnerships should be built on our core values, which are **social commitment, equity and respect**.

Our "way of working" should also reflect the following concepts:

**Proximity:** we prioritize local efforts in close collaboration with the communities, civil society actors and public institutions that are in direct contact with children.

**Sustainability:** we support children and their communities, but in no way intend to substitute or play the role of the State. All of our programs and projects are, from the outset, aimed at addressing structural causes of vulnerability and exclusion so that their positive impact will last long into the future.

**Capacity building through mutual learning:** if we aspire to achieve and sustain the desired results, capacity building must be an integral component of our partnering efforts.

#### Minimum requirements for local Educo partners:

- Commitment to the guiding principles of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- Compliance with the commitments and standards set forth in Educo's Child Safeguarding Policy and Gender Policy.
- No political affiliation.
- Commitment to transparent management.
- Compliance with the program country's local laws.
- Mission, vision, values and principles that are aligned with those of Educo.

#### 4. Types of local organizations

There are various types of organizations with which Educo may build partnerships. While the boundaries of different sectors are increasingly blurred, we may classify these organizations as follows:

- **Civil society organizations**, such as NGOs, farming associations, trade unions, etc.
- **Informal grassroots movements and groups**, such as women's groups or religious groups, etc.
- **Child-led organizations**, which Educo regards as particularly important. They may or may not have formal structures, and Educo may contribute to their institutional development in function of their specific needs and aspirations.
- **Public sector entities/organizations**, such as local or regional authorities, central government departments, etc. Educo does not provide direct funding to government partners<sup>2</sup>; however, we always work in close collaboration and coordination with them to promote Child Rights. This collaboration may be formalized through non-monetary contributions (technical or financial support, knowledge sharing and services, human resource, etc.) by signing a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement.
- **Academic and research organizations or institutions**, such as universities. Educo may reach formal agreements with the aim of achieving common objectives through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing and services, human resources, etc.).
- **Multilateral international bodies**, such as UN agencies, the World Bank, etc. Educo does not provide direct funding to government partners; however, we may reach formal agreements with the aim of achieving common objectives. This collaboration will be materialized through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing and services, human resources, etc.) with the signing of Memorandums of Understanding or Agreements.
- **Private sector**, which includes national and multi-national companies, small and medium enterprises and business associations. Educo recognizes that business entities may and should play an important role in promotion and protecting Child Rights. As such, we entertain the prospect of collaborating with corporate sponsors who comply with Educo's Ethical Code.
- **Coalitions/networks/alliances**, that is, groups of organizations which are formed to achieve a common goal. Their purpose is often to improve advocacy, mutual learning and information exchange among member organizations. They may have different levels of legal formalities, such as governing bodies, missions, legal registrations, membership requirements, etc. One example would be networks of child-centered organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Funds managed by government institutions will not be transferred, except in the specific case of schools and provided that the management of these funds involves the participation and empowerment of the educational community.

- **Consortium** or groups of organizations formed to achieve a specific, common one-time goal. For example, it may be formed in order to access grants. It may have different levels of legal formalities, such as governing bodies, missions, legal registrations, membership requirements, etc.

Educo may build partnerships with any of the aforementioned types of organizations, and these organizations may be categorized as follows:

**a) Strategic Partner**

A Strategic Partner is an organization with which Educo establishes a formal collaboration agreement with the aim of achieving common strategic objectives in the medium to long term. The relationship is formalized through a multi-annual Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement and may involve diverse forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.).

**b) Project/Program/Activity/Initiative Partners**

A Program/Project/Activity/Initiative Partner is an organization with which Educo establishes a formal, more short-term agreement, with the aim of achieving specific common objectives through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.).

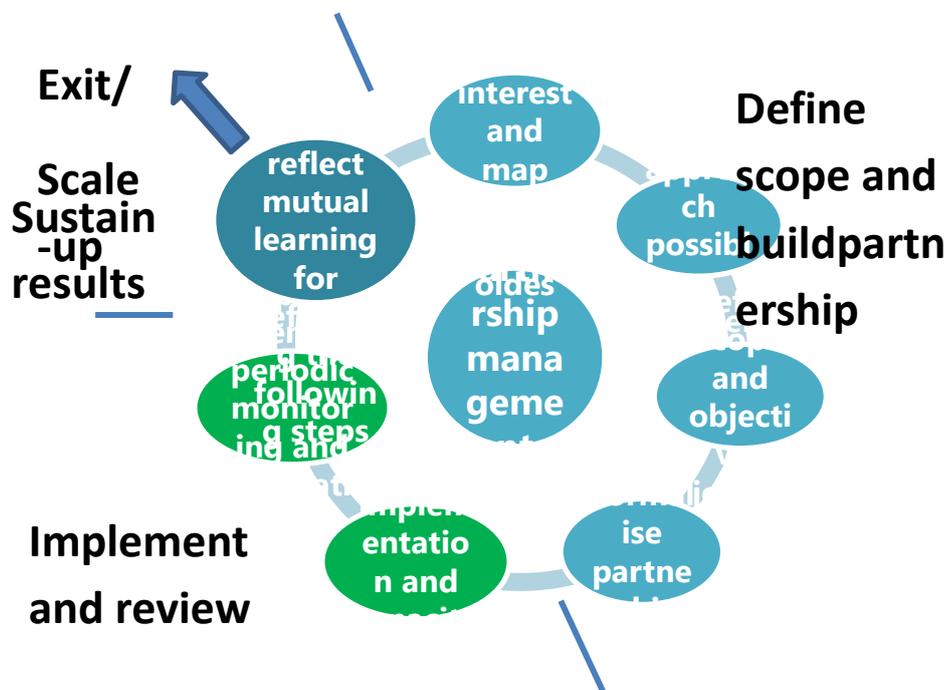
## PART 2: GUIDE

### 5. Partnership Management Cycle

This section describes the different phases and steps of Educo's partnership management cycle.

Educo divides the partnership management cycle in three different phases: define scope and build partnership; implement and review; and sustain results<sup>3</sup>.

**Diagram 2: Partnership Management Cycle**



#### Phase 1: Define scope and build partnership

##### **Step 1: Define the area of interest and map stakeholders**

Educo defines the initial scope and preferred intervention areas by identifying geographic, thematic and strategic priorities based on the key findings of the Child Rights Situation Analysis and the scope of each Country Program. The availability of funding sources, such as existing or future grant opportunities, or potential sponsorship base, is also taken into consideration.

##### **Step 2: Identify and approach possible partners**

<sup>3</sup> The Partnering Initiative (2011). *The Partnering Toolkit*.

In this step, Educo assesses the viability of specific partnerships through a contextual analysis (areas of interest and stakeholder mapping). The following questions are explored:

- What are the most important criteria for selecting partners, with respect to the specific program/project/activity/initiative?
- Does the funding source/donor come with specific conditions attached (for example, specific grant or sponsorship requirements) which may have a bearing on our choice of partners?
- Is there any capacity or other gap? What technical skill set must the partner have in order to fulfill its responsibilities?
- Do we have existing partners that fit the selection criteria?

In selecting potential partners, it is important to engage in dialogue with them through joint meetings and project-site visits. The following are key questions which should be addressed in these discussions:

- Do we share a common vision for achieving positive and lasting changes in children's lives?
- Are our values, principles and work methodologies compatible?
- Would partnership enhance our respective organizational goals and give added value to our work?
- Would partnership create positive opportunities for future organizational development?
- Can our mutual expectations for partnership be realistically met?
- Does the potential partner have a Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy? If not, would it be willing to adopt Educo's policy in this regard?

### **Step 3: Define scope and objectives jointly**

In this step, we define the principles and ground rules for partnership. The following are key questions which should be addressed in this regard:

- What is the purpose and what are the objectives and success indicators of the partnership?
- What are the deliverables and expected results?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each party?
- What would be the decision-making process?
- What are the key milestones during the partnership?
- What type of engagement is there from other stakeholders?
- What type of monitoring and periodic evaluation will there be of the program/project/activity/initiative?

### **Step 4: Formalize partnership**

Once both parties have accepted the program/project/activity/initiative proposal, the partnership will be formalized through the signing of an agreement. In case of a Strategic

Partner, a framework agreement will be signed prior to signing a specific program/project/activity/initiative agreement.

## **Phase 2: Implement and review**

### **Step 5: Plan joint implementation and capacity building**

This step marks the beginning of the program/project/activity/initiative implementation. Potential capacity or other gaps should be reviewed (technical and financial, human resources, political influence, etc.) and a capacity development plan should be designed and implemented jointly.

### **Step 6: Implement periodic monitoring and evaluation**

Program/project/activity/initiative implementation should be accompanied by periodic monitoring and evaluation (both technical and financial) with the aim of guaranteeing accountability and mutual learning. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism may take different forms, such as a joint monitoring committee, project-site visits, formulation of technical reports and training sessions.

The following are key questions to be addressed during this step:

- Are we on the right track in terms of achieving the desired impact?
- Are we on the right track with respect to what was set out in the agreement?
- How well are we doing in terms of executing the proposal? Are any adjustments needed?
- Are we adhering to the agreed principles for the partnership?
- What can we do to make our partnership even stronger and more effective?

The agreement may be terminated according to the particular terms established in the agreement signed by both parties, for instance in the case of a breach of the contractual terms and condition.

## **Phase 3: Sustain results**

### **Step 7: Conduct final evaluation and reflect mutual learning for defining the following steps**

The final evaluation should help us determine the following actions to take with respect to the partnership:

- Closing: involves implementing exit strategies.
- Continuing: involves continuance of the program/project/activity/initiative, after improving it based on acquired learning.

- Scaling up: involves expanding or reproducing the program/project/activity/initiative, while improving it based on acquired learning.

The following are key questions to be addressed during this step:

- Has progress been made towards the effective fulfillment of Child Rights?
- To what extent have the expected long-term objectives been achieved and what explains this level of achievement?
- To what extent have the parties lived up to their assigned roles and responsibilities in the partnership?
- Has the partnership been significant in improving the lives of children and has it added value to each organization and its respective work?
- Have both parties adhered to the agreed partnership principles and effectively tackled the challenges/obstacles encountered along the way?
- What have we learned and how can we apply this learning?
- Is it desirable to continue the partnership? If so, how can we make the partnership stronger and more effective?

## 6. List of available tools

The following table shows which tools may be used in each step of the partnership management cycle.

Step	Tools
Step 1: Define the area of interest and map the stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country Program</li> <li>- Child Rights Situation Analysis</li> <li>- Stakeholder mapping tool</li> </ul>
Step 2: Approach possible partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizational assessment form</li> <li>- Project-site visit form</li> <li>- Glossary of terms</li> </ul>
Step 3: Define scope and objectives jointly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project concept note</li> </ul>
Step 4: Formalize partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Framework agreement template</li> <li>- Project agreement template</li> <li>- Project form</li> <li>- Project budget template</li> <li>- Project budget bases</li> <li>- Budget development guidelines</li> </ul>
Step 5: Plan joint implementation and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>

Step 6: Implement periodic monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project monitoring form</li> <li>- Project budget monitoring template</li> </ul>
Step 7: Conduct final evaluation and reflect mutual learning for defining the following steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final evaluation terms of reference template</li> </ul>

## 7. Implementation

Once approved, this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. These annual reviews should be approved by the Policy and Strategy Director, who will present any proposed modifications to the Executive Committee for validation.

Several internal tools make it possible to verify Educo's compliance with this policy. First and foremost, there is the commitment of all of the organization's staff; and secondly, the policy has been approved and validated by the Board of Trustees, Educo's highest governance body, and by the Executive Committee. Compliance with this policy implies Educo's commitment to implementing internal operative tools that reflect the management and decision-making processes undertaken within the partnership framework. Finally, Educo's Internal Audit Department is responsible for verifying the effective implementation of all internal policies, including this Partnership Policy.

## 8. Bibliography

Internal Civil Society Organisation (2011), *Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Building Blocks for Success*.

Plan Nicaragua (2014), *Partnership Manual*.

Save the Children Uganda (2011), *Working in Partnership: Partnership Policy and Guideline*.

The Partnering Initiative (2011), *The Partnering Toolbok*.