Working in Partnerships:

An Ethnographic Study on Volunteers' Narratives of Establishing, Managing and Ending Partnerships between Finnish and Indian NGOs

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

This study examines inter-organizational relationships among Finnish non-governmental organizations (NGO) and their Indian partner organizations which have a joint development intervention in India. The study aims at gaining an understanding of the various aspects of partnership which have an effect on the formation, management and ending of the relationship from the perspective of Finnish volunteer workers from small-scale voluntary organizations. The study presents their narratives, perceptions and ways they define and experience the criteria for choosing a partner, the types of responsibilities among partners, challenges faced in different phases of the project cycle and certain elements of partnership, such as accountability and reliability.

The empirical data consists of five ethnographic semi-structured interviews of six informants which were conducted between October 2014 and January 2015. The secondary data, complementing the primary data, comprises qualitative documents including official project plans, journals from monitoring trips and a set of researcher's field notes from two monitoring trips. The research data is analyzed using the method of content analysis. The theoretical approach of the study is based on theories of development by anthropologists Emma Crewe, Richard Axelby and Arturo Escobar, and on theories of partnership by development researchers Alan D. Fowler, Maria Eriksson Baaz and Alnoor Ebrahim, and social anthropologist David Mosse.

The main results show that a new partner NGO is found through the personal contacts of active volunteers in the Finnish NGOs. The criteria for choosing a partner is based on three elements: 1) same field of work, 2) a realistic project proposal and sufficient expertise to implement the activities, and 3) a good level of administrative skills and financial solidity. The main challenge addressed is the small size of the Finnish NGO which creates several constraints in terms of poor time management, and insufficient human and financial resources. The results indicate that partnerships are perceived to be a mutual learning process to which partners bring their complementary expertise. The Finnish NGOs consider their Indian partner NGOs reliable but interestingly the criteria for reliability is accustomed to the expectations and previous experiences of the culture of the partner NGO.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Development cooperation, non-governmental organizations, partnership, India

Säilytyspaikka – Depository
JYX Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Pro gradu -tutkielmassani tarkastelen suomalaisten ja intialaisten kehitysyhteistyöjärjestöjen yhteisen kehitysyhteistyöhankkeen ympärille muodostunutta yhteistyötä eli kumppanuutta. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on ymmärtää kumppanuuden muodostumiseen, ylläpitoon ja lopettamiseen vaikuttavia tekijöitä. Tutkimuksessa tuodaan esille suomalaisten vapaaehtoisten kertomuksia, kokemuksia ja havaintoja muun muassa uuden kumppanijärjestön valintakriteereistä, järjestöjen välisestä työnjaosta, hankesyklin eri vaiheissa kohdatuista haasteista sekä vastuuvelvollisuuden ja luotettavuuden merkityksestä kumppanuudessa.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen aineisto koostuu kuuden informantin etnografisista puolistrukturoiduista haastatteluista, jotka toteutettiin lokakuun 2014 ja tammikuun 2015 välisenä aikana. Haastatteluaineistoa on täydennetty hankesuunnitelmilla, hankematkojen päiväkirjoilla ja tutkijan kenttämuistiinpanoilla. Tutkimusaineisto on analysoitu sisältöanalyysin avulla. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu antropologien Emma Crewen, Richard Axelbyn ja Arturo Escobarin teorioihin kehityksestä (engl. development theories) sekä kehitystutkijoiden Alan D. Fowlerin, Maria Eriksson Baazin ja Alnoor Ebrahimin sekä sosiaaliantropologi David Mossen teorioihin kumppanuudesta (engl. partnership theories).

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että kumppanuus saa usein alkunsa suomalaisten vapaaehtoisten henkilökohtaisista kontakteista. Kumppanijärjestön valintaan vaikuttavat kolme tekijää: 1) yhteinen toimiala, 2) realistinen hankesuunnitelma ja riittävä osaaminen sen toteuttamiseen sekä 3) hallinnollinen osaaminen ja taloudellinen vakavaraisuus. Kumppanuuden suurimmat haasteet johtuvat suomalaisen järjestön pienuudesta, minkä takia henkilöstö- ja taloushallinnon resurssit ovat niukat ja ajanhallinnassa on haasteita. Kumppanuus nähdään vastavuoroisena oppimiskokemuksena, johon molemmat osapuolet tuovat toisiaan täydentävää osaamistaan. Intialaisia kumppanijärjestöjä pidetään pääasiassa luotettavina vankan kokemuksen, ammattimaisen työotteen ja yhteisen hankkeen saavuttamien konkreettisten tulosten takia. Mielenkiintoista kyllä luotettavuuden kriteereitä on muokattu kumppanijärjestön kulttuuriin kohdistuvien odotusten ja aiempien kokemusten pohjalta.

Asiasanat – Keywords Kehitysyhteistyö, kansalaisjärjestö, kumppanuus, Intia
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Muita tietoja – Additional information

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Abbreviations

AAA American Anthropological Association

DAC Development Assistance Committee

GOF Government of Finland

LFA Logical Framework Approach

MDGs Millennium Development Goals

MFA Ministry for Foreign Affairs

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NGDO Non-Governmental Development Organization

NNGO Northern Non-Governmental Organization

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NPA New Policy Agenda

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCM Project Cycle Management

PPP Public-private-partnership

SNGO Southern Non-Governmental Organization

UM Ulkoasiainministeriö (MFA of Finland)

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

“A new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, underpinning mutual respect and mutual benefit in a shrinking world. Each priority area identified in the post-2015 agenda should be supported by dynamic partnerships (United Nations 2013, 9-10).”

The notion of partnership originally appeared in the terminology of international development cooperation in 1969 when the Commission on International Development published its report *Partners in Development,* and since that time it has had an established place in the field. Partnership has a strong position also in the United Nations' new post-2015 development agenda as we can see from the above extract. This agenda will guide the future of international development. The reason for such a strong .position is that today the field of development can be best described as an arena of intensive and extensive interaction between governments, businesses and civic institutions in the global North and global South. These partnerships implement broader development agendas of which the non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) are an important part (Fowler 2000, 3).

NGDOs have adopted the notion of partnership as a main frame of reference in their development interventions since the 1970s. Those located in the global North started to cooperate more closely with NGDOs in the global South instead of delivering services on their own. The most notable change was when the NGDOs in the global South took the main responsibility to implement activities at the local level, and at the same time NGDOs in the global North became primarily responsible for activities related to funding and organizational support (Lewis 1998, 503-504). In international, regional and national development policies and action plans as well as in particular project plans, cooperation is often described as a partnership between collaborating organizations.

The concept of partnership has been widely used and researched among development anthropologists and social scientists. The topic was studied with a particular interest at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries when the notion of partnership was becoming more popular among policymakers and development practitioners. Many previous studies have concentrated on criticizing the term because of its excessive use and undefined nature. Scholars have put a great amount of effort into examining an appropriate way of conceptualizing partnership as well as making the link between partnership theory and practice. Some are willing to admit that there are no such partnerships in a real life context than the concept suggests, whereas others prefer changing the concept to something more descriptive including concepts such authentic partnership, true partnership and trusteeship (Crewe & Harrison 1998, 188; Elliot 1987, 65; Fowler 1998, 139, 140; 2000, 3; Kontinen 2003, 131).

The study of development partnerships concentrates largely on international non-governmental organization (NGOs) and less on small-scale or even voluntary-based NGOs. However, even small-scale NGOs manage and implement development cooperation projects under the policy framework of partnership. How does this kind of cooperation work in practice? Is there an unequal power relationship between the northern and northern NGDOs as argued in many partnership theories? Small-scale NGOs have both advantages and constraints in terms of management, funding and flexibility which might be different from those of larger and often formally structured international NGOs. In order to understand how small-scale NGOs fit into the broader picture of partnership, it is important to examine in detail what kinds of relationships they call partnerships.

1.2 Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this study is to examine inter-organizational relationships among Finnish NGOs and their Indian partner organizations which have a joint development intervention in India. The study aims at gaining an understanding of the various aspects of partnership which have an effect on the formation, management and ending of the relationship. It particularly focuses on the process of partnership formation, division of labor and responsibilities, internal and external challenges as well as on issues of accountability and the role of money. The study also ponders the relational dimension of partnership, in other words whether it is between individuals or institutions, and what the effects of voluntarism are on the partnership.

The focus of this research is on small-scale voluntary development organizations in Finland which are not professionalized in development issues in contrast to state agencies, profit-seeking consultancy companies and professional non-governmental organizations. By contrast, their Indian partner organizations are professionalized and have a full-time and paid office and field staff. This study acknowledges its limitations regarding the scope of the data and, therefore, it does not aim at a comprehensive understanding of such partnerships but instead at hearing the voices of Finnish volunteers who are involved in project management activities in their respective organizations. It can be stated that the purpose of this research is to examine different aspects of partnership from the perspective of Finnish volunteer workers. The study aims at presenting their narratives, perceptions and ways they define and experience partnership and its different aspects.

I have identified four research questions which are as follows:

1) How was the partnership started between the Finnish and Indian NGOs and what were the reasons for starting it?
2) How does the partnership work in practice in terms of responsibilities and division of labor?
3) What are the major challenges encountered in the partnership and what are their possible consequences?
4) What are considered to be the main elements of the partnership?

First, I examine how the relationship between Finnish NGOs and their Indian partner NGOs started and what were the main reasons for starting the cooperation and applying for funding for the common project. I am particularly interested in the process of partnership formation and how the initiative was taken. Second, I examine the practicalities of cooperation including division of labor and responsibilities. I explain how the work has been divided among the partners and also look for reasons underlying the division of labor. Third, I examine possible challenges faced during the cooperation and their effect on the overall cooperation. Fourth, I examine certain aspects of partnership which include reliability and accountability, issues of learning, the role of finance and whether the partnership is between institutions or individuals.

1.3 Acronyms

The most common acronyms used in this study are NGO, NNGO, SNGO and NGDO. In order to locate them within the development jargon, the acronyms are briefly explained below. In addition, some of the main actors in the field of development carry acronyms that are necessary to clarify in order to know their functions in the development field.

According to the NGO Community of the NGOs associated with the United Nations (NGO 2015), "*a non-governmental organization (NGO)* is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to governments, advocate and monitor policies, and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, education, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements." An *NNGO* is an NGO based in the global North whereas an *SNGO* is an NGO located in the global South. NGDO stands for a non-governmental development organization, referring to an NGO which concentrates on development issues (NGO 2015).

USOECD (2015) defines *the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)* as "a forum where the governments of 34 democracies with market economies work with each other, as well as with more than 70 non-member economies to promote economic growth, prosperity, and sustainable development. The Organization provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and coordinate domestic and international policies (USOECD 2015)."

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is a term coined by *the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)* of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD Library (2010) defines ODA as "government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Loans and credit for military purposes are excluded. Aid may be provided bilaterally, from donor to recipient, or channeled through a multilateral development agency such as the United Nations or the World Bank. Aid includes grants, soft loans and the provision of technical assistance (OECDiLibrary 2010)."

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are "the time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions: income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion, while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability". The UN Millennium Declaration was adopted at the Millennium Summit in September of 2000, committing the nations to "a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015 (UN Millennium Project 2006)."

2 North-South Development Cooperation

2.1 Partners in Development

The word *partnership* originates from two Latin words, *pars* and *partiri*, which mean sharing something with someone (Helander & Niwagila 1996, 82). Nowadays, the term is used in many different fields without having one agreed-upon meaning. Often partnership means different things even within the same field. The Pearson Commission on International Development was set up in October 1967, following a request made by the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to study the consequences of development assistance during the past twenty years, including assessing the results, clarifying the errors and proposing the policies which would work better in the future. The end result of the commission, *Partners in Development,* published in 1969, was probably one of the first reports in which the term partnership was introduced in the field of international development. Chapter Six of the report talks about multilateral groupings which should be established and which have their own rights and obligations:

> "The formation and execution of development policies must ultimately be the responsibility of the recipient alone, but the donors have a right to be heard and to be informed of major events and decisions. This calls for a new partnership based on an informal understanding expressing the reciprocal rights and obligations of donors and recipients (Pearson 1969, 127-128)."

It took, however, several decades until the notion of partnership became popular in the field of development. In 1996, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) proposed a set of concrete development objectives in its strategy paper which were planned to be achieved through a global development partnership effort. The partnership model was seen to be one of the most positive changes proposed in the framework for development cooperation because it would not allow things to be done for developing countries and their people by external actors alone. According to the report, there is no place for paternalistic approaches but instead a true partnership is seen as a collaborative effort in which local actors gradually take the lead while external partners support their efforts to greater responsibility for their own development (OECD/DAC 1996, 13). These different yet complementary roles of partners are clearly described in the report:

> "We made a clear statement last year on our view of the roles of partners in development co-operation. Sustainable development, based on integrated strategies that incorporate key economic, social, environmental and political elements, must

> be locally owned. The role of external partners is to help strengthen capacities in developing partner countries to meet those demanding, integrated requirements for sustainable development, guided by the conditions and commitments in each country (OECD/DAC 1996, 13)."

The report acknowledges that partnerships have become more complex because of the wider scope of development cooperation. Nowadays development cooperation tackles a wide range of issues, including poverty reduction and economic growth, human and institutional capacity strengthening as well as capacity building of global problem management. Nevertheless, it is believed that a partnership approach is the way to meet these varied and often complex challenges. The report stresses that the particular elements of partnership vary considerably but they should always include three types of responsibilities in order to function properly: joint responsibilities, developing country responsibilities, external partner responsibilities (OECD/DAC 1996, 13-14).

Four years later in 2000, the notion of partnership embarked on a new level as the Millennium Declaration was adopted at the United Nations Headquarters. What followed was a series of global goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were targeted at reducing extreme poverty. These goals indicated the commitment of nations to a new global partnership which was outlined in detail in MDG 8. This goal emphasized that the development community needs to work in partnerships to achieve all of the goals set by the year 2015 (United Nations 2014). As the deadline approaches, there are an abundant number of conferences, seminars and workshops organized to illustrate the way forward. The notion of partnership seems to be at the core again, although this time its definition has been updated, as can be seen from the advisory report of the High-Level Panel appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Principles of common humanity and mutual respect are outlined in the report as the basic principles of partnership:

> "A new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, underpinning mutual respect and mutual benefit in a shrinking world. This partnership should involve governments but also include others: people living in poverty, those with disabilities, women, civil society and indigenous and local communities, traditionally marginalized groups, multilateral institutions, local and national government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy. Each priority area identified in the post-2015 agenda should be supported by dynamic partnerships… And since this partnership is built on principles of common humanity and mutual respect, it must also have a new spirit and be completely transparent (United Nations 2013, 9-10)."

When the notion of partnership first appeared in the terminology of development cooperation, it was understood to signify solidarity in humanitarian, moral, political and ideological issues between NNGOs and SNGOs, which collaborated to pursue the common cause of social change. Development researcher Alan Fowler (2000, 1-2) argues that partnership actually first referred to a new alliance between the NGDOs of the North and South which was set against the subsequently disproven modernization and trickle-down approach of that time. Trickle-down approach assumed that development with its life changing gains would trickle down from the upper societal levels to the bottom of the social hierarchy. At that time this approach was implemented in by official aid system. Instead, partnership referred to cooperation relationship in which both parties were equal to each other and the benefits did not trickle down from the North to the South (Fowler 2000, 1-2).

At that time the concept of partnership was used primarily for describing relationships between NGDOs in the North and South, and not so much between actors from different sectors including civil society, government and private business. This was due to the fact that NGDOs were considered to be marginal contributors to international development and were not counted as the official aid system which was the governments' responsibility until the 1970s. NGDOs were perceived to be out of the official aid structures. However, the use of the word slowly changed over time, and nowadays partnership is a widely used term which has been adopted by non-governmental and governmental sectors as well as by actors promoting public-private partnerships and South-South partnerships (Fowler 2000, 2-3).

2.2 The Role of NGOs in Development Cooperation

The nature of international development and aid was mainly governmental prior to the 1970s because governments were seen to be the principle engine of growth and development. NGDOs were considered as marginal contributors to development which were not embraced by the official aid system (Fowler 2000, 2). However, already at this time there were several NGDOs which were focused on poverty reduction and other development interventions. Their work was directly linked to the decisions made by governments in terms of international politics, foreign policies and policy implementation in particular. During the 1970s, things began to change and there was a growing interest in NGDOs, which according to many scholars can be seen as a response to the failure of state-led development approaches. These approaches, such as the Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and the IMF, were common during the

1970s and 1980s but often did more harm than good in improving social and economic conditions in developing countries (Lewis 1998, 502; Fowler 1998, 138).

What followed was a new approach which is better known by the name of New Policy Agenda (NPA). This change in policies is considered to be one of the main reasons for the growing interest in NGDOs (Lewis 1998, 502; Fowler 1998, 138). There are also other historical and political reasons in addition to governments' failure why the NPA took place at that time. For instance, northern interest in a market-based world order indicated that governments would have less responsibilities, businesses would be freed from restrictions, and citizens and their organizations would have more responsibility. More official aid was directed to the use of the NGDOs which made it possible for them to expand their human resources and development activities. In addition, NGDOs themselves became active in the field because previously their development work had suffered from vague policies and corrupted national governments. Now the NGDO pressure on governments started growing (Fowler 2000, 2).

In the past, it was common that NNGOs working in developing countries implemented their own development programmes and projects. For example, they ran health clinics in local communities or worked with small farmers to improve agricultural productivity by sending expatriate staff to run the programmes. The approach changed from this sort of implementation of programmes to partnership in the 1970s and 1980s when NNGOs started to cooperate more closely with SNGOs. The most notable change was that SNGOs started implementing activities on a local level whereas NNGOs were responsible for funding and organizational support (Lewis 1998, 503-504). Today the field of development can be best described as an arena of intensive and extensive interaction between governments, business and civic institutions in the North and South around development agendas. NGDOs are one part of the bigger development picture (Fowler 2000, 3).

Today development NGOs are an extremely diverse and heterogeneous group of organizations which vary from large, formal, professional and often highly bureaucratic agencies with multi-million dollar budgets to small, informal, voluntary-based groups with a handful of people, no clear organizational structure and inadequate funds. They come from a number of different ideological backgrounds including religious, political and other ideologies. They may work on a local, national or global level. Also the activities in which they are engaged range from self-help, assistance to members, and the provision of services to particular section of the wider community or campaigning work. NGOs may have chosen to work in one specific sector such as health, education or agriculture or they may be concerned with wider human rights, gender or environmental issues (Lewis 1998, 502-503).

2.3 The Characteristics of the Finnish NGO Sector

Finnish NGDOs have a long history of development cooperation with so-called developing countries and their respective civil society actors although there has been very little academic research carried out on Finnish NGDOs (Kontinen 2007, 62). It is, however, well-known that different kinds of development projects have been implemented in one form or another for more than 140 years. In the 19th century, most of the projects were implemented by Finnish churches under the label of missionary work. The history of Finnish NGDOs involved in development work can be considered relatively significant when compared to the bilateral or multilateral development cooperation implemented by the Government of Finland (GoF) which did not take place until 1965. Nine years later, in 1974, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) first started providing financial support for Finnish NGDOs for their development cooperation projects (Kepa 2011, 2; Williams 2008, 31). The new funding mechanism was greatly lobbied by the missionary organizations and the solidarity-based movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Salonen & Rekola 2005, 9).

Since the beginning of the new funding mechanism, the number of Finnish NGDOs and the funds allocated for their work have increased enormously. In 1983, the MFA of Finland supported 59 projects whereas in 2003 the number or supported projects was 450, implemented by 151 organizations (Salonen & Rekola 2005, 8). Today, there are about 300 Finnish NGDOs which work in over a hundred developing countries. The total annual support by the MFA of Finland was 103 million euros in 2012 (Ulkoasiainministeriö 2014). Currently there are three major funding mechanisms through which the Government of Finland provides funding for civil society actors: the NGO Partnership Scheme, project-based funding and funding provided for three NGO foundations; the Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations (Ulkoasiainministeriö 2015; Williams 2008, 31).

Finnish NGDOs are often quite different from their international counterparts due to the historical context and tradition of voluntarism in Finnish society. This tradition has also had an effect on the large number of voluntary-based NGDOs engaged in international development. Yeung (2004) argues that diverse kinds of voluntarism have been integral to Finnish societal life. There are a few traditions which have shaped the practices of voluntarism in the Finnish context. Firstly, in the 19th century, voluntary actions concentrated on social work and were often implemented in the name of Christian charity and particularly among middle and upper class women. Secondly, in the late 19th century, the emergence of civil movements such as co-operatives, women's, temperance and youth movement emerged due to the rising nationalism which provided a new basis for voluntarism. Thirdly, voluntary humanitarian action took place after the two World Wars, and then different types of volunteer activities took place due to the economic recession in 1970s and 1990s. The Finnish words *talkoot* and *talkooperinne* refer to such type of voluntarism (Kontinen 2007, 61; Yeung 2004).

Finland is committed to the development cooperation strategy of the OECD, which was adopted in 1996 and states that cooperation between industrial and developing countries is based on a partnership. According to this strategy, the roles and responsibilities of partners are clearly defined. The developing countries themselves are responsible for their own development and the cooperation process, including project design, implementation and evaluation, and as a partner, Finland plays a secondary role (MFA of Finland 2013). In this regard, those Finnish NGOs which apply and receive funding from the MFA of Finland agree with these guidelines and strategies of partnership as a development cooperation approach, and put them into practice through their development projects and other forms of cooperation.

Funding the Finnish NGDOs and their development projects is one of the main foci of the Finnish Development Policy adopted in 2012. The role of the NGO development cooperation is to complement the public bilateral and multilateral development cooperation and also the development cooperation of the EU. NGDOs are mainly supported because of their direct contacts with civil society actors and their access to the most vulnerable groups. According to the MFA of Finland, "the NGO development cooperation aims to promote the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to strengthen developing countries' own civil societies". These organizations take part in development cooperation activities either by implementing projects or by spreading information about development policy and other related issues (Ulkoasiainministeriö 2014).

The size of the Finnish NGDOs varies from small and medium to large from which the latter are often partner organizations with the MFA of Finland and, therefore, receive their funding through the NGO Partnership Scheme which is considered more flexible in many ways (Ulkoasiainministeriö 2014). As Finland has been called the promised land of associations with more than 123 000 registered associations in 2005, it is understandable that many NGDOs are small in scale (Kontinen 2007, 64). The Development Cooperation Service Center (Kepa) is an umbrella organization for Finnish civil society organizations (CSOs) who work with development cooperation or are otherwise interested in global affairs. It has created a methodological tool known as the Compass for Partnership. It is a kind of partnership check-list developed to support member organizations and their Southern partners in order to strengthen the North-South cooperation and to develop true partnership (Kepa 2012).

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland has published a policy paper known as Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy in which partnership between Finnish actors and actors in the developing country is described. The paper refers to partnership by stating that because civil society is country-bound and culture-bound, it poses challenges to partnership between Finnish actors and actors in developing countries. In this sense, Finnish actors should adapt their project to be part of the society's local operating environment and its specific requirements. The importance of local ownership and participation open to all are seen as preconditions for creating this sort of environment and partnership and also for granting government support (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2010, 13).

2.4 Project Approach and Project Cycle Management

NGO development cooperation comprises various approaches and models. One of the most common approaches is known as a project approach which is widely used among Finnish NGOs implementing projects funded by the MFA of Finland. The term project cycle is invented to describe the sequence in which the projects are planned and implemented. The project cycle is a detailed model of the lifespan of a development intervention, starting with its identification, going through the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases, and ending with the lessons learned. Although variations to the standard model are common, the project cycle is a backbone used by the various donors in development cooperation. The division of a development project into distinct phases helps to define the roles of various parties. It helps to make sure that the decisions are based on relevant and adequate information. The project cycle clarifies the role played by meetings and documentation and makes them more useful (MFA of Finland 2013; EC 1999, 6).

The project cycle has generally six phases: Programming, Identification, Formulation, Financing, Implementation and Evaluation. During the *Programming Phase*, problems, constraints and opportunities which development cooperation could address are identified at the national and sectorial level. Based on this identification, the main objectives and priorities are chosen and strategies are formulated. Then it is time for the *Identification Phase* during which ideas for projects and other development actions are identified by consulting with the intended beneficiaries and analyzing problems faced by them. The next phase, which is known as the *Formulation Phase,* is for developing project ideas into operational project plans. All relevant stakeholders participate in the detailed specification of the project idea which is assessed for its feasibility and sustainability. On the basis of this assessment, a decision is made about whether to draw up a formal project proposal and seek funding for the project (EC 1999, 6-7).

During the *Financing Phase*, funding agencies examine project proposals and take a decision on whether or not to fund the project. If the proposal is accepted, the funding agency and partner organization agree with the modalities of implementation and formalize it in a legal document. The next phase is the *Implementation Phase* in which the project is mobilized and executed in cooperation with beneficiaries and stakeholders. In order to decide whether the project is making necessary progress towards its objectives, actual progress of the project is assessed against the project plan. This is done by the project management team which determines whether some of the project objectives, activities or indicators need to be re-directed to bring the project back on track. It is natural that changes occur since the project formulation phase, and therefore it is important to react accordingly. During the final *Evaluation Phase,* the funding agency and partner organization assess the project in order to identify the main achievements and lessons learned. These findings are used to improve the design of projects or programmes in the future (EC 1999, 7-8).

Project Cycle Management (PCM) is a term used to describe “the management activities and decision-making procedures used during the life-cycle of a project including key tasks, roles and responsibilities, key documents and decision options”. According to the guidelines by the European Commission (EC 2004, 17), “PCM helps to ensure that projects are supportive of overarching policy objectives of the EC and of development partners; projects are relevant to an agreed strategy and to the real problems of target groups/beneficiaries; projects are feasible, meaning that objectives can be realistically achieved within the constraints of the operating environment and capabilities of the implementing agencies; and benefits generated by projects are likely to be sustainable”. There are several management tools, such as Logical Framework Analysis (LFA), SWOT analysis, Problem Tree and Objective Tree, which can be used in different phases of the cycle to help the project management and collaboration between partner organizations.

The project approach defines the framework and guidelines for the partnership between NNGO and SNGO. The purpose of the project cycle is to make sure that decisions are made by the stakeholders and, moreover, relevant and sufficient information is a base for these decisions. Project preparation takes place in a social and political context, where expectations are raised and often conflicting demands and aspirations are reconciled (EC 1999, 8). However, the project model has been criticized in many ways. For example, some argues that the management of project is actually more important than the project itself. The project cycle has also been claimed to be not as flexible as real life situations would demand it to be. In this regard, it is important to update project plans, objectives, activities and indicators often enough to guarantee their consistency with the situation in the project field (Kepa 2011, 2).

3 Ethnographic Approach to Development

3.1 Theories of Development

The anthropology of development starts by questioning the very notion of development by arguing that if we want to understand development, we need to examine its origins and how it has been defined historically. In his inaugural speech as president of the United States, Harry Truman initiated a new era in the understanding and management of world affairs, particularly those concerning the less economically accomplished countries of the world. In this vision, capital, science and technology would make the massive revolution towards modernization possible. This would happen by bringing about the conditions necessary to replicate the world over the features that characterized the so-called advanced societies of the time. Within a few years, the vision was universally embraced by those in power who then began to design concrete policies and measures for the economic development of countries which were perceived to be underdeveloped. The overall aim was a total restructuring of these societies in the pursuit of material prosperity and economic progress (Escobar 1995, 4). Anthropologists Emma Crewe and Richard Axelby (2013, 4) argue that at that time development was considered easy and simple; something to be achieved simply by the export of money, technology and expertise from the developed to the developing world.

Anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2001, 497-498) notes that in the early post-World War II period development was understood as a process for paving the way for the most Asian, African and Latin American countries to replicate the conditions that were believed to characterize the more economically advanced nations of the world. These conditions included industrialization, high degrees of urbanization and education, technification of agriculture, as well as widespread adoption of the values and principles of modernity, including particular forms of order, rationality and individual orientation. Defined in this way, development indicates the simultaneous recognition and negation of difference; Third World subjects are recognized as different, whereas development is the mechanism through which that difference is to be eliminated. The recognition and denial of difference is endlessly repeated in each project or strategy which does not only reflect the failure of development to fulfil its promise but it is also an essential feature of the development enterprise (Escobar 2001, 497-498).

Also Crewe and Axelby (2013, 6) argue that after the World War II, development was perceived to be a straightforward route leading forward to modernization. In this regard, when viewing the developed world’s past as the developing world’s present, it was easy to conclude that the developed world's present is the developing world's future. To modernization theorists, development could be achieved by mimicking the historical experience of the industrial states of Europe and North America. One of the means was large-scale and capital-intensive infrastructure by which development was to be achieved. Centralised states invested heavily in projects of road-building, the provision of irrigation and the promotion of heavy industry. Crewe and Axelby (2013, 6) argue that despite broad consensus on the fundamental desirability of development, agreement on the actual direction and content of the change was much less clear. The early prioritisation of industrialisation and economic growth shifted towards a focus on poverty reduction by the 1970s. At that time, the primacy of the state as the provider of development was replaced by an emphasis on the market as the driver of progress (Crewe & Axelby 2013, 7).

If the colonial encounter determined the power structure in which classic anthropology took shape, the development encounter has similarly provided the overall context for contemporary anthropology. In recent years, the majority of anthropologists have taken it for granted that development is a problematic and often offensive concept. Development anthropologists, however, argue that that a transformation in development thinking took place in the mid-1970s, bringing to the core the consideration of social and cultural factors in development activities. This new approach achieved support as the poor results of top-down, technology and capital-intensive interventions became widely recognized. Experts began to accept that the poor themselves, in particular the rural poor, had to participate actively in the programmes if these were to have a reasonable level of success. Projects had to be socially relevant and culturally appropriate, for which they had to involve the direct beneficiaries from the beginning (Escobar 2001, 499).

Crewe and Axelby (2013, 8-12) argue that development has also been viewed through the lenses of control and empowerment. As opposed to modernisation theory, which assumed that there would be a straightforward linear progression towards development, dependency theory has focused on the issue of control by recognizing development and underdevelopment as being different sides of the same coin. The countries of the global South have been actively underdeveloped through deeper involvement in an unequal and exploitative global economic system. Global historical processes such as colonialism and capitalist expansion were perceived to have negative effects on the underdeveloped world. Dependence theory was rooted in the belief that development as conventionally practiced was no more than an exercise in power. Theorists perceived that through development, powerful international actors were able to impose their interests, values and beliefs onto the people of the developing world. For example, the feminists and environmentalists have focused on the concept of control (Crewe & Axelby 2013, 8-9).

The notion of empowerment gained popularity in the field of development when many critics noticed the failure of the top-down nature of development processes. The point of empowerment is to try to avoid the dominance of development by outsiders as well as by elites within intended beneficiary communities by using techniques to encourage participation by all community members. Development researcher Robert Chambers has become one of the most famous proponents of bottom-up participatory development. He drew attention to the notions of bias and argued in favour of reversals within relationships, and thus initiated what has become a huge industry promoting participation (Crewe&Axelby 2013, 10). His initial method, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), is defined by him as follows:

> "… a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, and to act (Chambers 1983, 953)."

Development agencies promoting empowerment have been criticized for not promoting it in an open-ended way, but instead managing participation within highly constrained limits to ensure that their own goals are met (Crewe & Axelby 2013, 11). For instance, anthropologist Maia Green (2000, 68) argues that despite the claims of empowerment rhetoric, poor people lacking the capacity to bring about social transformation themselves can only participate in development through the institutional structures of development agencies. It has also been argued that the idea of participatory events empowering people is naïve because most development projects simply do not command enough power to transform radically the structural inequalities that reproduce poverty. Empowerment can only genuinely challenge power structures if it is explicitly political (Williams 2004, 98). According to sociologist Sarah White (1996, 6), sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power. Genuine empowerment can be facilitated but not controlled by outsiders (White, 1996, 6).

When development is thought in terms of discourse, it is possible to maintain the focus on domination and to explore the conditions of possibility which are attached to development discourse. A close analysis of the use of language, structures, symbols and rituals reveals the ways in which discourses serve the interests of powerful actors. Words and concepts shape ideas, policies and practices. Applied to the development world, the analysis of discourse gave rise to post-development theory which emerged out of the criticism of development projects, the institutional arrangements that produced them and the theories that justified them. This is the most recent critique of development which provides a questioning of the ethnocentric assumptions of mainstream development including neoliberal economics, modernisation and de-politicisation (Crewe & Axelby 2013, 12–13, 15).

According to Crewe and Axelby (2013, 4), development has become an industry which has grown up around efforts to engineer social change and eradicate poverty. People working in the development industry use the word development in different ways and either understand or misunderstand each other in the context of its use. Development researchers Ashis Nandy and Shiv Visvanathan (1990, 145) recognize development as both as an idea and a community:

> "The idea of development has served many purposes in our times. It has served as a reason of state, as a legitimizer of a regimes, as part of the vision of a good society, and, above all, as a shorthand expression for the needs of the poor. It has produced a new expertise and created a new development, new community of scholars, policy-makers, development journalist, readers of development news, development managers, and activists – who together can be said to constitute the development community (Nandy & Visvanathan 1990, 145)."

Nowadays many scholars agree that the term development was initially used to refer to processes of social and economic change. This kind of development as a process that is natural and inevitable has been traced, for example, by development researchers Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton (1996; viii-ix). However, Crewe and Axelby (2013, 3) argue that, more than that, development refers to the purposeful pursuit of economic, social and political goals through planned intervention. According to them, development interventions are conscious acts carried out through projects, policies and programmes by governmental and non-governmental actors. However, the contemporary reality in a globalized world seems to be that all planned changes involve both indigenous and expatriate stakeholders and, therefore, it is often difficult to distinguish national development from international aid. That is why the boundaries between notions of development as natural process and development as planned intervention are not straightforward (Crewe&Axelby 2013, 3).

To see development as a historically produced discourse entails an examination of why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped. How to develop became a fundamental challenge for them. As Western experts and politicians started to see certain conditions in Asia, Africa and Latin America as problematic, mostly what was perceived as poverty and backwardness, a new domain of thought and experience, namely development, came into being. This resulted in a new strategy for dealing with the assumed problems. Development had achieved the status of a certainty in any social context and this could not have been questioned despite the fact that most people's conditions did not actually improve (Escobar 1995, 5-6). Escobar (1995, 4) argues that what was perceived to be a dream of global development gradually turned into a nightmare. Instead of the abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development actually produced its opposite, underdevelopment, impoverishment, exploitation and oppression. Escobar points out that examples such as the Sahelian famine, increasing poverty, malnutrition and violence are signs of the failure of development industry (Escobar 1995, 4).

3.2 Partnership as a Contested Concept

Also partnership is a contested and much debated concept because it has been used to describe all sorts of relationships between all sorts of development agencies. There is no clear understanding of the overall concept nor a commonly agreed definition. It has been considered as an ideal which promises a lot but fails to meet expectations in practice (Mancusco Brehm 2004, 1). According to Fowler (1998, 141), the concept of partnership was intended to mean equality in methods of working and mutuality in respect for identity, position and role. In this regard, partnership would be based on common goals, a shared interpretation of the causes of poverty and marginalization, agreed principles with people-centered ways of combating the structural nature of these and other social ills, a mutuality in the contribution NGDOs could make in working for a more equitable, just sustainable world, and respect for the autonomy of each organization.

Development researcher Sarah Lister (2000, 3) has also listed a number of elements to define partnership. Successful partnership includes mutual trust, complementary strengths, reciprocal accountability, joint decision-making and a two way exchange of information. It includes clearly articulated goals, equitable distribution of costs and benefits, performance indicators and mechanisms to measure and monitor performance as well as clear delineation of responsibilities and a process for adjudicating disputes. Partners should have shared perceptions and a notion of mutuality with give-and-take. In addition, it is based on mutual support, constructive advocacy, and transparency with regard to financial matters, long-term commitment to working together and recognition of other partnerships (Lister 2000, 3).

Despite its good intentions, Fowler (1998, 139, 140; 2000, 3) argues that over the past decades partnership has generally been a disappointing story because everybody wanted to be a partner with everyone else on everything and everywhere. He points out that despite much rhetoric, partnerships are more illusion than reality. The term has been used and abused to cover all sorts of relationships between all sorts of development agencies. Also Emma Crewe and Elisabeth Harrison (1998, 188) state that "a yawning chasm remains between the stated goals of development and its practices and outcomes. Ambitious aims of partnership... often appear disappointingly empty". It is also argued by Elliott (1987, 65) that genuine partnership is impossible:

> "… this is a dialogue of the unequal, and however many claims are made for transparency or mutuality, the reality is – and is seen to be – that the donor can do to the recipient what the recipient cannot do to the donor. There is an asymmetry of power that no amount of well-intentioned dialogue can remove (Elliott 1987, 65)."

Another common critique is that the concept of partnership is used as a political slogan with hidden motives. These hidden motives could include, for example, the lowering of the cost of development aid or the restoration of accountability which might have once been lost in order to legitimate continued presence when facing increasing criticism. In other words, the developers never intended to create a more equal relationship and this is why partnerships fail to materialize in practice (Eriksson Baaz 2005, 7). In addition, development researcher Maria Eriksson Baaz (2005, 7) points out that the supposed lack of sustainability in partnerships could be attributed to partners' organizational and institutional capacity and aid dependence.

Eriksson Baaz (2005, 2-3, 6-7) discusses the issue of identity which she sees to be important in order to understand how development aid is planned and negotiated. She talks about the issue of identity in relation to partnerships. Eriksson Baaz argues that the need to create a more equal relationship between development partners has been a recurrent issue in the field of development for decades. It has been articulated through various concepts such as participation, empowerment and ownership. Today the concept of partnership is widely used to refer to the same relationship between donors and receivers. However, Eriksson Baaz (2005, 6-7) adds that an equal relationship has proven to be difficult to achieve in practice, which seems to be the case also when calling the relationship a partnership. Eriksson Baaz (2005, 6-7) sees partnership as harbouring different conflicts and tensions which often materialize through an established identity of oneself and the other. These identities are often portrayed the way that development actors see themselves as superior, proactive and reliable whereas the partner is perceived to be inferior, passive and unreliable. These identities create an unbalanced starting point to partnership which then can create conflicts and tensions between partners (Eriksson Baaz 2005, 6-7).

Although anthropologist Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2005, 138) mainly concentrates on the interaction between the so-called developer and developing community in the field, his insights can be applied to interaction in organizational partnerships. He takes as the ideal type of development a development project, which is currently the most widespread type of development model. Olivier de Sardan (2005, 137) notes that a development action inevitably requires interaction between social actors belonging to different worlds. He argues that that is not a matter of distinct personal choice, it is also a reflection of dissimilar interests and different norms of evaluation. The behavior of different actors is regulated by a variety of logics. Olivier de Sardan (2005, 147) introduces this idea of logic to describe a certain level of coherence in interaction which allows to explain similar type of behavior. In reality, despite the existence of an infinite variety of individual actions and reactions, the number of behavioral patterns is limited, as he argues.

For example, the logic of aid-seeking refers to making the most of external aid. Olivier de Sardan argues that it is not surprising that people attempt to gain as much as possible from the financial and material benefits that a project provides. In return, they want to give as little as possible. As an example, a local development agent uses the logic of aid-seeking when he or she lays personal claim to the bicycle provided by the project that employs him or her (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 147). Olivier de Sardan (2005, 141) notes that another level of coherence concerns the role of financiers and donors. Their influence is manifested indirectly in the choice of development interventions and the projects approved in the end. The funder also claims the right to examine finances and accountability because their norms of evaluation require that (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 141).

At the same time, researcher Alnoor Ebrahim (2003, 17-19) refers to a conceptual tool of capital, which was initially introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, a sociologist and anthropologist, whose work primarily concerns the dynamics of power in a society. The concept refers to the capacity to exercise control, and as such, it is a form of power. Capital can take variety of forms and can include material things or money (economic capital), non-material attributes such as status and authority (symbolic capital), and culturally valued tastes and preferences including art, education and language (cultural capital). In social relationships, capital is exchanged between individuals, groups and social classes. The relation of capital to power is most obvious in the case of economic capital which determines relations of economic dependence, but for Ebrahim the most powerful form of capital is symbolic. This is where an expert enters the picture. The expert is an individual or group which is socially sanctioned to determine what is wrong or right in order to create the official version of the social world. Symbolic capital is an important form of power because of its association with knowledge production and expertise (Ebrahim 2003, 17-19).

In addition, Ebrahim (2003, 15) discusses how the demands of donors constrain NGO action. These demands can be conceptualized as being located within an institutional context, that is, as being a part of a structure within which NGOs are embedded. The flow of financial resources from funders to NGOs is a pivotal part of their relationship but reputation, prestige and flows of information are equally crucial elements of the exchange. The generation and use of information is particularly important, given the centrality of reporting and monitoring systems to NGO-funder relations. Struggles between organizations occur over these different forms of economic, cultural and symbolic capital, with organizational members engaging in strategies to secure more capital and thus more influence over the actions of others. These strategic behaviours are not always deliberate. In other words, the relationships are structured. These structures are established through practice, such as through routines of communication and routines of capital exchange. Through these practices the structures which guide these relationships are re-produced (Ebrahim 2003, 18).

3.3 Alternatives to Partnership Policies

Social anthropologist David Mosse (2005, 2) asks an interesting question: what if development practices were not driven by policy? What if, instead of policy producing practice, practices were to produce policy? Western agencies and their policy advisers put enormous effort into re-framing development, discarding the signs of a colonial past or present-day commercial self-interests, finding new foci and political legitimacy in the international goal of reducing global poverty, and in the language of partnership and participation, among others. Despite the energy devoted to generating the right policy models, little attention is given to the relationship between these models and the practices and events that they are expected to generate or legitimize in particular contexts. At best, the relationship between policy and practice is understood in terms of an unintended ‘gap’ between theory and practice, reduced by better policy more effectively implemented (Mosse 2005, 1-2).

Understanding the relationship between policy discourse and practices in the field has been hampered by the dominance of two opposing views on development policy. These can be summarized as follows: on the one hand, there is an instrumental view of policy as rational problem solving – directly shaping the way in which development is done. The usual concern is how to define the problem and realize the programme designs in practice. In recent years, the international development shift away from narrow technology led micro-managed projects to wider programme goals (Mosse 2005, 3).

On the other hand, there is a critical view that sees policy as a rationalizing technical discourse concealing hidden purposes of bureaucratic power or dominance, which is the true political intent of development. This critical perspective takes the failure of development interventions as self-evident. Here there is no surprise that management models which isolate interventions from the historical and social and political realities of the global South do not achieve their stated ends (Mosse 2005, 4). However, Mosse (2005, 4) argues that neither of these views does justice to the complexity of policy making and its relationship to project practice.

There are different opinions whether to replace the concept of partnership or to understand it better. Fowler (2000, 8) offers two alternatives: cooperation and solidarity. Cooperation refers to the old way of looking at aid and its benefits are that there are many ways of cooperation and it always depends of the issues and interests at hand as well as the capacity and power of actors involved. Then, in Fowler’s words, solidarity refers to “a recognition of the inevitability of the need for mutual understanding, empathy and shared action in an increasingly interdependent and complicated world”. The term is more emotional and politically loaded than cooperation (Fowler 2000, 8).

On the other hand, economist Kamal Malhotra (2000, 655) talks about genuine partnership, which could be a basis for future relationships between NGDOs in the North and South. He claims that “moving away beyond relations premised on aid should enhance the possibilities of building a much stronger global movement for social justice and poverty eradication”. Genuine partnership would, therefore, be possible if there were a paradigm shift away from the current resources transfer. Malhotra (2010, 658) argues that particularly in the case of small NNGOs without much financial capital, power relationship between them and their Southern counterparts has been more equal. In these cases, partnership is based on non-funding roles such as policy dialogue and advocacy which have then built up interesting political North-South exchange and advocacy partnership relationships.

Development researcher Tiina Kontinen has studied the applicability of two notions, partnership and trusteeship, to describe the relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs in management on development cooperation projects. Based on her case study of Finnish NGO development cooperation in Tanzania, she argues that partnership should be replaced by trusteeship because it is more appropriate and more suitable to describe the real nature of the relationship between Finnish and Tanzanian NGOs (Kontinen 2003, 131). There have been other attempts to relate concepts for example from organization theory to the study of NGOs but they have not been as dominant as functional approaches which can be translated into practical guidelines. In addition, in the analysis of inter-institutional relationships, many approaches have frequently ignored the role of individuals (Lister 2000, 1-2).

Some argue that it is not necessarily the concept of partnership which is inappropriate to describe the relationship between NNGOs and SNGOs but it is the concept of organizational partnership which does not fit in the picture. Development researcher David L. Brown (1996) has pointed out that what we mean by partnership is actually based on strong personal relationships. Brown and Jane Covey (1989) talk about social change organizations which, in their opinion, are often loosely organized and therefore depend much on personal relationships. From a positive point of view, this provides a higher amount of flexibility, but on the downside, organizations are relatively vulnerable to changes in leadership. Also Sarah Lister (2000, 1-2) questions whether the current emphasis on organizational partnership is useful or whether, in practice and in theory, greater recognition should be given to the importance of relationships between individuals.

4 Research Design

4.1 Methodology

This is a qualitative study aimed at examining, understanding and describing the social and cultural phenomenon of development partnership. Qualitative research covers a wide range of approaches and methods which all have in common that they intend to describe human experience in a real-life context by exploring issues holistically and answering questions of specific interest (Hirsjärvi et al 2009, 161-162). Out of these distinct qualitative approaches and methods, I have chosen an ethnographic approach. According to Finnish anthropologist Anna Rastas (2010, 64-65), ethnography refers to two things; a research method and a research outcome. The latter is a description of a certain community, culture or phenomenon which is gained by a research project based on the method of ethnography. It can be said that ethnography is a unique way of producing information and knowledge in which knowledge is commonly produced by combining diverse methods. These methods could include being present in the community, participant observation, interviews, other methods of data collection and, furthermore, the dialogue between data and theory (Rastas 2010, 64-65).

This research can be considered as big ethnography as conceptualized by John Brewer, an English sociologist who defines what ethnography is in social science. Brewer (2000, 17) explains that big ethnography refers to qualitative research as a whole, and virtually describes any approach as ethnographic as long as it does not use surveys as the means of data collection. In this regard, ethnography is really a perspective on research, rather than a way of doing it. In comparison, he talks about little ethnography which is a particular way of doing qualitative research, often understood as field research and fieldwork. This involves the study of real-life situations (Brewer 2000, 17). Brewer (2000, 11) emphasizes in his definition of ethnography that it is a style of research which is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given setting, and its approach, which involves close association with informants, and often participation in, this setting. In order to be familiar with the setting, ethnographers observe behavior, work closely with informants and combine several methods of data collection (Brewer 2000, 11).

Ethnography is not only a method stressing fieldwork but instead it is a methodological approach in which the precondition for producing new knowledge is the dialogue between informants and researchers as well as the dialogue between interpretations made from data collected through a critical perspective and contextualization of the data within multiple frames of reference such as social, cultural, political, economic and historical (Rastas 2010, 64-65). However, without dispute, the ‘field’ is one of the main concepts in ethnographic research. The definition of field is rather flexible because it can be seen as a geographical place as in a traditional anthropology or then it can be a socially constructed place, as in contemporary research (Huttunen 2010, 39). In this research, the field is a socially constructed place in which NNGOs and SNGOs collaborate in terms of their common development projects and their shared objectives. The field is not a particular physical or geographical place, nor even a certain organization and its organizational structure or working environment; instead it is a place where partnership happens and which enables the collaboration between organizations situated in different continents. The field can be defined as the partnership between these organizations.

Although ethnographers have traditionally been interested in subcultures, researching organizations, working environments and even business companies has gained popularity in recent years. Due to the fact that ethnography offers a holistic approach, it has been able to examine diverse voices from different actors and, therefore, the outcome of the research has been beneficial for the target group or institution. In addition, ethnographic research has been able to contribute to the development of organizations by combining development projects or plans of action within its research focus (Rastas 2010, 66-67). This argument also supports the idea that ethnographic research can study organizational relations, and the field can be a socially constructed place shared by partner organizations. However, the present study does not represent applied research but instead basic research and therefore its results are not used for organizational development within any particular organization.

Interviews have always played a central role in ethnographic research. Interviewing is considered to be a process in which interviewer and interviewee are both involved in developing understanding and constructing their common knowledge of the social world. Sociologists Holstein & Gubrium (1995, 4) argue that both parties need to be active: “Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Each is involved in meaning-making work. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter.” In this sense, it is very important for the interviewer to create a good relationship with the informant who often includes an empathic attitude on the part of the interviewer, creating a common ground for the discussion and easier questions to start the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 107; Rubin & Rubin 2005, 92).

The line between informal conversation and planned research interviews is often thin, particularly when interviews are ethnographic in nature. The main difference, however, is that interviewing aims at collecting information and, therefore, its function is to have a sense of direction, whereas the function of a conversation can simply be associating with others. In this regard, ethnographic interviews can be described as a conversation with a purpose which has been set by the researcher prior to the interview situation. Due to this function, interviews are led by the researcher on his/her terms and conditions, although interview situations are often unstructured and close to a naturally occurring conversation. However, this does not mean that ethnographers do not have any topics or wishes that they would like to explore but, in fact, the conversation is often guided by some questions which the ethnographer has in mind (Davies 2008, 103; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1993, 25; Huttunen 2010, 41).

Sociologist Hayley Davies (2008, 106) notes that semi-structured interviews have recently become very popular among ethnographers, and many researchers combine them with participant observation which then makes the relationship between ethnographer and informants go beyond the particular interview. Davies continues by arguing that even at a minimum, semi-structured interviewing requires attention to the interview context and the relationship with informants beyond what is simply said (Davies 2008, 106). In my study, the primary data was collected by semi-structured ethnographic interviews but in order to fully understand the phenomenon from the chosen perspective, the primary data is complemented by secondary data including qualitative documents such as official project plans, monitoring trip journals and field notes. However, the importance of interviews is stressed when analyzing and presenting the data.

4.2 Empirical Data and its Collection

As mentioned previously, this research combines primary and secondary empirical data in order to arrive at an understanding of the inter-organizational partnership between NNGOs and SNGOs. The primary data consists of five ethnographic semi-structured interviews of six informants. The secondary data, complementing the primary data, comprises qualitative documents including official project plans, journals from monitoring trips and a set of researcher's field notes from two monitoring trips.

To collect my primary data, I started the interview process by reading previous research and other literature on the topic and then outlining a number of themes which I found interesting and relevant to cover. Under each theme I sketched a set of questions which formed the backbone of the interview, but these were not followed slavishly during the interview. I would say that the semi-structured questionnaire gave more of a sense of direction to the interview situation and reminded me as a researcher of the general research questions I wished to be covered during the interview. A somewhat similar structure was used for each interview but depending on the informant and her position in the NGO, I emphasized certain questions which may have then played a minor role in some other interviews. I was relatively flexible when conducting the interviews in order to find the field of expertise of each informant and thus reveal their distinct yet complementary knowledge. The semi-structured interview technique was suitable for the purpose of this research because it ensured that a certain amount of factual information was covered whereas there was still enough space for an open discussion.

It is essential that the question format elicits what the researcher intends. Therefore, the researcher needs to be careful in forming questions and in some cases should conduct pilot interviews (Brewer 2000, 64). I paid a lot of attention to the questions by researching the topic and its theoretical background, as well as examining previous research which helped me form the set of initial questions. I did not conduct pilot interviews but I did consult a previous coworker who had been working as a project coordinator and who had some experience of and was also interested in it. After conducting interviews, I had a feeling that there were no ambiguous questions involved which would have been misinterpreted by the informants. Informants were encouraged to return to topics which were discussed previously. I also wanted to keep the responses open-ended and not tied to my own preconceived notions.

The primary data collection for the research was carried out in Finland between October 2014 and January 2015. Five out of six interviews were conducted face to face in two different cities where the headquarters of the Finnish organizations were located. One of the interviews was carried out by phone. The length of the interviews varied from approximately 40 to 86 minutes. The duration of the interviews caused a bit of fatigue for some informants which then may have produced slightly shorter answers towards the end of the interview. The scope of the research is sufficient although not broad when considering the requirements of a Master’s thesis. The small size of the empirical data is compensated for by the depth and richness of the data and its analysis, as all of the interviews are lengthy and informative, and the empirical data is complemented by qualitative documents.

When selecting possible informants, the purpose sampling method was used. This method is often used in a qualitative research, and is based on the idea of purposefully selecting individuals who will best help the researcher answer the research questions (Silverman 2009, 178). I started the sampling process by mapping out suitable organizations through my personal work and volunteer contacts. I successfully mapped out two organizations which worked voluntarily and implemented development interventions in the same state in Northern India. I decided to focus on two organizations and their partnerships with Indian NGOs in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of these specific partnerships and at the same time a broader understanding of variations in partnerships than what would be obtained just by focusing on one organization.

One of the organizations was a large organization which promotes its members' interests through lobbying activities and in which development cooperation is a small part of the overall operational functions. The organizational structure includes a board of executives, a council of representatives, secretaries and sub-committees from which the Subcommittee for Development Cooperation and particularly two persons appointed by the board of executives are responsible for development interventions. Also the Secretary for International Affairs and one person from the financial office take part in project management according to their own expertise. The organization has a long history of implementing development cooperation projects, and the current partnership was established in 2010 after ending another partnership in the same country context. The current partnership was formed with a professional Indian NGO which had functioned since the 1970s and had had previous foreign funders and development projects. The joint project is in the field of community development and women's empowerment. The ongoing project is an extension of the first phase, and currently the third and last phase is under planning.

The other organization is an expert organization which focuses on development cooperation and gender issues. The organization was established in the 1980s and its membership as well as its budget is small. The organization comprises a board and other active members. One of the board members is also the project coordinator, and has the main responsibility for management. The organization is run by volunteers, but its level of professional competence is high. All members have broad experience in development cooperation. The organization has had several development interventions in the past and the partnership under this research was sustained between 2011 and 2013. The Indian partner organization was established in 2007 and it functions professionally at the local, regional and international level. The joint project was a small-scale development project funded by the MFA of Finland aimed at training women in local leadership in India. The partnership ended after the first phase of the intervention.

After mapping out suitable organizations, I contacted their current volunteers in order to ask whether they would be interested in taking part in the research. I received a positive response from representatives of both organizations and within a few weeks conducted the first interviews. After the initial interviews were carried out, it became obvious that it would be necessary to interview former volunteers from both organizations in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the different phases of partnership. Through current informants I was able to contact former volunteers and agree on an interview with them on short notice. No one declined the request. Although the group of informants was rather homogenous, certain questions were emphasized according to the point in time they had volunteered. For example, some informants had more knowledge about the development of the partnership whereas others knew more about the managing phase or ending the partnership.

The selection of informants was affected by their volunteer position in the organization and their availability and willingness to share their experiences. The titles of the informants varied from chairperson of the board to member of the board and project coordinator but their tasks and responsibilities were relatively homogenous. All informants had some level of involvement in project management activities although some were more responsible for fundraising or public relations in Finland than others. However, when mapping out the informants, it was important that informants were responsible for the communication with the partner organization or had been in direct contact with them in some other ways. Most of the informants were those who occupied the most responsible roles in the partnership.

In this research, the interview situations were planned in advance in terms of date, time and location. Interviews were set apart in time and space as something different from the usual social interaction between researcher and informant or the field. Interviews were not carried out in the field but instead in an isolated environment not related to the researched environment. Two out of the four face-to-face interviews were conducted at my home whereas the other two were at the home of the informant. Ethnographic interviews are usually conducted with one individual at a time but this is not imperative. In ethnographic research nowadays group interviews have become more accepted (Davies 2008, 106). Out of six informants, four were interviewed individually and two were interviewed in unison.

My informants had been volunteering between one and six years. Three of the informants were currently volunteering, whereas the other three had already finished their term. All of them work on a voluntary basis, although three of them were compensated annually. It was not called a salary as it was not dependent on the amount of working hours. With the permission of participants, I audio-recorded and took notes during the interviews. Recordings and noted were saved in a secure space until the end of the research when they were destroyed appropriately. The names of the informants and their respective organizations are not revealed in order to protect their anonymity. The table below shows some of the main factual information regarding the informants and their interviews including the duration of volunteering, date and length of interview and which NGO the informant represent:

Number of Interview	**Name of the Informant**	**Duration of Volunteering**	**Date of the Interview**	**Length of the Interview**	**Which NGO**
1	INFORMANT 1	15 months	24 Oct 2014	1 h 22 min	NGO 1
2	INFORMANT 2	18 months	11 Nov 2014	1 h 17 min	NGO 1
3	INFORMANT 3 INFORMANT 4	12 months 28 months	29 Nov 2014	55 min 1 h 26 min	NGO 2 NGO 2
4	INFORMANT 5	6 years	11 Dec 2014	40 min	NGO 2
5	INFORMANT 6	3 years	21 Jan 2015	61 min	NGO 1

Each interview began with a question related to the background of the informant. Some of the informants had a lot of experience in the field of development cooperation and the respective country context, whereas others had hardly any relevant experience prior to their current position. Some studied development studies at the time of volunteering as a major or minor subject at the university, some had volunteered in other development organizations or had done a study-related internship abroad in the same geographical region. Those with little experience had been living and travelling abroad for some time or had been involved in project management activities in other fields but were not familiar with the specific nature of the project cycle management in development cooperation. They saw their position as a way of learning.

The language in which the interviews were conducted alternated, since one of the interviews was conducted in English and others in Finnish. Five of the informants were native Finnish speakers whereas one had Swedish as her mother tongue. Prior to the interview, I asked all informants which language they preferred to use because it is important to have appropriate language skills to understand interview questions and to be able to reply (Pietilä 2010, 412-

413). By doing so I also wanted to make sure that no information would be lost because of language issues and that informants felt comfortable with the language used. Only one informant chose English. She was able to communicate clearly in English although occasional Finnish terms were used throughout the interview. In some parts of the interview, the richness of the data suffered from the use of a non-native language.

One necessary thing to be considered in ethnographic research is whether or not to share personal experiences with informants. There are two distinct approaches to the issue depending on whether the issue is discussed in sociology or ethnology. Sociologists Ruusuvuori & Tiittula (2005, 42) provide an ethnological example of sharing personal experiences with informants in order to build an open environment, whereas education scientists Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2001, 97) argue that interviewers should minimize their own role according to the principal of neutrality, which is more common in the field of sociology. It is not considered good behavior from the researcher to share his/her own experiences or comment on what the informant has said. The role of the interviewer is only to ask questions and shortly comment on whether the responses are long enough (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 97).

According to Davies (2008, 105) ethnographic interviews often take place between individuals who share more than the interview encounter, in other words the relationship is often ongoing and it precedes and will continue after the encounter. As I shared a common history with some of the interviewees or I had been in contact with them prior to the interview, it was unavoidable that I would share some personal experiences or comments. This made the interviews close to a natural conversation. However, I did not want to guide the conversation to any certain situation but instead wanted to provide an open space for the informant to share information and reply to my questions, so I therefore shared some of my own experiences to encourage the informants to be as open as possible with their narratives.

As the primary data consists of information recorded during interviews, the first step after conducting interviews was to convert audio recordings to text. I did not use any official transcription tools but instead I used Windows Media Player and Word Document. The transcription process was not an overwhelming task to accomplish as all of the informants spoke clearly and sufficiently slow. The scope of transcription depends on the research questions as well as the methodological approach. As the focus of this research is on the content of the interviews, not on the discursive or linguistic features of the responses, the transcription is not linguistically detailed (Ruusuvuori 2010, 424-425). I transcribed what the informants said word for word but I did not mark pauses or short words which were used to fill in gaps or to give the speaker more time to formulate sentences. I do not consider that these extra words or pauses were meaningful when the content was analyzed. When considering the objectives of the research, I believe that the transcription was conducted in a sufficient detail.

Although transcription makes the analysis process easier for the researcher, there are a few challenges which need to be taken into account in order to avoid errors. Transcription as such is already an interpreted version of the original conversation. Therefore, the original recorded interview is at all times the primary data. Transcription is done to make the data analysis easier by using it as a tool to organize speech structures and its details (Ruusunen 2010, 427). It does not matter how well the original interview is transcribed, it can never represent the complexity of the original conversation situation because it can never include all the verbal and non-verbal nuances of conversation. It is the end result of the researcher‘s decisions and interpretations and therefore it is always imprecise (Nikander 2010, 433).

The primary data of this research is complemented by secondary data including official project plans, journals from monitoring trips and researcher's field notes. It is rare for ethnographic data to only consist of interviews. Instead, interviews are a part of the larger picture and they need to be contextualized, in other words, to be positioned in a frame of reference of other data. Interviews provide the train of thought which is then complemented by data from other sources. Project plans and journals from monitoring trips provide relevant background information and they are examined to discover direct and indirect references to partnership and other concepts used in describing inter-organizational cooperation. The project plans existed prior to the research and, therefore, as Brewer (2000, 72) points out, are compiled under natural conditions, uninfluenced by the researcher. However, they play a minor role in my study.

In addition to official documents, I have used field notes as secondary data. My field notes comprise two sets of notes which I wrote down when I worked as a volunteer in one of the organizations participating in this research and when I took part in monitoring visits at the project site in February 2011 and 2012. Field notes were the main source material for my Bachelor's thesis, and are again used in this study although this time they are examined from the perspective of partnerships. My field notes are based on observant participation which can involve the utilization of an existing role in a familiar setting (Brewer 2000, 61). They are used for supporting the empirical data and giving the research a stronger ethnographic understanding. Observation is always partial because it is one person's personalized and subjective view of the situation (Brewer 2000, 62-63).

4.3 Data Analysis

Although the processes of data collection and analysis are described in two different sub-chapters in this research, it is important to keep in mind that ethnographic data is not analyzed only subsequent to its collection but the collection and the analysis often go hand in hand and they form a continuous process which cannot be strictly divided into distinct phases (Gobo 2008, 226-227; Brewer 2000, 107). The research data is analyzed here using the method of content analysis. It is a commonly used tool to examine the contents of the data by categorizing and summarizing similarities and differences and by focusing on the meaning of the content (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009; 91, 103–105). In order to analyze the contents of ethnographic data, sociologist John D. Brewer (2000, 109) has introduced an analytical tool which has seven steps and which I have adapted to this research. These steps are as follows:

1. Data management
2. Coding
3. Content analysis
4. Qualitative description
5. Establishing patterns in the data
6. Developing a classification system of open codes
7. Examining negative cases (Brewer 2000, 109)

As Brewer (2000, 110) suggests, I started the process by data management which is not a form of analysis but instead it assists in organizing the volume of the data. I started the data management by carefully reading and rereading transcriptions, official project plans, monitoring trip reports and field notes. After I was familiar with the data, I started to bring order to it by organizing it under themes and descriptive units. Initially I came up with approximately 15 different themes which were then loosely divided under four initial research questions. I carried out this phase of data management and coding in the old-fashioned way of using printouts and scissors. I cut all the answers into smaller units which were then indexed according to the most appropriate theme. Each research question had its own color and all the answers were indexed accordingly. This way of working with the data was possible due to its rather small scope and it gave me a chance to familiarize myself with the content of data.

When the data was indexed according to the research questions, I undertook content analysis by reading and rereading the texts. Under each research question I started to look for common points as well as to build generalizations and inferences. This led me to the phase of qualitative description which refers to the identification of key events, people, behavior and appropriate forms of counting (Brewer 2000, 109). There was some level of mobility in answers as I searched for their place under a correct research question. Then I began establishing patterns in the data by looking for recurring themes and relationships between the data (Brewer 2000, 109). It was not until this point in the research that the final research questions started to take their final shape according to how I organized and interpreted the research material.

From these themes and patterns I continued to conceptualize the data. During the entire analytic process I looked for negative cases which do not fit in the overall pattern of responses and therefore represent exceptions. As the data is comprised of interviews from volunteers from two organizations, there is some level of variance in the answers due to different starting points of volunteering. Next came the phases of interpretation and presentation of which is the former is defined as attaching meaning and significance to the analysis and explaining the patterns and relations, whereas the latter constitutes the act of writing up the data in textual form (Brewer 2000, 104-105). When interpreting the data I consulted some informants in order to minimize false interpretations.

There are several considerations which need to be taken into account when analyzing, interpreting and presenting ethnographic data. Because the data comes in the form of extracts from natural language, it is personal to the researcher as well as limited in scope and voluminous in scale. This is due to the fact that the researcher is involved with the setting and people under research (Brewer 2000, 104-105). Throughout the analytic process I tried to acknowledge my preconceptions and keep in mind my own position in the research. This was challenging because of the research topic being close to my personal interests. A realistic aim was to try to remain as impartial as possible.

4.4 The Researcher’s Position and Reflexivity

In September of 2013, I enrolled in the Master’s Programme of Development and International Cooperation at the University of Jyväskylä, after obtaining a Bachelor’s degree in the Program of Ethnology the year before. Although my educational background was in cultural studies, I had explored a strong interest in issues of international development through my minor studies in development and international politics. For instance, the purpose of my Bachelor’s thesis was to examine the characteristics of the cultural and societal environment of a small village community in Northern India, where a development cooperation project had been implemented in cooperation with local and Finnish organizations. Around the same time, I was also involved in development management activities through a volunteer position as a project coordinator.

However, the idea of examining inter-organizational partnerships in my Master's thesis did not occur to me until after the first year of Master's studies when I conducted a study-related internship at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations in the summer of 2014. During the internship, I attended the biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum where the matters of partnership among the actors of public, private and civil society sector were discussed. When listening to the key note speakers and panelists from all over the world, it was clear that there was no agreed definition on partnership or its terms and conditions but instead they all varied from one speaker to another. I was interested in the topic from the perspective of non-governmental organizations as I had been involved in the field for several years and had experienced that partnerships were highly valued and usually extended from one project to another, although obvious challenges existed.

Despite of my growing interest in partnerships, the focus of this research was not clear to me until the beginning of my second Master's year in September 2014. For the first two weeks of the month, I participated in the monitoring trip of a development cooperation project in Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, and was able to observe cooperation on the spot. After two weeks of monitoring and at the same time observing, I decided that my thesis would focus on examining partnerships between small-scale volunteer organizations in Finland and their partner organizations which usually were professional development organizations in the global South. I was interested in the possible effects of the rather different starting points of partner organizations to work together and manage the partnership. I was particularly interested in hearing the narratives and experiences of Finnish volunteers.

The reason for choosing inter-organizational partnerships as the topic of my thesis and focusing on small-scale volunteer organizations was the relevance of the topic and the growing interest but also criticism of development interventions implemented by the civil society sector. There is more financial support flowing to non-governmental organizations than in the past, and many of these organizations work on a volunteer basis. Volunteers spend a large proportion of their leisure time to do what paid employees do in professional development organizations and to a larger extent they also have the same duties and responsibilities. How does this effect partnership, and what form does the partnership take? Based on my personal experience of several Finnish development organizations, I had seen what kinds of challenges there might be in partnerships. For instance, volunteers change often, so how does this affect the sustainability of the partnership?

How can a researcher conduct research in a field which is familiar to her? First and foremost, it is important to pay a great amount of attention to issues of reflexivity throughout the research process in order to make the research results transparent. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's aim to explore the ways in which researcher's own involvement with the research influences, acts upon and informs such research. Reflexivity allows the researcher to locate his or her position within the research process in an attempt to explain it to the reader afterwards. This is why researchers often share their own experiences in terms of their position, including beliefs and objectives and their possible effects on the research (Gilbert, 2008, 512; Hertz, 1997, viii; Huttunen 2010, 57). Additionally, the researcher greatly contributes to 'the construction of meaning' during the study; in other words the research is dependent on the interpretations which the researcher gives to the data (Gilbert 2008, 512).

I acknowledge the fact that my personal characteristics affect the data collection and analysis which is a part of conducting ethnographic research. Reflexivity played an important role during semi-structured interviews in Finland and particularly when collecting the secondary data in the field. When conducting the interviews in Finland, it was important not to mix what the informants told me and what I had personally experienced in the same kinds of partnership situations. In the field, I had primarily been seen as a representative of an international funder and not as a researcher. This may have had an effect on what kind of impression informants wanted to give me as they associated the project funding with me. There are a number of characteristics which may affect the research which the researcher needs to be aware of and these include age, gender, social background and education level (Bryman, 2004, 312). These were more important to take into account because the informants interviewed in Finland had rather similar backgrounds to mine.

I have also acknowledged the fact that the primary data consists of interviews and therefore it produces situated understandings tied to this specific interaction. I, as an interviewer, created the reality of the interview encounter and there were no materials related to the organization and its partnership available in the interview situation. This may have an effect on how informants recalled things based solely on their memory (Brewer 2000, 65-66). As I knew some of the informants from previous contacts, and also with those I did not know in advance, the interview situation was very close to a natural conversation. Although I was the one asking the most questions, I felt like there was a good atmosphere in the room and informants were relaxed to discuss any issues raised during the interview. Interview situations were cozy because we were drinking tea and eating some snacks.

Brewer (2000, 59-60) reminds researchers of the balance between insider and outside status which is the balance between how much the researcher identifies with the informants and to what extent he/she maintains a professional distance which allows adequate observation. This was a delicate balance for me to handle because I was familiar with some of the informants. In interview situations I had to take the role of a researcher in order to maintain a certain level of professionalism. I tried to accomplish this by concentrating on asking questions and not on sharing personal stories which I would have done in a normal conversation situation. For me the challenge was not identify too much with the informants as I often had a desire to share personal experiences.

Another interesting aspect follows from the above because in some cases, researchers participate in a field with which they are unfamiliar and sometimes in settings of which they are already a part. Brewer (2000, 60) distinguishes two types of observation based on the familiarity of the field. Participant observation involves the acquisition of a new role in an unfamiliar setting, whereas observant participation involves a utilization of an existing role in a familiar setting (Brewer 2000, 61). When collecting secondary data in the field, I used my primary role as a project coordinator to examine and observe the partnership and thus this role belongs to the category of observant participation. This may have created several challenges to data collection because I was not treated as a researcher but primarily as a project coordinator who represented a foreign donor.

4.5 Research Ethics and Limitations

Issues of validity and reliability are necessary to take into account in any qualitative research in order for it to be credible and of high quality. Validity refers to whether appropriate methods are chosen to collect and analyze appropriate information in order to answer the research questions posed by the researcher. For example, when deciding on interview questions it is necessary to pay attention to whether the questions will be understood by the interviewee in the way the interviewer intended and therefore whether the questions really measure what was intended (Mäkinen 2006, 87). In this research, validity was striven for by paying attention to the purpose sampling method of informants and to the research questions and their design.

Additionally, transcription is directly related to the validity of the research. Even though the reader can never gain direct access to a researcher's source material as a whole, transcription brings it closer to readers and enables them to make their own analysis and interpretation. In addition, transcription and the use of citations add transparency (Nikander 2010, 433). I have used a number of direct citations in order to give voice to my informants. Citations complement the analysis and provide direct examples of what was said and how during the interviews. In my view, citations bring informants and their thoughts closer to the reader and also add transparency and validity in terms of showing examples of what was actually said and how it was said. As one of the interviews was conducted in Finnish, I have translated it into English. These citations do not represent the exact words of the informant but by carefully translating them, I have striven not to misinterpret them or lose meanings in the translation process.

Reliability refers to the repeatability of a particular set of research findings, in other words, how accurately they would be replicated in a second similar study no matter who conducted the other research (Hirsjärvi 2009, 231; Mäkinen 2006, 87). Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasion, as Hammersley (1992, 67) writes. Although reliability is an important factor in a social research, in my view it is never possible to conduct an identical piece of ethnographic research because of the position of the researcher. In an ethnographic study, the researcher plays an important role in carrying out the research and managing interview settings and therefore his or her own behavior and even personality and previous experience may have an effect on the way informants react to the research. How my own position affected the research is discussed in a greater detail in Section 4.4.

In addition to validity and reliability, it is very important to pay attention to ethical questions in order to avoid harm to informants or any individual and organization involved in the research (Davies 2008, 53). Since social research is about relationships among individuals and collectivities, informed consent is one of the key features to be taken into account, and therefore in this research all interviews were conducted and audio-recorded with the permission of informants and according to the principles of informed consent set forth by the American Anthropological Association (2011):

> “The degree and breadth of informed consent may be influenced by the nature of the project and its setting. Minimally, informed consent would include sharing with potential participants, in an understandable form, the research goals, methods, funding sources or sponsors, expected outcomes, and anticipated impacts as well as establishing expectations of anonymity or credit. Researchers must present to research participants the possible impacts of participation, and make clear that despite their best efforts, anonymity may be compromised or outcomes may differ from those anticipated (American Anthropological Association 2011).”

The concepts of anonymity and confidentiality are related yet distinct. Confidentiality refers to the promise that the researcher has given to informants that all knowledge provided by the informant will be handled confidentially. In addition, the researcher should inform in what ways the research material is to be used, by whom, for how long and how the confidentiality is guaranteed in practice. This is where anonymity is linked to confidentiality because in many cases anonymity is the main way of assuring confidentiality. Anonymity means that personal details of informants are never passed on to third parties but instead they are erased or changed in a way so that informants cannot be identified (Mäkinen 2006, 114-116; Gobo 2008, 138-139). In addition, Mäkinen (2006, 115) points out that it is important to make sure that when providing a certain amount of background information relevant to the research, it also needs to be guaranteed that this information will not reveal the informant or organization represented. This can be avoided by masking unnecessary details.

I have paid a considerable amount of attention to anonymity because of the relatively small scope of research and the small circles of the volunteer development actors in Finland. After all, it would be easy to recognize both of the organizations and the informants if one is familiar with the field. Although some background information has been provided regarding the two organizations and informants, the names of the informants and their respective organizations are not revealed in order to protect their anonymity. I also agree with Mäkinen (2006, 114) that anonymity has certain benefits, such as it increases the amount of freedom researchers have because they can handle the data and its sensitive and delicate details without being afraid of harming the informant. Usually anonymity encourages people to talk more openly and freely which means that the quality of data is higher and more detailed. In addition, anonymity guarantees that those persons who are not a part of the research but who are talked about during the interview are not exposed (Mäkinen 2006, 114).

Anthropologist David Fetterman (2010, 143-146) discusses questions of honesty and trust when conducting ethnographic research in the field. It is important for an ethnographer to be candid about his or her tasks and explain carefully what will be studied and how it will be carried out (Fetterman 2010, 143-146). Since my informants had conducted a Master's thesis or were about to do so in the near future, there was no need to provide a detailed introduction to what a Master's thesis is but instead before the interview I focused on giving a short briefing about the research topic, my own interests and how the research materials would be used. I emphasized issues such as anonymity and confidentiality because sensitive matters would be discussed during the interview. Only a few informants asked me during the interview whether the information they provided would be confidential. Informants' familiarity with the objectives of a Master's thesis probably also affected their consent.

When an ethnographer is able to establish a bond of trust with informants, there is a chance to learn about the many layers of meanings in the community under study (Fetterman 2010, 143, 146). What made it easier to build trust was my previous experience in the field of development cooperation and own personal experiences regarding partnership. With some informants I had the feeling that it was easy for them to open up, since they knew that I had experienced similar sorts of things. Another way in which I gained trust of informants was the fact that they had been recommended to me by previous informants. Since the first contact with these new informants came from previous informants, in other words, someone they knew and trusted already, it was easier to start building the relationship. I was pleased to conduct long interviews because it meant I was trusted in the interview situation. Informants seemed to be relaxed, open and honest when discussing the topic.

One limitation in social research is the kind of knowledge the chosen informants actually have. According to Davies (2008, 107), the traditional assumption is that informants have access to knowledge which they share with the researcher and thus what they say is a representation of social and cultural realities. However, the researcher faces certain challenges since it is natural that informants may simply not be able to provide uncontested knowledge about their social world. Instead, interviews always contain contradictions and incorrect knowledge. These problems are addressed by comparing what a number of informants have to say on the same topic (Davies 2008, 107.) In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the topic, I chose informants representing different phases of partnership. Contradictions were taken into account by comparing statements and by not aiming at developing a homogenous picture of partnership but by allowing heterogeneities to exist. Some of the factual background information was checked against the secondary data.

Another limitation in this research is the small scope of the research material. Only volunteers from two Finnish organizations were interviewed and thus it is important to keep in mind that the outcome solely represents their point of view. No voices of Indian NGO representatives were heard. This is an obvious limitation in the research if one wishes to have a comprehensive and holistic picture of the partnerships. As the partnerships are examined from the point of view of Finnish volunteers, it is important to include secondary data, since the volunteers have participated in producing official project plans and journals. These documents complement the information provided during interviews and give a more holistic picture of the chosen perspective.

5 Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, I present answers to my four research questions: 1) How was the partnership started between the Finnish and Indian NGOs and what were the reasons for starting it? 2) How does the partnership work in practice in terms of responsibilities and division of labor? 3) What are the major challenges encountered in the partnership and their possible consequences? and 4) What are considered to be the main elements of the partnership? I will discuss the answers to these questions in relation to the main concepts presented in Chapter Three.

5.1 Forming the Partnership

Nowadays the most common way for Finnish NGOs to implement development cooperation interventions is to have a local partner organization in the developing country. How the initial contact is made and how the partnership starts between the Finnish NGOs and the Indian NGOs varies greatly. In this research there were informants representing two Finnish NGOs, so there were also two distinctive stories about how the partnership was formed with their Indian partner NGO. What is common for both cases is that the initial contact with the Indian NGO was developed through personal contacts although in different circumstances.

Informants 2 and 6 explained that their organization had an initial contact with the Indian NGO because one of their active members did a period of voluntary work in one of the primary schools which was run by the Indian NGO. The active member of the Finnish NGO volunteered through an independent voluntary programme and it was part of her university studies. At that point there were no linkages between the Finnish and Indian NGOs but instead the voluntary work was organized independently by the member. However, the Finnish volunteer had a good experience when volunteering with the Indian NGO and she had taken note of how the organization implemented development intervention with other partner organizations at that time as explained in the following extract:

> *Hanke on saanut alun perin alkunsa sitä kautta, että silloin on ollut yks meidän järjestön opiskelija tekemässä opintoihin liittyvää harjoittelua kautta vapaaehtoistyötä ja sitä kautta tutustunu siihen järjestöön paremmin ja sen järjestön toimintaan. Hän on ollu aktiivisesti mukana meidän toiminnassa, niin siinä vaiheessa, kun on ruvettu ettii uusia kumppaneita, niin sitten hän on tuonu tän kumppanin esille. (Informant 2)*
>
> *Initially the project started from when one of the students in our NGO did voluntary work for a study-related internship and in that way got to know better the [partner] organisation and its activities. She was actively involved in our work so when we started to look for new partners, she brought up this one. (Informant 2)*

Personal contacts were also important when the Finnish NGO 2 started building the partnership with the Indian NGO. Informant 5 explained how her personal contribution gave the initial push to start discussing a joint development intervention. During the time she was a member of the Finnish NGO 2, she participated in a development seminar in Finland. The head of the Indian NGO, the future partner organization, gave a talk in the seminar. The presentation was found to be inspirational and informative by Informant 5 who sat in the audience. The head of the Indian NGO talked about gender issues and human rights which were also the focus points of the Finnish NGO 2. Informant 5 explained how she paid attention to the stated reasons for poverty and inequality as well as the gender issues introduced by the speaker and how they were similar to her own thinking. She described the situation as follows:

> *Se syntyi sillä tavalla, että mä olin käymässä... sellainen tilaisuus naisista ja naisten ihmisoikeuksista, missä tän järjestön perustaja ja pääjohtaja oli vierailulla. Mä kuuntelin häntä parin tunnin ajan, että mitä ajatuksia naisten ihmisoikeuksista ja kehityksestä. Mä muistan, et jo silloin panin merkille, et hän on aika terävänoloinen tyyppi ja sen ajatukset köyhyyden syistä ja epätasa-arvosta ja naisten asemasta meni aika yhteen mun ajatusten kanssa. Se jäi mun mieleen hyvin se tapaaminen ja sitten sen jälkeen kun meidän järjestö päätti, että aletaan etsiä uutta hankekumppania, mä muistin tän järjestön ja sen kohtaamisen tai tapaamisen silloin siellä tilaisuudessa. Sitten mä vaan yksinkertaisesti otin häneen yhteyttä ja kerroin, että me etitään hankekumppania. (Informant 5)*

> *It started because I was visiting... there was an event about women and women's human rights which the founder and director of this organization attended. I listened to her speech for about two hours and her thoughts about women's rights and development. I remember thinking that she was pretty sharp and that we had very similar kinds of thoughts on the causes of poverty, inequality and the position of women. I remember this event very well and when our organization decided to start looking for a new partner, I recalled this organization and that event. Then I simply contacted this woman and told her that we are looking for a partner. (Informant 5)*

As the citations above show, active members of the Finnish NGO were an important resource for having a first contact with the Indian NGO. Their personal interest took them to situations and environments where it was possible for them to get to know representatives of Indian NGOs and create networks which later became of use. However, what can be concluded from the end of the citations is that the initial contact does not necessarily lead to partnership formation, what is needed in addition is convenient timing. Both Finnish NGOs participating in this study already had previous development interventions with other partner organizations but these were coming to an end within a short period of time. As the Finnish NGOs were ready to look for new partnership opportunities, the issue was discussed in board meetings where the positive first impressions and experiences with respective Indian NGOs were shared and discussed with other members. However, at this point other partnership options were also under consideration.

After the members of the board were unanimous about this Indian NGO being the most viable option for partnership, the heads of the Indian NGOs were contacted through email and told that the Finnish NGO would be interested in having a joint development intervention with them. Both Indian NGOs had other foreign partners at that time but nevertheless they were interested in the cooperation and had sufficient resources and determination to enlarge their scope of work. However, at this point in the planning of a development project it is uncertain whether the project proposal will be approved by the MFA of Finland and therefore all the work is done without certainty of further funding. The planning phase is conducted over a long period of time. As this study indicates, it takes several years to plan a development project before applying for and receiving the funding.

When the Finnish and Indian NGOs agreed to the partnership formation, more regular and goal-directed communication started between the two organizations. The primary means of communication were emails and Skype; also phone calls were used a few times in the beginning. Two approaches can be identified in how the initial drafts of the project proposals were produced. In one case, the Finnish NGO 2 gave relative freedom to the Indian NGO to generate initial ideas of possible development projects, since its personnel were thought to have a better understanding of the overall situation and needs in the region. As the Indian NGO had worked with foreign partners, it had a general idea of what it takes to plan a development intervention and therefore they wrote and sent the first draft to the Finnish NGO. The draft was based on the previous background research by the Indian NGO about the overall situation in the region and what would be needed in order to have development in their respective fields. The idea of the first draft was to map out the needs in the region and see what kind of intervention would be needed.

> *Sitten se (pääjohtaja) lähetti jonkun sellaisen alustavan draftin, niinku ajatuksia, et mitä se hanke vois koskea, et mikä ois heille tärkeetä. Sit ne oli tehny sellaista taustatutkimusta siitä tarpeesta siellä ja laajemmallakin siellä maassa ois niinku*

naisten ihmisoikeuksiin liittyen jotain koulutuksen identifioinnin ja naisten verkoston luomisen. Sitten me puhuttiin Skypessä muistaakseni pitkä puhelu ja sit jatkettiin sitä ideoidenvaihtoa ja alustavan suunnitelman hiomista. Sit me katottiin, että tossa on sen verran potentiaalia, et haettiin Ulkoministeriöltä matkatukea. (Informant 5)

Then [the director of the NGO] sent us a tentative draft [of the project plan], like what the project could be about and what would be important for them. They had carried out some background research about the needs there in the region and also in the country relating to women's rights, education and networking. Then we had a long Skype meeting and continued exchanging ideas and drafting the initial project idea. Then we decided that there was enough potential to apply for funding from the MFA of Finland. (Informant 5)

In the second case, a rather different approach was taken by Finnish NGO 1. The project proposal was initially an assignment of a university course which one of the volunteers at that time attended during her Master's studies. She wrote down the first draft as a course assignment which was then sent to the Indian NGO for further comments. At this point, the relationship between the two NGOs was already established through another active member of the Finnish NGO but no joint projects were running at the time. Although the draft was modified to fit the real life situation in the field, the main project idea was developed by the Finnish volunteers without consulting with the Indian NGO as explained by the Informant 6:

Se oli sillä tavalla hyvä, että kun toinen koordinaattori opiskeli ohjelmassa, missä oli projektisuunnittelukurssi, niin hän oli pystynyt kurssin aikana tekee tälle projektille, siis oikeelle konkreettiselle projektille suunnitelmarungon. Sitten me mentiin sinne (Intiaan) ja tavattiin järjestön johtaja ja käytiin kohta kohdalta sitä suunnitelmaa läpi. Kirjoitettiin sitä ja käytiin läpi, mitkä on niitä konkreettisia asioita, mitä me halutaan tehdä ja miten tehdään. (Informant 6)

It was a good thing that our other coordinator studied in a programme which had a course in project planning, so she was able to write a proposal for this actual project. Then we went [to India] and met the director of the NGO and went through the project proposal point by point. We wrote the proposal together and went through the concrete things that we wanted to do and how to do them. (Informant 6)

Despite dissimilar ways of planning the project proposal, the next step was common to both cases as they applied funding the MFA of Finland for a project planning visit from. This is a common practice among Finnish NGOs when planning a new project. Such funding has changed its form over the years, but at that time the funding was meant for representatives of Finnish NGOs to conduct a two-week planning visit to the project field. Both organizations applied for and received the funding and sent two volunteers to meet with representatives of the possible partner organization. Three out of six informants had participated in such a visit, one of them at the time when the project extension was planned after the first phase of the project.

When the MFA of Finland had approved the funding application for a project planning visit, two volunteers travelled to the destination and met the partner organization during a two week period of time to plan the joint development intervention. The planning was conducted by first getting to know the Indian NGO, their field of expertise and ways of working and then by familiarizing themselves with the initial project idea and working on it together. The aim was to have a nearly final version of the project plan by the end of the visit. After the project planning visit, the final project application was written and submitted to the MFA of Finland by the end of May of that year. According to the practice of the MFA of Finland, decisions are made towards the end of the year. Both projects received approval for funding and the projects started in the following year.

> *Katottiin, et miten ne toimii ja puhuttiin niiden naisten kanssa ja niiden järjestöjen työntekijöiden kanssa. Tehtiin sitten ihan konkreettisesti sitä hankesuunnitelmaa, kirjoitettiin siellä aika pitkälle. Tehtiin sitä narratiivista ja tehtiin se budjettikin aika pitkälle. Suunnittelu suju hyvin, koska he oli tehty aika paljon sitä taustatutkimusta, mihin me pystyttiin vetoamaan siinä, et miks se on relevantti se hanke. (Informant 5)*

> *We looked at their working methods and discussed with the women and the employees of the NGO. We worked on a concrete project proposal by writing most of it there. We worked on the narrative part and also on the budget. Planning went well because they had done a lot of background research, so that we could demonstrate the relevance of the project. (Informant 5)*

In addition to how the partnership started, reasons for choosing a particular Indian NGO to be a partner were discussed with the informants. All informants who had been involved in the early phases of partnership formation mentioned relatively similar reasons although, as we have seen above, the means by which partnerships are formed can be distinctive. Based on the research data, three main reasons can be identified when choosing a new partner. Firstly, the informants pointed out that it was important to work in the same field with the partner organization, for instance among women or community development. Secondly, it was emphasized that the partner organization needs to have a relevant project idea and a certain level of professionalism. Thirdly, the administrative capacity and financial solidity of the Indian NGO were appreciated.

All informants pointed out that it is essential for partner organizations to work in the same field of development and have common interests. For instance, if the Finnish NGO was interested in gender issues or community development, it was highlighted that the partner organization should have the same interest as well as a certain level of knowledge of the issues in a local but also sometimes in national and regional levels. It was also appreciated if the partner organization had a certain level of professionalism in their work as well as previous work experience. Due to these requirements, the chosen partner organizations were highly professional and had long roots not only in development activities but also in working with international donors. This made some elements of the partnership function according to the expectations of all parties.

The second reason for forming a partnership with a particular Indian NGO was its ability to have a project idea which is relevant and which can be further developed together. All informants pointed out that their partner organization was highly professional as well as had a good understanding of the situation in the field. Based on these elements, the Indian NGOs were able to provide a sufficient amount of information prior to the project planning visit. The reason for a good level of professionalism was that one of the Indian NGOs had implemented development interventions since the 1970s and the other, although being a relatively new NGO established in 2007, had a person at the head of the organization who had worked in international development organizations prior to establishing her own NGO.

The third reason for developing a partnership had to do with the institutional structures and administrative skills of the Indian NGO. Chosen partner organizations had a long history of working with international donors or the head of the organization had lived in the global North and worked with development interventions. Since the Indian partner organizations had previous experience of working with international donors and therefore of project management as well as of monitoring and reporting requirements, they had a good understanding of administrative requirements. These preconditions made it easier to form a reliable partnership and to start to plan a joint development intervention. The Indian NGOs were aware of the bureaucracy and other complicated and often strict requirements from the side of the donor.

It is important to point out that when discussing partnership formation, it was necessary to interview previous volunteers who were not active members of the Finnish NGOs anymore. When I asked about partnership formation, some current informants openly acknowledged that they do not know much about it and what they know is the bigger picture while many details are unclear to them. All of the informants mentioned the names of previous volunteers who volunteered at the time of partnership formation and also provided me with their contact details to directly contact them. Although it had been several years since the previous volunteers had participated in the project management activities, they were still eager to discuss the issue.

The reason for not knowing much about the partnership formation was that the informants did not volunteer at the time of partnership formation and since there are no established and systematic ways of writing down the organizational memory, this knowledge has been lost with the organization itself. Informant 1 provided an interesting example of the brevity of organizational memory in her organization when she tried to recall what she knew about the early phases of partnership. She said that the information regarding the partnership formation was not provided to her by the previous volunteers but instead by the head of the Indian NGO during her first monitoring visit in the field. She had spent a lot of time asking questions about how the partnership was formed, since she had a feeling that no one knew much about it in her organization. She also mentioned that it would be important to know the history, since it motivates volunteers when they know why certain things are done in a certain way and how current volunteers are part of a bigger picture.

> *I don't know the exact reason why this organization was chosen to be a partner but what the head of their organization told us, it was a personal reason that they got a really well along with these people they met from Finland. Actually in the last monitoring trip she was telling us a lot about this background because I have a feeling that nobody really knows about it here because maybe the knowledge wasn't given further, like when changing the coordinators. (Informant 1)*

5.2 Managing the Partnership

5.2.1 Tasks and Responsibilities

The OECD report of 1996 stresses that partnership should include three types of responsibilities in order to function properly: joint responsibilities, developing country responsibilities and external partner responsibilities (OECD/DAC 1996, 13-14). Also Lister (2000, 3) refers to a clear delineation of responsibilities as an element of partnership. In this study, all informants pointed out that there is a clear and largely settled division of labor and responsibilities between the Finnish NGO and the Indian NGO. The division of labor and responsibilities was discussed in detail and approved when the joint development project was planned. It was also clearly written down in the final project plan.

Based on the research data, three types of responsibilities can be identified which are in line with the aforementioned classification of the OECD/DAC report (1996, 13-14. All informants perceived that their organization is primarily responsible for the administrative system which is required by the funder, in this case the MFA of Finland. One of the main tasks is to monitor the project implementation by collecting data of the progress of the project from the Indian NGO. There are formal and informal ways of collecting data and sharing information which will be further discussed in the sub-chapter 5.2.2. The Finnish NGOs collected data throughout the year and then modified it to fit the reporting guidelines of the MFA of Finland. Then the information was forwarded to the Finnish NGO:

> *Me ollaan hoidettu se UM:n kuvio täysin eli meillä on ollu UM:n puolesta niitä tiettyjä aikatauluja ja vastuita. Ja sit niinku koottu heiltä sitä dataa sieltä. Niillä on ollu se käytännön toteutus siitä (hankkeesta) ja koordinointi. (Informant 4)*
>
> *We've taken care of the cooperation with the MFA of Finland, meaning that we have had certain deadlines and responsibilities from that side. And then we put together the data from [the partner NGO regarding the progress of the project]. They were responsible for the practical implementation and for the overall coordination. (Informant 4)*

> *Työnjako oli aika selkeä. He vastas hankkeen käytännön toteutuksesta siellä ja me sitten Suomessa vastattiin lähinnä sen hankkeen hallinnoinnista ja tiedottamisesta ja rahoituksen hakemisesta. Meidän järjestö hoiti sen yhteydenpidon ja raportoinnin sinne Ulkoministeriöön. Mutta se toteutus, niin paikalliset työntekijät vastasi siitä pyörityksestä. (Informant 2)*
>
> *The division of labour was clear. They were responsible for the practical implementation there [in the field], and here in Finland we were mainly responsible for project management, informing the public, and applying for funding. Our organization took care of maintaining contact with and reporting to the MFA of Finland. But the actual implementation was managed by the local employees. (Informant 2)*

In addition to monitoring, there were a few other tasks for which the Finnish NGOs were solely responsible. The Finnish NGOs were responsible for receiving funding from the MFA of Finland and then forwarding it to the Indian NGO. In addition, the Finnish NGOs were responsible for establishing self-funding mechanisms though which they were able to fundraise a certain percentage of the budget, as this is one of the requirements of the funder. Fundraising was also related to public relations and global education activities of the Finnish NGOs as they organized awareness events and other activities. Based on the research data, fundraising was perceived in two different ways. Informants 3 and 4 acknowledged that it is challenging for their NGO and it requires a lot of work, although the amount is relatively small. Representatives of the Finnish NGO 1 were not concerned about self-funding because their NGO had established fundraising mechanisms which brought fairly regular earnings.

When it comes to the duties and responsibilities of the Indian NGO, the project implementation in the field was seen to be the most important and time-consuming. The Indian NGOs implemented all the activities described in the project plan as well as monitored the progress which was then reported to the Finnish NGO through jointly agreed reporting practices. For instance, when the project activity was to organize a monthly meeting for women, it was the duty of the SNGO to call the meeting, invite women there, plan the content of the meeting and eventually hold the meeting and have a list of participants. The Finnish NGO did not participate in implementing the project activities but they did participate in observing them during the monitoring visit which is discussed in more detail in a sub-chapter 5.2.4.

> *They are the ones who are responsible for activities and doing… I don't like to say all the work but basically all the work that is changing things there. (Informant 1)*

In addition to differentiated tasks and responsibilities, particularly two phases of the project cycle, project planning and monitoring, were described as having been implemented jointly. All informants emphasized that project planning was conducted together as discussed in Chapter 5.1, although ways of doing it differed. Since it was the early phase of the partnership, it made sense to work together in order to build a strong partnership and have a common understanding of what has to be done. Project monitoring was also implemented jointly as the Indian NGO conducted small-scale monitoring on a regular basis whereas the Finnish NGO monitored the project annually by visiting the project site. During the monitoring visit and also through e-mails, the Finnish NGO and the Indian NGO discussed their observations which were then a basis for the annual report sent to the MFA of Finland. Some perceived that their own organization could have contributed more especially to the formulation of project activities and their content. A lack of contribution was seen to be the result of a lack of professionally-trained staff.

> *Jos meilläkin on vaikka projektikoordinaattoreina koulutuksen asiantuntijoina, niin me voitais enemmänkin tehdä sitä ideoidenvaihtoa esimerkiksi niiden aktiviteettien muodostamisessa. (Informant 2)*
>
> *If we had project coordinators which are experts in education, we could be more involved in the exchange of ideas, for example when planning their activities. (Informant 2)*

Some informants perceived that monitoring was one of the most important yet challenging tasks to accomplish. Informant 1 argued that it was impossible to monitor everything because of the geographical distance between the partner NGOs, although much was shared though emails and during the annual monitoring visit. She pointed out that trust is very important when monitoring the project because not all activities which were implemented on a daily basis were able to be monitored by the Finnish NGO. They just had to trust that things were done the way they were described in emails and reports. However, she was rather skeptical that the Indian NGO implements all activities according to the project plan as she describes in the following:

> *Not everything we see in the project plan and what we see in the final report are the same. Of course, it's the fact. Even in Finland if someone is telling you that I have done this and this… Of course it may be more honest but it's not the real reality. (Informant 1)*

A clear division of labor was described as a natural way of cooperating with the Indian NGO. All informants reported that they share common values and development objectives with their Southern partner organization and in order to achieve these objectives, it is necessary to divide tasks and responsibilities according to the know-how of each partner organization. Partner organizations were seen to have their strengths in different areas and therefore the expertise of each organization was seen as complementing the other. The division of tasks and responsibilities as well as different areas of strength was considered to create a solid basis for the partnership. Based on their complementary strengths, partner organizations shared an appreciation of what each has to bring to the relationship, in terms of competencies and comparative advantages:

> *Kumpikin osapuoli vastaa siitä, mistä on sitä tietoa. He on paikallisia. He asuu siellä. Heillä on oikeesti paras faktatieto siitä alueesta ja sen alueen kehittämistarpeista. Sit taas meillä on paras tieto Suomen Ulkoministeriön raportointivaatimuksista ja kirjanpitovaatimuksista. Musta se kumppanuus on sitä, että hyödynnetään kummankin osapuolen vahvuuksia. (Informant 2)*
>
> *Both parties are responsible for what they know the best. They are the locals. They live there. They have the best factual information about the area and its development needs. On the other hand, we have the best knowledge of the reporting and auditing requirements of the MFA of Finland. In my opinion, partnership is about utilizing each other's strengths. (Informant 2)*

When discussing the position of the Finnish NGO in terms of tasks and responsibilities, some informants saw that the Finnish NGO is in a position between two organizations, the MFA of Finland which is the funder, and the Indian NGO which is the implementer. Due to this position, the Finnish NGO has responsibilities towards both parties. It is responsible to the MFA of Finland in terms of monitoring and evaluating the use of the project funds and activities and to the Indian NGO in terms of sending the financial support on time and providing other support and assistance when necessary. Such a position made the tasks and responsibilities of the Finnish NGO complex because the needs and demands of the two parties did not necessarily coincide. The Finnish NGO needed to find a balance between the demands of two different organizations and sometimes it was the one who demanded compromises.

5.2.2 Information sharing

All informants pointed out that the cornerstone of partnership is information sharing. As the Finnish NGOs and their Indian partner NGOs were located on different continents, the only way to know what the other partner was doing was through communication and information sharing. Partnerships were described as a process of continuous interaction through which partner organizations shared information which was not available to the other partner in any other way. Information sharing ensured that the other partner knew what was happening on the other end of the development intervention and how the joint intervention was proceeding.

All informants agreed that some parts of information sharing are considered formal whereas others are informal. Formal information sharing includes any form of information related to the joint project. Information that was shared included narrative updates of the project implementation, pictures of project activities, and quarterly and annual reports from the side of the Indian NGO. Narrative updates of the fundraising and other activities carried out by the Finnish NGO as well as examples of leaflets distributed for the members of their organization were also shared. Formal information sharing was also the main purpose of the annual monitoring trip during which the progress of the project was discussed together.

The means of information sharing included emails, skype calls and occasionally, but these days rarely, phone calls. The research data suggests that no other technologies such as electronic mailing lists or web-based databases were used, which would allow multiple participants to be included, or at least these technologies did not come up during interviews. There was primarily one volunteer in the Finnish NGO as well as in the Indian NGO responsible for information sharing. The information shared between them was later distributed to other volunteers through e-mails or in meetings. However, this was not an unconditional practice as other members were also allowed to contact the partner organization if necessary.

When the Finnish NGO and the Indian NGO worked in their respective home countries, there was very little informal information sharing between them. Almost all information sharing and communication was directly linked to the joint project. The importance of informal communication which was not directly linked to the joint project but was considered as a part of a good partnership was emphasized during the monitoring visit when the Finnish NGO and the Indian NGO encountered each other face to face for up to two weeks of time. One reason for not sharing much informal information in between monitoring visits was a lack of time. Monitoring visits were seen as an opportunity to nourish partnership also outside of project activities which I will later discuss in more detail in sub-chapter 5.2.4.

Several settings were perceived to be convenient for informal conversations and small-talk during monitoring visits. One of the informal settings mentioned by several informants was a car which became familiar to them due to long and especially slow driving distances from one place to another when the office of the Indian NGO and the project field were not situated in the same place. Informant 4 acknowledged the dull side of the long drives but then again she perceived them as an opportunity to get more information related to the societal situation of the host country or other topics which were under the interest of both NGOs.

> *Ja tavallaan ne automatkat, vaikka ne on niin puuduttavia, niin niissä voi sit jutella kaikkee semmosta muutakin. Tavallaan meillä oli hirveen kiinnostavia keskusteluja ihan tän hankkeen tiimoilta, mut siis ihan yleisesti… et me hirveen pitkälti käytiin keskustelua ihan yhteiskunnallisista asioista. Keskusteltiin varsinkin naisten asemasta aika paljon. (Informant 4)*

In a way, the trips taken by car, although they were exhausting, were chances to discuss all kinds of matters. In a way, we had very interesting discussions about the project but also about general topics... we had a lot of discussions about social issues. We discussed a lot particularly about the position of women. (Informant 4)

Informant 1 had a similar perception as she used the long drives for asking questions about different issues. Some of the issues were related to the project activities whereas others were more general, about the societal situation in the country or the previous work done by the Indian NGO. Informant 1 pointed out that her openness and outspokenness was not always perceived as a good thing but more as meddlesome. For instance, when she asked questions about the past of the Indian NGO, the head of the NGO did not always answer but instead stayed silent. Informant 1 would have liked to know more but she read between lines that there were sensitive issues in the past, or that was how she observed the silence.

Despite the fact that all informants said that they were relatively content with the project-related information sharing between the partner organizations and that they received enough information to properly manage the project, four types of challenges can be identified from the narratives of the informants in terms of communication. Firstly, the informants were skeptical as to whether everything was shared by the Indian NGO. Informants perceived that sharing negative issues and challenges faced during a project implementation might be hard for the Indian NGO because of the funding element. They might be afraid of losing the funding if project implementation did not follow strictly the initial project plan. There was a strong agreement that not everything is shared by the Indian NGO. It was believed that all of the important things were shared whereas information not shared mainly related to challenges encountered.

I'm actually sure that they are not sharing all the information with us. Why would they share everything? I know their mindset a little bit and… they want your eyes to sparkle even if there's nothing behind that. (Informant 1)

Viimeisenä vuotena siihen osallistui naisia Nepalista. Se tuli meille ihan yllätyksenä, että tää yks työntekijä siellä, yks tämmönen koordinaattori kautta suunnittelija, hän oli itse niinku Nepali-taustainen ja oli sit kontaktoinu jotain paikallisia järjestöjä Kathmandun alueelta… He oli omatoimisia, et me oltiin ihan, et mistäs nää nepalilaiset naiset. Heitä oli ihan muutama. (Informant 4)

During last year, some women from Nepal participated. It was a surprise for us that one employee there, one of the coordinators/planners was herself of Nepalese background and had contacted a local NGO in the Kathmandu region. They were proactive and we were like: 'where did these Nepalese women come from?' There were just a few of them. (Informant 4)

Secondly, the way of writing reports and sharing information by the Indian NGO was perceived to be challenging in some cases. The representatives of the Indian NGOs used rich and descriptive language in their reports including a lot of background information, personal narratives and repetition. Phrases were very colorful. This made the work of Finnish volunteers challenging because they had to adjust the information received from the Indian NGO to the report forms of the MFA Finland which favored short sentences and summaries and did not have space for extensive elaboration. Sometimes the meaning had to be read between the lines because it was not stated clear because it was surrounded by sentences which were considered colorful but sometimes meaningless by the informants.

Thirdly, when project-related information was shared in terms of official reports there were certain deadlines which were determined by the MFA of Finland and needed strictly to be followed. In a typical case, the Finnish NGO gave their own deadline to the Indian NGO which was earlier than the final deadline of the MFA of Finland so that they would have enough time to write the final report based on the information shared by the Indian NGO in their report and discussion during the monitoring visit. However, these deadlines were not always strictly followed by the Indian NGO but instead often a push was needed to receive the information on time from them. The necessary information was always received in the end but at times it came relatively late and then the Finnish NGO did not have much time to finalize the reports and submit them to the MFA of Finland.

Fourthly, at times information was assumed to have been communicated to their partner by the Finnish NGO but it was not received by the Indian NGO in the way it was originally intended. Informant 4 told of a situation when planning an upcoming monitoring trip in which their organization had provided information regarding their preferences and previous experience of the country. However, these suggestions were not taken into account when planning the monitoring trip by their Indian partner and this led to further frustration by the Finnish NGO. These sorts of misunderstandings were described as "a communication problem".

Meijän hankevastaava oli kyllä aika… siis hän on hyvin sellainen aktiivinen tyyppi ja oli sinne paljon yhteydessä ja hän oli vielä kertonu, et me ollaan asuttu siellä ja muuta. Mut he ei sitten jotenki vissiin lukenu niitä meilejä kauheen hyvin, et se oli kyllä vähän silleen, et me kyllä annettiin sitä infoa, mutta he oli sit vaan tehny jonkun raamin mukaan tän suunnitelman. (Informant 4)

Our project coordinator was very active and was very much in contact with them and told them that we have lived there and everything. But I guess they did not read our emails very closely, so it was sort of like we gave them information, but they had just planned the trip in their own way. (Informant 4)

5.2.3 Monitoring visits

In addition to information sharing through emails and official reports, an annual monitoring visit carried out either by the Finnish NGO to the project field, which was the most common practice among Finnish NGOs, or alternatively by the Indian NGO to Finland, is a part of the ongoing program of monitoring the progress of joint development interventions. A monitoring visit provides the opportunity for the Finnish and Indian NGOs to discuss the progress made, to learn what has been successful and what has not, and then revise the aims and objectives of the project when necessary. In many cases, it is the only time when the partner NGOs meet face to face, and if the Finnish NGO visits the project field, it is an opportunity for them to see how the project has been implemented in reality.

The substance of the monitoring visit depends largely on the project activities, but numerous common practices can be identified. When the representatives of the Finnish NGO visit the field, they typically work at the office and in the field together with the representatives of the Indian NGO. When they work at the office, the progress of the project is discussed by comparing the objectives of the project plan for the year in question and the activities which have actually been implemented and documented by the Indian NGO. Monitoring focuses on activities, indicators and budgetary matters from which pieces of evidence are examined in terms of receipts, lists of participation and so forth. In the field, representatives of the Finnish NGO organized meetings with beneficiaries, stakeholders and other possible partners of the Indian NGO. If it is possible to participate in a particular activity, for instance a training session or a regular group meeting, it is often preferred by the Finnish NGO to observe better how that particular activity is implemented.

Based on the research data, monitoring visits were perceived to be one of the most important elements of partnership between the Finnish and Indian NGOs. Most informants clearly took it for granted that partnership could not exist if the partners were not able to meet face to face on a regular basis. There are three ways in which the monitoring visit was perceived particularly important. Firstly, it was seen as an important tool to monitor the project implementation as the following extracts reveal:

> *Jotenkin se hankematka konkretisoi sitä yhteistyötä mun mielestä tosi paljon. Oikeesti siellä hankematkan aikana näkee käytännössä niiden toiminnot, mistä vuoden aikana lukee sähköisesti niistä projektiraporteista. (Informant 2)*
>
> *I think the monitoring trip made the project much more concrete. During that trip one can see the concrete activities which are described in project reports [sent by email] during the project year. (Informant 2)*

> *Onhan se siis ihan äärettömän tärkeetä. Et kaikin puolin se, mitä täällä suunnitellaan ja puhutaan, jos me ei tavata niitä hyödynsaajia, niin mitä järkee siinä niinku on. Kyllähän se meille antaa ihan erilaisen ymmärryksen siitä, mitä siellä kentällä tapahtuu, keitä ne ihmiset on kehin me halutaan vaikuttaa ja miten se on heihin vaikuttanu.(Informant 4)*
>
> *It is extremely important. It does not make any sense that we would plan here but never meet the beneficiaries. It gives us a very different kind of understanding of what happens in the field, who the beneficiaries are and what kind of impact the project has had on them. (Informant 4)*

> *I mean without the monitoring trip, I don't even know how it would be having cooperation with such as big amount of money and a big amount of activities and not monitoring them. (Informant 1)*

As the extract by Informant 2 shows, a monitoring visit concretizes project plans and reports to the Finnish volunteers. Activities which have previously been shown in written form become real and concrete. They are no longer words on paper but instead have a physical form in time and space. Informant 4 seems to refer to the same phenomenon by stating that the monitoring visit gives a different kind of understanding of what happens in the field, who the beneficiaries are and what affects the project activities have on them. When the Finnish volunteers see with their own eyes what the words in the project plan and other reports stand for and how the activities have an influence on the lives of beneficiaries, their motivation and commitment increases, as I discuss in this chapter.

Secondly, monitoring visits are perceived as a way of getting to know the representatives of the Indian NGO and their networks. Although partnership is typically based on the joint development intervention and its monitoring is the main reason for conducting annual visits in the field, personal relationships were appreciated and even treasured in some cases. Monitoring visits gave a face to those who represent the Indian NGO and brought a feeling of togetherness between the representatives of the Finnish and Indian NGOs. They had a chance to encounter each other as people:

> *Lisää semmosta yhteenkuuluvuuden tunnetta, kun tietää, mitä he siellä tekevät, millaista se on se heidän arki ja millaisia haasteita tai millaisia saavutuksia siihen kuuluu. (Informant 2)*
>
> *It increases the feeling of togetherness when you know what they do there, what their daily routine is and what kinds of challenges and achievements go along with it. (Informant 2)*

> *Onhan siinä aina se mahdollisuus tutustua ihminen ihmisenä toiseensa. Onhan se ihan eri asia olla yhteydessä ihmiseen, jonka tuntee, että on tavannut. Sehän on todella niinku verkostoituminen kotimaassakin on älyttömän tärkeetä, et tietää ihmisiä, jotka toimii samalla alalla, et toimii ihan samalla lailla. Ne kasvot antaa kuitenkin, et on paljon helpompaa ja matalampi kynnys ehkä. (Informant 4)*
>
> *There is always a chance to get to know a person on a personal level. It is a completely different thing to be in touch with a person you know and have met. That, like networking in your home country, is extremely important so that you know people who work in the same field, who work in the same way. It is much easier when you know their face. (Informant 4)*

Thirdly, as mentioned previously in this chapter, the informants perceived that monitoring trips were both personally and professionally important to them. Motivation and commitment to work increased when they observed what happened in the field. When the informants returned to Finland, they shared their experiences with other board members and in some cases with other members of their broader NGO:

> *Kyl se oli henkilökohtaisesti se hankeseurantamatka tosi antoisa. Kyl se toi motivaatiota siihen työhön ja tavallaan antoi ne konkreettiset kasvot niille naisille. Ja se että kuulee heidän tarinan, sen miten se meidän koulutus on muuttanut heidän elämää, niin sehän on ihan mieletöntä. Kyl mä luulen, että se loi, sekin että me tultiin takas ja pystyttiin jakaa se tieto meijän hallituksen kanssa niin se kyllä loi*

semmosta motivaatiota ja semmosta niinku yhteisöllisyyttä ja jotenkin sitä intoa ihan erilailla. (Informant 4)

Personally the monitoring trip was very rewarding. It gave motivation to work and also it gave concrete faces to those women. And when you hear their stories, like how our education project has changed their lives, it is amazing. When we came back and were able to share that information with the board of directors in our NGO, it brought motivation and feeling of togetherness and a new kind of enthusiasm to our own work. (Informant 4)

Monitoring visits were perceived to be a vitally important part of partnership but they did include certain challenges which need to be addressed at this point. Informant 1 argued that monitoring visits provided answers to numerous questions and uncertainties which were not answered when sharing information through emails and reports, but at the same time, new unanswered questions arose. The reason for this was that as Finnish volunteers received more in-depth knowledge about the project implementation, their capacity to understand different nuances of the implementation and to ask detailed questions accordingly increased. The project plan was complicated and included numerous activities and indicators which were challenging to cover in two weeks' time. However, Informant 1 did not provide any concrete examples of the types of questions which arose during the monitoring visit and remained unanswered.

The research data indicates that the Finnish NGO was not always sure how the Indian NGO perceived the monitoring visit and whether it was of importance to them. This was not very common in project planning visits but it sometimes became an issue in the case of monitoring visits. In fact, sometimes the Finnish volunteers had a feeling that they were bothering the Indian NGO because the latter had to organize their schedules around the needs of the monitoring visits and also because the Finnish volunteers were the ones asking more questions and observing all project activities. There was a general agreement among the informants that monitoring visits often played a more important role for the Finnish NGO than for the Indian NGO. However, this was only a feeling that the Finnish volunteers had, since the issue was never discussed with the Indian NGO.

Mä en sitten tiiä, mikä heijän näkemyksensä on, koska mulle jäi siitä hankeseurantamatkasta vähän sellainen olo, että se oli pakollinen juttu. Mä luulen, et se anto meille enemmän kuin heille se viimeinen matka. Varmaan se hankesuunnittelu oli heille jo paljon tärkeempi, koska siinä vaiheessa heidän *intresseissään on saada se rahoitus ja laajentaa sitä toimintaa niin sehän on varmaan kaikista kriittisin molemmille. (Informant 4)*

I don't know what their view is but I felt that the monitoring trip was sort of a compulsory thing for them. I think that the final trip gave more to us than it did to them. Probably the project planning was more important for them because at that time it was in their interest to get funding and expand their activities, which is the most critical phase for both sides. (Informant 4)

5.2.4 Decision-making

Decision-making processes were discussed in terms of project planning, changes made to the project plan during the project cycle, and the ending of the partnership. Based on the research data, the forms of decision-making depended on the decision to be made and particularly on who was believed to have the greatest knowledge of the situation. Based on the research data, two kinds of decision-making processes can be identified. Decisions were made either jointly after a lengthy negotiation process or then based on the initiative of one organization and later willingly or at times unwillingly accepted by the other partner. There were no structured decision-making models, but the processes were rather flexible.

As an example of joint decision-making, Informant 2 described in detail the process of planning a project continuation after the first phase of cooperation. Her description clearly shows that a great amount of independence was given to the Indian NGO at an early stage of planning in order to emphasize the importance of local ownership. The Indian NGO had a more comprehensive understanding of the local situation and needs and therefore it was given the freedom to plan the substance of the project. Later on, when the project plan was modified and finalized, there was a negotiation process which culminated in one week of intensive face-to-face planning during the monitoring visit. However, at first the only precondition which guided the planning process of the Indian NGO was the budget, since it depended on the terms of the funder and the self-financing capability of the Finnish NGO:

No ainakin jatkohankkeessa oli ajatuksena, silloin kun sitä lähdettiin käynnistää, niin he toimittivat tällaisen hankesuunnitelman, alustavan, että millaisia asioita siellä voitaisiin tehdä, kun hanketta jatketaan. Sen suunnitelman pohjana oli ollut tällaiset meidän antamat taloudelliset raamit, mitä oli meidän järjestön kanssa käyty läpi. Tavallaan minkälaisia summia omarahoituksella voitiin kerätä, niin siihen pohjaten. Sitten koordinaattorit kävi sen suunnitelman läpi ennen hankematkaa… Sitten seuraava viikko (hankematkasta) käytettiin niin, että ihan *konkreettisesti käytiin läpi suunnitelmaa kysymys kerrallaan. Sen pohjalta ruvettiin sitten muotoilemaan sitä lopullista yhteistyötä. (Informant 2)*

Well, at least when we started the project continuation, the idea was that they would provide us with a preliminary project plan which would include things we could do when the project continued. That plan was based on the financial framework which we gave them after consulting our NGO. It was based on the amounts of money we would be able to raise for self-funding. Then the coordinators went through the plan before the monitoring visit. The second week of the trip was used by going through the project plan question by question. Based on those discussions, we started formulating the final cooperation. (Informant 2)

Informant 1 reported that particularly at the beginning of the cooperation, most decisions were made by the Indian partner simply because the Finnish NGO and its coordinators did not have adequate knowhow of the situation in the field. Project coordinators had only worked for a short time in the Finnish NGO and they felt that they were not able to give many suggestions to the content of the project including activities and practical work in the field:

If we make some changes, basically they are made by their organization and we just accept them. So, mainly it is them doing the decisions. Of course they ask us if they do some changes. If we had some suggestions, of course we could tell them that how about this, but it's up to them if they accept it or not. (Informant 1)

They are aware of the local situation and the society there. They have the local mindset and they work with people who have the same mindset. I want them to do something that is good there, not something that we think is good there. (Informant 1)

Quite an opposite approach was taken when making a decision to end the partnership after three years of cooperation. It is always a big decision to end a partnership. The main reason for such a decision were sudden and dramatic changes in the personnel of the Finnish NGO and its crippling effect on the Finnish NGO. In such a situation, the only way out was to not extend the project and to take a year off before planning further actions. The decision was made unanimously by the board of the Finnish NGO, and then the Indian NGO was informed about the decision first through emails and later during the monitoring trip. Discussions were held between organizations although the initiative came from the Finnish NGO:

Aloite tuli mieltä. Se oli ihan hallituksen yhteinen päätös… Ja siitä kyllä informoitiin jo hyvissä ajoin, että hanke on loppumassa… Kyllä siitä läheteltiin sähköpostia ja käytiin silleen sitä keskustelua ja sit me siellä hankeseurantamatkalla keskusteltiin kasvokkain siitä, että valitettavasti nyt tilanne on tää. (Informant 4)

The initiative came from us. It was a mutual decision by the board. And we informed them well in advance that the project was about to end. We sent emails and then during the monitoring trip we discussed face to face that unfortunately this is the situation now. (Informant 4)

According to the informants, decision-making processes were flexible and variable depending on the decision made. Although decision-making processes had various forms, the final decision was usually made jointly by both partners. In order to make a decision, a relevant amount of information needed to be available and thus information sharing contributed largely to decision-making processes. It was acknowledged that when decisions were made, the terms of the MFA of Finland needed to be taken into account as a frame within which to negotiate. As the Finnish NGO was responsible for the communication with the MFA of Finland and was also aware of their terms and conditions, it was its volunteers who watched that the decisions made were in accordance with the MFA's guidelines.

5.3 Challenges in Partnership

Some challenges have already been addressed in previous chapters because of their relevance to the issues covered in that particular chapter, so in this chapter I focus mainly on other challenges. Challenges to partnerships were discussed with all informants throughout the interviews. Informants were eager to talk about the issue and some challenges were mentioned even before they were asked about. All informants acknowledged that there were challenges and other concerns in different phases of the partnership and that some of them were addressed properly in cooperation with the Indian NGO whereas others were overlooked due to their insignificance to the overall project.

When looking at the challenges discussed during interviews, it is possible to categorize them as internal or external challenges. Internal challenges were linked to the partner organizations themselves or to the established requirements of the joint development intervention which were often set by the funder. Some of internal challenges occurred, for instance, due to the small size of the Finnish NGO, lack of time, frequent changes in volunteers, the lack of previous management or cultural experience of volunteers and inflexibility in reporting deadlines. On the other hand, external challenges did not originate from the internal organizational structures of the partner organizations or from the official requirements of the joint development interventions as such, but related instead to factors which were independent from the organizational structures, such as cultural aspects. These culture-related external challenges included hierarchy, communication and language, lack of time and what was described as a local mindset of the recipient community. Internal challenges were mostly linked to the challenges within the Northern NGO whereas external challenges were a consequence of a conflict of cultures.

Some of the challenges were common to both Finnish NGOs and they were mentioned by all informants, whereas others were typical only for one NGO. All informants acknowledged that that there were several challenges to partnership. Some of them were considered internal whereas others were external in nature, depending on whether the challenges derived from within the organizational structures or more from the surrounding cultural environment. They were perceived to be inevitable when cooperation takes place with actors from very distinctive cultural and societal backgrounds. Despite the obvious challenges, all informants emphasized that they are a part of the cooperation particularly when working in an intercultural environment.

5.3.1 Internal Challenges

Internal challenges to partnership were faced regarding financial and human resources as well as organizational capacity, and they were addressed by all informants to some degree. Most of the internal challenges derived from the small size of the Finnish NGO and the voluntary nature of the work. At the time of volunteering, volunteers were either working or studying and therefore volunteering was something they did during their leisure time. A lack of time resulted in not being able to do all the work as well as the volunteers would have liked. Tasks and responsibilities needed to be prioritized and scheduled well. Informants perceived that there was not enough time for fundraising activities and communication with the Indian NGO.

Another internal challenge which was brought up frequently in all interviews was the high staff turnover, in other words changes in volunteers particularly in the Finnish NGO. Many of the volunteers volunteered only for a short period of time so that a certain amount of knowledge was always lost. All informants pointed out that the organizational memory in their respective organization was relatively short as there were no adequate ways of preserving information or no adequate introduction was organized for new volunteers. Particularly tacit knowledge was lost in a situation where most of the volunteers changed at the same time:

> *Siinä aina häviää sitä tietoa eli vaikka tietoa on kuinka yritetty koota sähköiseen muotoon samaan paikkaan, esimerkiksi muistitikulle tai projektikansioon, niin kuitenkin siinä perehdytysvaiheessa ei vaan pysty, kun nähdään muutaman kerran, niin siirtää sitä kaikkee tai uudet koordinaattorit ei, kun tietoo tulee paljon, niin millään pysty ottaa kaikkee vastaan. (Informant 2)*
>
> *Some part of the information always goes missing. Even if you try to collect it electronically, for example on a memory stick or in a project file, during the training period you just cannot, when you only see new coordinators a few times, to transfer all the information [to them], or the new coordinators cannot remember it all, when there is so much information" (Informant 2)*

> *Kyl se välivuoden pitäminen oli ihan siitä seuraus kyllä, et se rampautti sitä toimintaa kuitenkin, et yhtäkkiä lähti tosi monta. Siihen ei sinänsä liittyny mitään dramatiikkaa. Se kuuluu vapaaehtoisuuteen. (Informant 4)*
>
> *That year without a project was definitely a consequence of so many volunteers quitting at the same time, it crippled our operations. But there was drama involved. It's part of voluntary work. (Informant 4)*

> *Aina kun porukka vaihtuu niin, siinä on se riski, että se suhde ei lähde toimimaan, et voi tulla vähän sellainen ihmetys, et miks siellä vaihtuu koko ajan se porukka. (Informant 5)*
>
> *Always when the volunteers change, there is a risk that the partnership does not work anymore, [in the partner NGO] they might wonder why the people there keep changing. (Informant 5)*

As the extracts show, these changes were seen as a natural part of volunteering but still they had undesirable consequences on the operation of the Finnish NGO and in that way to the partnership with the Indian NGO. A high turnover in volunteers in the Finnish NGO made partnerships with the Indian NGOs challenging in terms of communication between NGOs as well as the sustainability and continuity of the joint project. As changes in personnel happened relatively often, it was important to highlight to the Indian partner NGO already from the early stage of the cooperation that changes in personnel do not mean that the work is not done:

> *Mä heti avasin tässä ensimmäisessä skype-haastattelussa tän uuden mahdollisen kumppanin kanssa sitä, että vaikka tässä vaihtuu ihmiset, niin se ei kuitenkaan tarkoita sitä, että sitä työtä ei tehdä. Se on semmonen asia, mikä pitää vaan hirveen tarkkaan avata. (Informant 4)*
>
> *I told the possible new partner already during our first Skype meeting that even if our [volunteers] change, it does not mean that the work won't be done. It is one of those things that you need to explain in detail. (Informant 4)*

The small size of one of the the Finnish NGOs was not only challenging for the NGO itself but it also raised concerns from the Indian NGO partner. Project management follows the same guidelines regardless of the size of the project. This means that the same guidelines for reporting apply to smaller- and larger-scale projects. Often this was a burden to the Indian NGO as they spent a lot of time managing the project. However, the Finnish NGO could not expand the project because then they would have had difficulties in fundraising the required amount for self-finance:

> *UM:n byrokratia on aina sama oli se (hankerahoitus) sitten 200 000 tai 20 000. Kyllä meille tuli sellainen fiilis, et se oli heille kuitenkin varmaan aika ärsyttävää tehdä niitä, kun se on tosiaan raskas koneisto. Raportointi ei oo mitään helppoa. (Informant 4)*
>
> *The bureaucracy of the MFA of Finland is always the same whether the project funding is 200 000 or 20 000 euros. We got the feeling that [the partner NGO] found it annoying to write reports because it is truly a heavy apparatus. Reporting is not easy. (Informant 4)*

The research data clearly shows that small-scale NGOs function from relatively diverse starting points. On one end of the spectrum, there are NGOs which do not have a clear organizational structure or volunteers who do not have any previous knowledge of project cycle management. Their main challenge is that project coordinators must learn the system before they are able to proceed further. On the other end of the spectrum there are organizations which are highly professional and their personnel are in fact their main asset. Informants 3 and 4 pointed out that it has never been a challenge in their organization to have enough volunteers with an adequate educational background or working experience. Their organization was extremely well organized and structured, most of the volunteers worked in the field of international development and they had strong knowledge and experience from it.

I have been a year in this project but I feel like really confused even now. I'm slowly getting into not being confused anymore but thinking about the situation that there is a new coordinator at the moment and I'm the one who should brief her. It gets quite complicated. (Informant 1)

Jos miettii nykyistäkin kokoonpanoa, niin meillä on kuitenkin aika kovanluokan tekijöitä siinä mukana. Se ei oo koskaan ollu silleen, et tää ois harrastelujärjestö. (Informant 4)

If you think about our current volunteers, we have real experts as volunteers. [Our NGO] has never been an organization for amateurs. (Informant 4)

Informant 5 argued that the nature of voluntarism has changed during the past few years, particularly since 2010. According to her experience, it is difficult to find volunteers who are ready to commit to one particular project and interested in working on it over a long period of time. She mentioned as an example that many people are willing to participate in individual events or hit the "like" button on Facebook for a good cause but they often do not have the time or resources to volunteer long term. One reason for the change can be found from the temporary nature of employment and therefore it is challenging for many people to commit themselves to long-term projects:

Mun kokemuksella mä sanoisin, että ehkä 2010 eteenpäin ehkä enemmän ja enemmän mä huomasin sellasta, et ihmisten on tosi vaikee sitoutua pitkiin projekteihin. Ihmiset haluu tehdä sellasta vapaaehtoistyötä, missä voi tulla tapahtumaan tai tykätä Facebookissa. Mutta sit kun täytyy tehdä hankehallintoa ja seurata sitä hanketta ja pitkäjänteisesti kerätä rahaa, niin se on hyvin vaikeaa monille ihmisille nykyään. Sen lisäks et on sellasia ihmisii, et he on vastuullisia ja on hyvii ideoita ja sitoutuu pitkäjänteisesti hoitaa hommansa, niitä on vaikee löytää. Mun mielestä se on sen takia, et kun pätkäsuhteet, työsuhteet on yleistyny Suomessa niin paljon. (Informant 5)

Based on my experience, I would say that starting from 2010 I noticed more and more that it is difficult for people to commit themselves to long-term projects. People want to do the kind of voluntary work where they can attend an event or click 'like' on Facebook. But when you have to do project management and monitor the project and raise money long-term, then that is hard for many people nowadays. In addition, even if there are people who are responsible and have great ideas or are willing to commit to do the job over the long term, it is difficult to find them. I think it is because part-time jobs have become so common in Finland. (Informant 5)

5.3.2 External Challenges

The main external challenges which were not related to the project design or organizational structures derived from cultural differences between Finland and India. Some issues mentioned were the lack of common native language or in some cases a common language at all, a dissimilar conception of time constraints and time-related norms and hierarchical social structures in India. The first two challenges were not mentioned by all informants and often when they were mentioned, it was also added that they only play a minor role and does not affect the partnership to a significant degree. A dissimilar conception of time constraints and time-related norms, for example, had never disturbed the partnership even if the Finnish NGOs were relatively stricter with the given deadlines than Indian NGOs. Also during the monitoring visits, the Finnish volunteers were punctual with scheduled meeting times and therefore often had to wait for the Indian employees. Eventually all reports were submitted either on time or slightly late which, however, did not negatively affect the project implementation or management activities.

A lack of common language was an issue in partnership formation. Those informants or their co-workers who were able to speak at least the very basics of the local language acknowledged that it made a huge difference in the partnership especially during the monitoring trip. It was not only a question of having a common language as many were able to speak some English, but it was more about being respected by the Indian partner for knowing the local language. In spite of time- and language-related challenges, power hierarchies within the Indian NGO and between NNGO and SNGO workers were the major concern which was addressed numerous times during the interviews. The Finnish volunteers were treated with a great amount of hospitality and kindness:

> *We were like kings and queens there. In some meetings, being in the front and being the one who is giving the money makes a challenge for me. I would like to stay as they are and sit next to them. (Informant 1)*

As this quote shows, Informant 1 felt uneasy when treated in a different way than the local people. Most of the other informants had similar experiences of receiving special treatment. Some informants struggled with how to interpret the way they were treated by their Indian colleagues. It was not clear for them whether the friendly behavior derived from a pure and genuine hospitality or whether it was because of hierarchical social structures. Some informants tried to imagine how they would treat the Indian partners if the latter were to visit Finland; would they be overly friendly, which would then be interpreted deriving from hierarchical social structures? As one of the informants described, it was not always easy to know why they were treated in a special way during the monitoring trip.

> *Sen voi varmaan tulkita kahdella eri tapaa. Joko tämmönen tietty kulttuurinen hierarkia ja kastijärjestelmän peru, että ihmiset on tapana lokeroida ja me länsimaalaiset ollaan sitten parempaa kastia. Tai sitten he vaan halus olla vieraanvaraisia ja ystävällisiä. En tiedä kumpaa, koska kuitenkin jos he tulis vierailulle Suomeen, vaikka johonkin järjestön kokoukseen, niin yhtälailla siellä varmaan sijoittais tuolin eteen ja siihen kokois ihmisiä. Jotenkin et nyt me on saatu vieraita ja heitä haluu vähän nostaakin jalustalle. (Informant 2)*

> *It can probably be viewed in two ways. Either it is related to cultural hierarchies or to the tradition of caste system that people are put in certain categories and we as Westerners are perceived to be better. Or then they just wanted to be polite and friendly. I don't know which one, because if they came to Finland, for example to one of our meetings, we would place their seats in front in the same way and then collect people around them. In a way that they are our guests and we want to put them on a pedestal. (Informant 2)*

How cultural differences were perceived on a personal level depended greatly on the previous experience of volunteers regarding the cultural context of the Indian NGO. On the one hand, those with some previous experience of volunteering or travelling in this particular country acknowledged numerous differences but instead of considering them as a challenge, they were perceived to be a natural part of intercultural communication and cooperation. Due to their previous experience, it was relatively easy for them to blend in with the local culture and work with the representatives of the Indian NGO. Local clothes and an ability to speak a few words of the local language were found to be helpful ways to meet the Indian NGO half way. Such blending in with the local culture was actually a surprise for the Indian NGO because they did not expect that the Finnish volunteers knew that much of their culture:

> *Mä huomasin, et se vaikutti ihan hirveesti heihin, koska he ei tosiaan niinku osannu odottaa yhtään, että minä ja meidän hankevastaava ollaan oltu siellä. Niin me jotenkin blendattiin aika äkkiä siihen silleen sisälle, koska meillä oli ne vaatteet kotona täällä ja me molemmat osataan olla silleen kohteliaita hindiksi. (Informant 4)*

I realized that it made a huge impact on them because they did not expect that I and our project coordinator had been there before. So, it was easy for us to blend in because we had the proper clothes at home here and we were able to be polite in Hindi. (Informant 4)

On the contrary, those with very little or no previous experience of the cultural context of the Indian NGO found some of the cultural differences challenging. They were perceived to be a major obstacle since the volunteers had a feeling that they were not able to behave in the way they wanted. The differences became emphasized during the monitoring trip because of the intense face-to-face interaction. Informant 1 recounted a personal situation in which she wanted to make friends with one of the employees of the Indian NGO but it was not looked well upon because of each woman's position in the hierarchy, and Informant 6 experienced challenges in negotiation processes:

I think it's sometimes a challenge that you're not able to act or do what you consider a good way of doing things because they see that it is actually a really bad thing… We made friends with one member of the office but later heard that the organization didn't like this friendship between us and this worker because we are seen as higher persons in a hierarchy and then we are making friends with this lower worker. (Informant 1)

Kyllähän siinä sellainen kulttuurien välinen jännite on olemassa. Mä luulen, että mulla ei ollut niin suurta haastetta siinä, koska olin kuitenkin ollut Intiassa.. Mä tiesin sen intialaisen tyylin, että siinä pitää vähän myötäillä sitä ihmistä, että sen kautta se ratkaisu tulee. Toiselle koordinaattorille se oli hirveen raskasta, et kun te ette nyt ymmärrä ja tää pitää tehdä näin ja rahoittaja haluaa näin. He oli hirveen paljon vastakkain siinä. Mä yritin olla siinä kahden kulttuurin välissä ja se oli hirveen raskasta. Me oltiin ihan poikki joka ilta. (Informant 6)

Of course, there is some kind of intercultural tension. I think that I did not encounter major challenges because I had been in India before. I knew the Indian way that you have to conform to people, that's how the solution comes. Our other coordinator found it terribly difficult because she felt that they did not understand that things should be done in a certain way and that the funder wants things to be done in a certain way. They were so against each other there. I tried to come between these two cultures and it was very hard. We were exhausted every night. (Informant 6)

When informants talked about cultural differences in terms of dissimilar ways of thinking and perceptions they often referred to *a local mindset* when they talked about the representatives of the Indian NGO. In their thinking, the notion of a local mindset referred to something considerably different from the mindset they were used to. Some informants found it hard to explain in detail what they meant by the local mindset but they did provide examples of situations which they thought represented such a mindset. They often referred to situations in which they did not feel themselves understood correctly by the Indian NGO. However, if the Indian NGO representatives had previous experience from a European or North American context, the Finnish volunteers felt that they were better understood:

> *I still don't know how to explain the local mindset. I have a feeling that sometimes I'm thinking this way and I want to explain it but nobody understands me and nobody listens to me. (Informant 1)*

Cultural differences were not always perceived as something negative. Although challenges existed, an understanding of cultural differences between partners and acknowledgement of those differences were emphasized. Some informants pointed out that it is important to take into account certain cultural values in order for the partnership to be functional. In these cases, apparent challenges actually became a way of learning about the world and the behavioral patterns of the volunteer herself. Attitudes such as acceptance and non-judgment were learnt through the cooperation. Informants also pointed out that when mutual understanding was achieved, it was a moment of pure joy. Eventually after all the challenges and disputes encountered, hard work paid off and a way forward was found. Diversity contributed to creating new ideas and relationships:

> *It has taught me a lot of acceptance and non-judgment. (Informant 1)*

> *Mä en nää pukeutumiskoodeja ja muita yhteistyötä rajoittavana, vaan että yhteistyö paranee, kun huomioi toisen kulttuurin arvot. (Informant 2)*

> *I don't see dress codes and other things as restricting cooperation, but instead that cooperation improves when you take into account another person's cultural values. (Informant 2)*

5.4 Elements of Partnership

5.4.1 Reliability and Accountability

All informants perceived that the Indian NGOs were reliable. In fact, reliability was one of the main reasons mentioned when discussing why the partnership was originally started or why it was extended from one project cycle to another, as in the case of Finnish NGO 1. Several justifications were provided to back up this claim; one of them being a high level of professionalism in the Indian NGOs and the second being the concrete results achieved by the joint development intervention.

Firstly, the Indian NGOs were considered to have a high level of professionalism and expertise in their field of work. They either had a long working history in the field or their personnel were highly professional and experienced. Both of the Indian NGOs had participated in previous partnerships with international donors and they therefore had a basic knowledge of how to deal with the bureaucracy of the international donor. The second reason why the Indian NGOs were perceived to be reliable were the concrete results achieved when implementing the project. This was considered as a proof of sufficient reliability. All informants argued that they never had to be worried about whether the project activities were implemented. When estimating reliability, monitoring visits and reports were considered to be an important measure.

When estimating the reliability of the Indian NGOs, it would, however, be too simple to conclude that there was an absolute consistency between words and action. Although all informants were content with the degree of consistency and did not mention any significant inconsistencies which would have had a negative impact on the overall partnership or the specific project implementation, it is necessary to note that reliability was generally discussed from a culturally sensitive point of view. Reliability was not expected to be as high as when working with Finnish partners, but it was gauged according to different standards as the extract by Informant 4 shows below:

> *Just ne aikataulut saattaa olla vähän kulttuurisidonnaisesti haastavia. Kyllä ne hoiti hommansa aina, eikä meidän siihen työnjälkeen tarvinnut koskaan mitenkään puuttua. (Informant 4)*

Schedules can be culturally specific and therefore challenging. Of course they always did their job and we never had to intervene to their actual work. (Informant 4)

Ovat he varmaan luotettavia, mutta varmasti myös tekevät sitä, että kirjoittavat sillä tavalla positiivisesti painottaen. Totta kai tuovat ensisijaisesti ensimmäisessä lauseessa kaikki hyvät asiat ja ehkä sitten jättävät haasteita sivulauseeseen. Oikeesti se syy on vaan, että totta kai kuka tahansa, jos sä kirjoitat jotakin raporttia, niin kyllähän sä haluat tuoda ne positiiviset asiat ensin esiin ja ne tulokset, mitä on saavutettu. Ethän sä nyt missään lähde liikkeelle negatiivisen kautta, jos sä haluat saada jotain aikaiseksi. (Informant 2)

They are probably reliable, but they probably also emphasize the positive when they write [reports]. Of course they first bring up all the good things and then maybe mention challenges as an aside. The real reason of course is probably just that anyone, if you write a report, you want to tell the positive things and achieved results first. You don't start with the negative if you want to achieve something. (Informant 2)

The extract by Informant 2 shows that in writing reports, the Indian chose to take a particular perspective. She explained clearly how it is natural to start from the positive outcomes and highlight them instead of concentrating on challenges or even failures. Informant 2 seemed to be aware of the fact that project implementation was perceived from a positive point of view by the Indian NGO, or at least this was the picture they want to give to their Finnish partner NGO. Later on, Informant 2 explained that this is also the approach she takes when working with similar issues.

Another example of how the reliability of the Indian NGOs was gauged by Finnish NGOs relates to the previous partnership experiences of the informants. The reliability of the current partner NGO was compared to other Southern NGOs and by doing so, it was concluded that the current partners were more reliable than with what they had worked previously. There had been corrupt activities and confusion in previous partnerships which was mentioned by Informant 6. In this regard, for instance, Informant 4 pointed out their NGO has probably analyzed too critically the challenges encountered in the partnership under discussion because after all, the joint development project was one of the most successful projects in which she had worked:

Kyllähän he oli läpinäkyviä suhteessa siihen, mitä oli nähny etelän järjestöjä. Kyl heilläkin varmaan on paljon monenlaista hämärää siellä, mitä me ei nähdä, mutta se on suhteessa siihen… Et jos me haluttiin nähdä jotain papereita ja tilikirjoja, niin ne aina näytti meille kaiken. Samantien tuotiin kaikki ja meille annettiin kopiot niistä. (Informant 6)

They were transparent compared to what I have seen among Southern NGOs. Probably they also have all kinds of hidden things which we can't see but… If we wanted to see some papers and audits, they would always show us everything. They immediately brought them to us and gave copies. (Informant 6)

When reliability was evaluated, the issue of corruption also came up. It was admitted that there is probably some level of corruption in the Indian NGOs, but it was considered to be minor and therefore insignificant in terms of overall partnership. For instance, Informant 1 argued that corruption is everywhere, also in their partner NGO and among beneficiaries. She provided an example of corruption in their partner organization and also explained how small acts of corruption were performed also by beneficiaries at the community level. She justified these acts by stating that because people are poor and they have very limited resources at their disposal, they are in a sort of competition with other community members. Therefore, she did not see people who were involved in corrupt activities as immoral but more as victims of circumstance. She provided an example of her observations as follows:

I think this is a really small thing and it's happening all the time everywhere. Like simple things that we give a game to play at schools and then we find out that the dices are in a bad condition. Then we ask where the right ones are, the teacher has taken them home and brought back the bad ones for students. Now his children have better ones. I don't think these people are bad. He somehow wants good to his children and then they are happy and smiling whereas it's not his children at school. It's the society there that you have to be in a kind of competition with others. (Informant 1)

Another aspect of partnership is accountability. It was perceived that the Indian NGOs were accountable to the Finnish NGOs and that the Finnish NGOs, in turn, were accountable to the MFA of Finland. The accountability framework came directly from the funder which was then operationalized by both partner NGOs in their cooperation. Accountability was often discussed in terms of Indian NGOs being accountable to the Finnish NGOs. They needed to adopt their organizational structures to match the accountability framework of the MFA in order to receive further support. It was acknowledged that the bureaucracy was overly complex particularly when joint development interventions were relatively small. The rules were perceived to come outside the NGO partnership which was sometimes considered to be a positive thing:

> *Toisaalta sitten taas onhan se positiivista, että hankkeella on jotkut raamit ja selkeät tavoitteet ja linjat, minkä mukaan mennään ja missä pysytään. Kun ne tulee ulkopuolelta ne ohjeet, niin ehkä se voi sitten tiivistää sitä yhteistyötä. Siinä ei tuu semmosta, että kumpikaan yhteistyöjärjestöistä kyseenalaistaisi toisiaan sillä tavalla, kun ne tulee ulkopuolelta. (Informant 2)*
>
> *On the other hand, it's a positive thing that the project has certain frames and clear targets and guidelines to follow. When the instructions come from the outside, it can sometimes make for a tighter partnership. Neither of us will question the other because [the rules] come from the outside. (Informant 2)*

Informant 2 pointed out that their NGO is also accountable to the Indian NGO in terms of keeping them updated with the activities in Finland. She particularly referred to the communication with the MFA of Finland regarding the acceptance of annual reports and other decisions made by the funder:

> *Tavallaan se, että he ovat tilivelvollisia meille, koska me olemme tilivelvollisia UM:lle. Se paine tulee meillekin ulkoapäin. Mutta kyllä mä näkisin, että myös meidän järjestö on tilivelvollinen heille siis silleen, että kun me saatiin vuosiraportti läpi ja se hyväksyttiin, niin kyllähän sen tiedon lähetti myös heille ja ilmoitti, että kaikki kunnossa ja homma toimii ja he olivat tyytyväisiä. (Informant 2)*
>
> *They are financially accountable to us because we are accountable to the MFA of Finland. The pressure on us comes from the outside, too. But in my opinion, our NGO is also accountable to them because when the annual report is approved by the MFA of Finland, of course we forwarded the news to them and informed them that everything is fine, and they were content. (Informant 2)*

5.4.2 Between Institutions or Individuals?

The literature on inter-organizational partnerships discusses the importance of the level of partnerships, in other words whether partnerships focus on individuals, groups or organizations. Mancusco Brehm (2004, 4) argues that although the issue is not straightforward, it can be suggested that partnerships often concentrate on a few individuals and departments within an organization. The concept of over-reliance on individuals refers to the vulnerability of the partnership model, since the power dynamics in the relationship do not only operate between Northern and Southern partners but also in the hierarchy of a single organization (Mancusco Brehm 2004, 4).

The level of partnership was discussed with all informants. Many of them stated it is important and needs to be addressed properly. Some of the informants had given some thought to the issue, whereas others were probably examining the issue for the first time. The research data indicates that there are two different ways of seeing the level of partnerships. The representatives of the Finnish NGO 1 perceived the relationship to be primarily between individuals whereas the representatives of the Finnish NGO 2 emphasized that the partnership is between organizations. All informants acknowledged that there are elements of both levels of partnerships because the formal partnership is between organizations as stated in the project plans and other official documents but that individuals are the ones representing their organizations. However, institutional organization varied widely between the Finnish NGOs and this had a large effect on whether the partnership was seen to be between organizations or individuals.

All informants from Finnish NGO 1 openly acknowledged that the partnership between their NGO and the Indian NGO was primarily between active individuals and not between the NGOs as organizations. Based on their interviews, it can be argued that the partnership was based on the behavioral patterns of individual actors, in other words how well the Finnish volunteers and the head of the Indian NGO got along. What kinds of forms the partnership took depended largely on their personal relationships and chemistry. The head of the Indian NGO was described as an emotional person who does not only cooperate on a professional level but in addition has a close personal connection with the Finnish volunteers:

> *Se on varmaan sitten kuitenkin hyvin pitkälti meidän koordinaattoreiden ja heidän toiminnanjohtajan välillä. Se varmaan johtuu osittain siitä kieli- ja kulttuuritekijästä, että vaikka hankematkalla tapasi niitä projektin työntekijöitä, mutta kaikkien kanssa ei ollut yhteistä kieltä, niin ei se yhteistyö päässy muodostuu niin läheiseksi. Piti kuitenkin tulkin kautta käydä asioita läpi ja sitten tulkkina toimi tää toiminnanjohtaja itse. (Informant 2)*

> *It is probably mostly between our coordinators and their director. This is probably due to issues related to language and culture, so that even if we were to meet project workers during a monitoring trip, we did not have a common language with*

all of them and we didn't have a chance to form a closer cooperation. We always needed someone to translate and the translator was always the director of their NGO. (Informant 2)

The head of the partner organization is an emotional person. She gets really personal contacts with these project coordinators. She has been talking a lot about the coordinators who have been there before. (Informant 1)

As the extract by Informant 2 shows, another reason for the partnership being between individuals rather than organizations is because of a lack of common language. Informant 2 pointed out that the Finnish volunteers did not always have a common language with the office and field staff of the Indian NGO and thus they needed someone to translate even the simplest conversations during the monitoring visits. It was a common practice that the head of the Indian NGO translated these conversations. In this way she was a part of the conversations even if the Finnish volunteers did not directly speak to her. Because of her translating what the other members of the personnel said, the Finnish volunteers had a feeling that they were not able to form a close working relationship with other employees of the Indian NGO and these relationships did not exist without the presence of the head of the Indian NGO.

Informant 1 also pointed out that the partnership only focused on few individuals from each NGO. For instance, the Indian NGO got to know only two Finnish volunteers at a time during the monitoring visits and they never met the other representatives of the Finnish NGO face-to-face nor directly shared information or communicated with them. As the Finnish volunteers were the only ones keeping in touch with the Indian NGO and visiting the field annually, they were also the ones who indirectly shared this information with other members of the Finnish NGO when it came to project implementation and progress. There was no direct contact between the other members of the Finnish NGO and the employees of the Indian NGO. Also the Finnish volunteers only shared information through emails with the head of the Indian NGO and did not stay in touch with other employees. In this regard, the roles of the Finnish volunteers in charge of project management and the head of the Indian NGO were emphasized.

In addition, the research data indicates that the partnership between the Finnish NGO 1 and its Indian partner NGO took place between individuals because of a lack of established and institutionalized practices in the Finnish NGO. As I have discussed previously, the level of staff turnover among the Finnish volunteers is high, there is not a sufficient amount of training organized for the new volunteers, and the organizational memory is short. All of these factors contributed to the fact that when new Finnish volunteers began working for the project, they needed to establish the partnership from the beginning because they had not received a sufficient amount of knowledge regarding the partnership. Also the annual monitoring trip to the project field contributed to this because Finnish volunteers participating in the trip were the only ones from their organization to meet face-to-face with the Indian NGO. As discussed earlier, this is an important factor when considering the relational dimension of the partnership.

On the contrary, all informants from NGO 2 argued that the partnership between their NGO and the Indian NGO was between organizations rather than individuals. This view was emphasized by stating that the partnership was not between individuals but instead between titles, in order words it was not an individual who was taking care of the partnership but someone who is in such and such a position and had the authority to represent the Finnish NGO as an organization:

> *Jotkut pienet järjestöt Suomessakin kokee sen vaikeena, et se on niin henkilövetoista ja me taas ei olla. Meille se on nimikekohtainen juttu, että kuka on hankevastaava, niin se ei oo se persoona, joka sitä vetää, vaan meidän järjestö. (Informant 4)*
>
> *Some small NGOs in Finland find it difficult, that it is driven by certain people, and we aren't. For our NGO, it is based on positions meaning whoever is a project coordinator is representing the NGO, not herself as a person. (Informant 4)*

> *Onhan se aina järjestöjen välillä siis periaatteessa se yhteistyö, mutta mä kyllä uskon, että mä oon jotenkin tullu siihen tulokseen, että oli se organisaatio ku organisaatio, niin sullahan voi olla vaikka mitkä prosessit ja mitkä järjestelmät siellä, et tavallaan institutionalisoituu se yhteistyö sinne, mut siis tää on loppujen lopuks todella paljon ihmisistä kiinni, et ketä ne ihmiset loppujen lopuks on. Niin se vaan on. Tää on niinku ihmisten välistä yhteistyötä. Mä en oikein usko siihen, että missään isossakaan organisaatiossa kehitysyhteistyöhankkeessa tai missään asiakassuhdehankkeessa jossain yrityksissä, niin toimis kauheen hyvin, jos ne ihmisten väliset suhteet ei toimis. (Informant 5)*
>
> *In principle, the partnership is always between organizations, but I have come to the conclusion that whatever the organization, you can have all kinds of processes and systems going on, that the cooperation may be institutionalized, but in the end it all depends on people, on who the people involved are. That's the way it is. This is cooperation between people. I don't believe that even in larger organizations,*

> *development cooperation projects or in any customer relationship, things would work very well if the relationships between people didn't work."(Informant 5)*

However, as Informant 5 pointed out, the importance of personal relationships was not underestimated although it was viewed that the partnership is between organizations. She argued that even though an organization has established and institutionalized structures, individuals play an important role in partnership. In order for the partnership to function properly it is important that individuals get along and their relationship is on a good basis. After all, individuals are the ones contributing to the partnership and cooperation with each other even if they represent a particular organization. Informant 5 continued to explain that she could not be friends with the head of the Indian NGO, so partnership is not a similar relationship to friendship but it is another kind of work-related relationship.

Whether the partnership was viewed to be more between institutions or individuals, a common factor for all informants was that partnerships were mainly based on implementing a joint development intervention. There were few or no other forms of cooperation. When cooperation was discussed it was always seen from the project point of view. Informant 2 pointed out that they had tried to launch other forms of cooperation but they were not that successful, due mainly to different expectations between the partner NGOs. For example, she pointed out that her NGO wanted to offer internship placements to students in their partner NGO but that not all experiments were positive. As the project already had various activities and was large in scope, there was enough work to do to handle it properly.

5.4.3 A Mutual Learning Process

When discussing how partnerships were perceived and what their primary function was, first and foremost partnerships were perceived as a mutual learning process and as give-and-take. The learning process was perceived primarily in two ways: the NGOs gained new professional skills and the volunteers gained new personal skills. A mutual learning process was perceived as a process to which both NGOs brought their complementary expertise from different fields. In other words, partner NGOs combined their efforts to achieve shared goals which were described in the project plan. This was also the point of the give-and-take relationship as it was perceived that both partners gave something from their expertise and then took the benefit from the expertise of the partner NGO.

The main expertise of the Finnish NGOs was related to project management activities. The Finnish NGOs were familiar with the terms and conditions of the funder including reporting guidelines, budgetary issues and the national development policy environment. It was seen that the Finnish NGOs brought knowhow on how to manage development projects funded by international donors and, in this regard, it was viewed that the SNGO would learn new competencies from which it could possibly profit in future cooperation with other foreign donors. The Finnish NGOs were capable of strengthening the organizational capacities of the Indian NGOs and supporting practices which might later become of use when searching for other international donors.

Although it was perceived that the Indian NGOs shouldered the main responsibility regarding the content of the development intervention, if the Finnish volunteers had an educational background in one of the project themes, such as education, they were able to contribute to the content of the project to some degree. However, it was perceived to be important to keep in mind that even if the Finnish volunteers had the latest knowledge and knowhow in the educational sector, they had to take into account the cultural context and therefore the final decisions regarding the project content were often made by the Indian NGO.

When it came to the expertise of the Indian NGOs, they possessed the local knowledge regarding development issues and the content of the joint project. All informants agreed that the Indian NGOs had a high level of expertise. They knew the field, including the policy environment, the geography of the region, beneficiaries, and other actors working in the field with which they could network. The Indian NGOs also knew the local situation of the objectives of the joint development intervention. They knew the educational and human rights situation in the community and its challenges, its greatest concerns as well as strengths and opportunities. They had often carried out background field research on the issues. In some cases, field workers originated from the community in which the development intervention took place.

The main issues which the Finnish NGOs perceived that they gained as an organization from the partnership were visibility and credibility. When project-related events were organized in terms of fund-raising or public relations, the NGOs gained visibility. In terms of credibility, the NGOs perceived that when they had direct contact with the Indian NGOs, they gained credibility to talk on behalf of them in political and other forums. Although credibility was perceived to be important, it was acknowledged at the same time that the mandate to talk on behalf of people who are not in the same room should always be dealt cautiously.

The learning process did not only take place at the organizational level, but personal learning experiences and the acquisition of new skills were emphasized by all informants. A personal level was often the level from which the informants started to describe the learning process and then continued to what their respective NGOs had gained from the partnership. What the informants personally learnt from the partnership were social and cultural skills. Their understanding of the cultural context of the partner NGO increased and therefore it was easier for them to cope with cultural differences as the partnership proceeded. Inter-cultural skills were mentioned as a primary learning outcome by those who had very little or no experience of the cultural context of the Indian NGO.

The volunteers' knowledge about development and human rights issues also expanded. As the Indian NGO had strong local knowledge of what was happening in the field, it was possible for the Finnish volunteers to learn from fieldwork in an authentic environment. This was considered useful, since many volunteers also intended to pursue a career in the field of international development. Those who did not pursue such a career but had a general interest in the world noted that the experience was still a valuable learning and working experience which gave them numerous transferable skills to exploit in their career aspirations. Often the value of the experience and things which were learned from the partnership were better understood after the volunteer period had ended:

> *Mä haluaisin ainakin nähdä sen silleen, et molemmat osapuolet siitä saa jotain ja hyötyy. Heille se on se konkreettinen rahoitus, jolla voidaan niitä kyliä kehittää, jolla voidaan lisätä koulutukseen ja terveyteen liittyvää tietoa sillä alueella ja sitä kautta saada parannuksia. Sit taas meidän järjestö tarjoaa jäsenilleen mahdollisuuden vaikuttamiseen, kehitysyhteistyön tekemiseen ja tarkoitus oli, että siellä ois mahdollista lähtee tekee harjoittelua ja projektikoordinaattoreille opiskelujen ohella saada työkokemusta. (Informant 2)*

> *I would like to see it as a beneficial relationship for both sides. For them, it is the concrete funding which enables community development and increases information about education and health, which in turn creates improvements. Our NGO, for its part, offers its members opportunities to make a difference, to participate in development cooperation, and the idea was that some could conduct internships there and project coordinators get work experience in addition to their studies. (Informant 2)*

Onhan kaikki hankkeet aina hirveen opettavaisia. Siitä etelän ja pohjoisen välisestä suhteesta ja tavallaan siitä käytännön kenttätyöstä. Onhan se ollu hirveen arvokasta. (Informant 4)

All projects are very much a learning experience. We learned about cooperation between Southern and Northern partners and also about the practical field work. It has been very valuable. (Informant 4)

As the first extract by the Informant 2 shows, the main thing that the Indian NGO gained from the partnership was concrete financial support. The financial support was seen as a precondition to developing communities and their educational and health related structures. The role of the money will be further discussed in the following sub-chapter 5.4.4 but at this point it is relevant to tackle the issue to some degree. As the financial flow was unidirectional, Informant 2 pointed out that their Finnish NGO did not gain financially from the partnership; in fact they lost because the volunteers were compensated annually.

As partner organizations brought their own cultural background into the partnership, cultural exchange and inter-cultural communication were described as a mutual learning possibility. The Finnish and Indian NGOs came from very different cultural contexts and this was particularly visible in a working culture. There were obvious differences in terms of conception of time, report writing and other issues mentioned previously. Informants described that they learned to appreciate cultural differences and be flexible when things did not turn out the way they expected. They also believed that the Indian NGOs learned from their way of working, for example when it came to concise report writing or being punctual with scheduled meetings.

A mutual learning process was not perceived as automatic. In order to learn from one another, the Finnish volunteers and the Indian employees had to be active and take the initiative. Particularly at the early stage of the partnership, the Finnish volunteers who did not have much previous experience had a lot to learn. As the organizational memory was short and appropriate training was not organized, the only way to learn about the project and the partnership was to be pro-active. The research data indicates that when the Finnish volunteers learned from the partnership as it proceeded these learning outcomes also contributed to the development of the partnership. When the volunteers had acquired more knowledge, they were capable of asking specific questions or providing their own opinions, for instance. Their tools to manage partnerships increased. As one of the informants pointed out, volunteering in project management was “learning by doing”.

Informant 1 pointed out that it is very important for their small group of active members to think about what they learn from the partnership and how the learning outcomes can be utilized within the Finnish NGO. As they are a part of a larger NGO which is involved in work other than development cooperation, they sometimes have to justify their activities. This became timely particularly when a project cycle came to an end and it was time to discuss whether the partnership should continue. The Board of Directors of the NGO made the final decision and there were members who do not support development cooperation activities or did not see why their NGO should be managing them. In this regard, it was important to have well defined justifications for the partnership or otherwise there was chance that the partnership would not be supported by the Board.

5.4.4 The Role of Funding

According to Malhotra (2010, 658-659), funding has played an important role in the evolution of relationships between NNGOs and SNGOs. The issue can often be seen as a largely one-way resource transfer relationship, since the finances flow from the NNGO to the SNGO. In addition, it is a question of the NNGOs' exercise of power. However, Malhotra (2010, 658-659) continues by arguing that in the case of small NGOs which have limited financial resources, the power relationship can be more equal and partnerships can be based on non-funding roles. Based on my research data, I argue that the Finnish NGOs have a strong funding role which brings certain elements to the partnership, but that when it comes to the content of the development intervention, the power relationship is relatively equal; in some cases the Indian NGO has more power over the content.

The role of the funding was not discussed with all informants but those with whom it was stated that the funding played an important role particularly in shaping the partnership between partner organizations. As Finnish NGOs were the funders and the Indian NGOs the recipients, the financial flow was unidirectional. All of the regulations regarding the partnership, including reporting guidelines and what kinds of changes were allowed to be made in terms of project implementation or the budget were set out by the original donor, the MFA of Finland, and the role of the Finnish NGOs was to oversee that the regulations were followed accordingly. Since following the regulations was a precondition for receiving the funding and the Finnish NGOs were the ones forwarding the terms and conditions as well as the funding to the Indian NGOs, they had the power to keep the Indian NGOs accountable to them.

The research data indicates that because of the impermanence of the funding and the project cycle model, the Finnish NGOs perceived that their Indian partner NGOs were hesitant to openly share challenges and discomforts over the project. This was generally common in the beginning of the partnership when the partner NGOs were still taking their first steps on the common path of partnership. It was interpreted that the Indian NGOs might have been afraid of losing the funding if the project implementation did not strictly follow the original plan or if surprising challenges were encountered. Informants emphasized that it was their job to remind the Indian NGOs that challenges are part of the project implementation and partnership and that it would not automatically indicate a cut in funding. It was emphasized that challenges, when dealt with properly, were a means of learning and developing. In fact, if there were no challenges or minor changes, it could have been considered suspicious.

The Indian NGOs considered funding to be easily available to the Finnish NGOs. The issue was brought up by informants from both Finnish NGOs, although in a different manner. Informant 1 from the Finnish NGO 1 explained that the head of the Indian NGO had told her during the monitoring visit to visit the MFA of Finland and to ask for a larger amount of funding. Although the head of the Indian NGO had lived in the Nordic countries and was familiar with international donors due to previous partnerships, it seemed obvious that she was not aware of the complex processes by which Finnish NGOs applied for and received funding from the MFA. This made the Informant 1 wonder whether the partnership was only for financial purposes.

A similar case with Finnish NGO 2 was explained by Informant 4. She told that their NGO was small and could only collect a small amount of money to meet the self-funding requirement. This affected the overall budget of the project because the MFA of Finland required that 15 percent of the overall funding must come from self-funded activities, from which half can be voluntary work but the other half must be money. Because of this self-funding mechanism, the Finnish NGO could not implement larger projects, since it did not have the resources to collect more self-funding to meet the requirement of the MFA of Finland. Informant 4 continued by explaining that the head of the Indian NGO was convinced of the capacity of the Finnish NGO 2 to fundraise more. She had a feeling that the head of the Indian NGO never had a realistic understanding of how small the budget of Finnish NGO 2 was due to the voluntary nature of the work.

The research data indicates that the role of the money in these partnerships was emphasized in two instances, at the beginning and at the end of the partnerships. The informants did not pay too much attention to the role of the money or how it might have shaped the cooperation while the joint development project was ongoing. The role of the money became important when a project cycle was coming to an end and it was time to decide whether to continue cooperation. Informant 5 argued that this was the only challenge in the partnership.

When it came to the end of the partnership and thus to the end of the funding, NGOs 1 and 2 had different experiences. NGO 1 had continued partnership from the first project cycle to the second and was now planning to extend it to the third cycle. The NGO did not have any experience of what would happen to the partnership when the joint development intervention came to an end. In addition to a joint development project, the Finnish and the Indian NGOs had previous collaboration in terms of sending Finnish students to the Indian NGO to conduct their study-related internships. This practice was not related to the development project funded by the MFA of Finland and there were no financial resources involved in it. This practice was carried out even without funding playing any role. Although most parts of the partnership were built around the joint development project, there were still other forms of cooperation between the NGOs which could imply that partnership was not only built around funding. However, Informant 1 was relatively skeptical about the issue as the following quotation shows:

> *I don't know how they would deal with us if, let's say for example, if the project is ending and they would know that they're not getting any money from us. I strongly had the feeling last year that they are doing many things for us only because they want to treat us in that way because they get the money. (Informant 1)*

As the extract shows, Informant 1 had a feeling that she and others in the NGO received special treatment because of their role as funders. She continued her statement by explaining how they were treated as kings and queens during the monitoring visit in the project field. She did not feel comfortable with the idea that she received special treatment because she represented the donor. The role of the funding, therefore, did play a role at least in the mind of the Finnish volunteer during the partnership and not just in the beginning and at the end when it had an emphasized role. The narratives of Informant 1 indicate that she did not feel at ease with her role as a donor. Informant 2 also pointed out that there was an interesting contradiction in her role because she was at the same time a young female university student, and a donor with some level of decision-making power. Particularly during the first monitoring trip, she had difficulties identifying with the latter role.

Finnish NGO 2 had an experience of ending a partnership. As explained previously, the decision to end the partnership was made by the board members of the Finnish NGO which then informed the Indian NGO about the decision and the reasons which led to it. Although the budget of the project was small and the bureaucracy heavy, Finnish NGO 2 perceived that the Indian NGO would have liked to continue the partnership in order to enhance its organization and its operational possibilities. When the project came to an end after three years, the Indian NGO opposed the decision. The main reason for opposing was its aspiration to build its organizational capacity and grow as an NGO. However, the Finnish NGO 2 did not see any other ways out of its situation when most of its active members finished their term around the same time. The Indian NGO objected to this decision, or this is how the Finnish NGO 2 perceived it:

> *Siinä vaiheessa totta kai, kun rahahanat meni kiinni, niin sitten tuli vähän sitä vastustusta sieltäpäin, mutta et raha kyllä tuli heille selvästi tarpeeseen ja heillä oli silleen, et halus pitää meidät rahoittajana. (Informant 4)*
>
> *Of course when the funding ended, they protested, because they were in need of funding and they wanted to keep us as their funders. (Informant 4)*

All informants pointed out that money plays a crucial role in the partnership because otherwise it would not be possible to implement mutual development projects. Whether there could be a partnership without the financial support is a relevant question to ask. Although money played an important role in the partnership, it was not seen as aid work as Informant 1 explained. She pointed out at one point in the interview that the Finnish NGO or its volunteers did not do aid work because the Indian NGO and its employees were the ones doing all the work that helped the community. The role of the Finnish NGO was only to provide the opportunity. Informants also emphasized that even though financial resources make the cooperation possible there are other considerations which are as important as finance which are brought to the cooperation by both partner organizations. This included an exchange of professional knowledge and knowhow such as local expertise from the side of the SNGO, as well as two-way cultural exchange.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this research was to examine inter-organizational relationships among Finnish non-governmental organizations and their Indian partner organizations which have joint development interventions in the global South. The study aimed at gaining an understanding of the various aspects of partnership which have an effect on the formation, management and ending of the relationship. It particularly focused on the process of partnership formation, division of labor and responsibilities, internal and external challenges as well as on issues of accountability and the role of money. The study also pondered the relational dimension of partnership. The study used the notion of partnership when referring to this inter-organizational relationship, but its main purpose is not to contribute to the ongoing discussion of whether partnership is the most relevant term to describe the relationship. Instead it focused on how the relationship was perceived by informants.

The first research question focused on examining how partnerships between Finnish and Indian NGOs started in terms of who took the initiative and what the reasons for starting a partnership were. Based on the research data, it can be stated that partnerships started from the need of the Finnish NGOs to find a new partner organization because their ongoing partnership was coming to an end. New partner NGOs were found through the personal contacts of active volunteers in the Finnish NGOs. They made the initial proposal to the Indian NGOs. As many scholars such as Brown (1996) and Lister (2000, 1-2), have pointed out, personal relations plays a crucial role in partnerships. Also timing plays an important role at this point because in order to form partnerships, both partners need to look for new partners. The beginning of the partnership was built around a common development project although some partnerships took others forms later on.

When the Finnish NGOs looked for a new partner NGO, they highlighted important criteria. First, it was important that the Finnish and Indian NGOs worked in the same field, for instance among gender issues or community development. In this way, the partner NGOs were able to contribute more to the joint development intervention. Second, the Finnish NGOs appreciated that that the Indian NGOs had a realistic project proposal and sufficient expertise to implement the activities. After all, it was entirely the responsibility of the Indian NGO to implement activities. Third, a good level of administrative skills and financial solidity were considered to be preconditions for the partner NGO. Since the Indian NGOs had previously worked with other international donors, they were aware of the bureaucracy involved in project-type interventions. These are some of the elements described by Lister (2000, 3) and Fowler (1998, 141) in their work.

The second research question aimed at examining the responsibilities and division of labor between the Finnish and Indian NGO after the partnership had formally started. Three types of responsibilities can be identified: responsibilities of the Finnish NGO, responsibilities of the Indian NGO and joint responsibilities. The Finnish NGOs were mainly in charge of collecting data from the Indian NGO in terms of the implementation of activities and the use of financial resources which was then reported to the funder in a form of annual reporting. It can be said that the Finnish NGOs were responsible for the final monitoring of the overall project and therefore they were the ones to keep the project progress on track. In addition, the Finnish NGOs were responsible for activities carried out in Finland including global education and fund-raising the self-financed share of the overall funding.

On the other hand, the Indian NGOs were responsible for implementing all project activities in the field. In addition to project activities, they also took care of the administrative duties in the host country including data collection, regular reporting, purchasing necessary items and paying salaries to local employees. When it came to joint responsibilities, information sharing, communication, and decision-making were considered to be the most important. Various forms of carry these out in reality can be identified depending on the information shared or decision made. Sometimes the Finnish NGOs took a leading role whereas other times the Indian NGOs were in charge.

The third research question concentrated on the challenges encountered in partnerships. Based on the research data, challenges were faced in all phases of the project cycle and they were openly discussed by the informants. The main challenge addressed by all informants was the small size of the Finnish NGO which created several constraints to the partnership. Since the project management activities were carried out by only a few active volunteers in the Finnish NGOs, there was always a lack of time as well as human and financial resources. The project management activities were run by volunteers who either studied or worked full-time. The voluntary nature of the work resulted in the fact that many people were not committed to volunteer over a long period of time and thus the changes in personnel were inevitable and constant. In this regard, one of the main challenges was a short organizational memory because the training of new volunteers was not organized properly or the tacit knowledge was lost due to inappropriate archiving techniques.

Other challenges were related to the cultural context of the Indian NGO although dissimilar perceptions seemed to be based on the volunteers' previous experience of the host culture. Those volunteers who had no experience or only very little experience of the Indian culture were overwhelmed by certain cultural differences, whereas those volunteers who had at least some level of experience and even some local language skills did not perceive cultural differences as strongly. The main differences were related to the concept of time, the hierarchical structure of the society and communication patterns. Although there were some obvious challenges, partnership was highly valued and considered to be a joint learning process.

The fourth research question tackled some important elements which were attached to the concept and practice of partnership. Regarding reliability and accountability, two important elements in partnerships, the Finnish NGOs considered their Indian partner NGOs reliable because of their robust experience in the development field, professional way of working and results achieved by the joint project implementation. However, it is important to point out that reliability was not expected to be as high as when working with the Finnish partners but was instead estimated using different standards. Reliability was generally discussed from a culture-sensitive point of view and therefore an absolute consistency between words and action was not expected. Accountability was highlighted regarding the Indian NGOs as they were the ones carrying out all project activities. The Finnish NGOs were seen to be primarily accountable to the funder, although some mentioned that they are accountable also to the Indian NGO in terms of keeping them updated.

Brown (1996) and Lister (2000, 1-2) argue that the current emphasis on organizational partnerships may not be useful but that instead greater recognition should be given to the importance of relationships between individuals. The research data clearly indicated that personal relations are important throughout the project cycle, although there was some dissimilarity in how the relational dimension of partnership was perceived. Some acknowledged that the partnership is mainly between individuals, whereas others perceived it as being between organizations. The justification for having a partnership between persons rather than institutions was that there were no stable structures or processes within NGOs. Instead, they changed according to the volunteers in charge of the project. Also, the emotional bond with the representatives of the Indian NGOs was discussed. However, those who argued that the partnership is between organizations backed up their statement by saying that the work is done by those who carry a certain title within the Finnish NGO.

Partnership was perceived to be a joint learning process to which both partners brought their own expertise, knowledge and knowhow. In general, it can be stated that the Finnish NGOs brought administrative skills to the partnership, whereas the Indian NGOs brought their local knowledge of the project environment. Learning was perceived to be both professional and personal. On the professional level, volunteers learned project management skills and increased their knowledge on international development issues. In terms of personal skills, volunteers learned intercultural and language skills as well as acceptance and nonjudgment. However, learning was dependent on the level of activity of the volunteers. As Ebrahim (2003, 18) shows, systems of learning play essential roles in shaping not only what NGOs do, but more importantly, how they think about what they do.

Malhotra (2010, 658-659) points out that funding plays an important role in the evolution of relationships between NNGOs and SNGOs. Based on the research data, it can be argued that funding indeed plays an important role, and that it is a one-way resources transfer relationship from the Finnish NGO to the Indian NGO. Its importance was highlighted particularly in the beginning and at the end of the partnership. Malhotra (2010, 658-659) continues by arguing that in the case of small NGOs which have limited financial resources, power relationships can be more equal and partnerships are based on non-funding roles. Although the partnerships in this research were based on funding elements, some volunteers argued that they did not consider this funding to be charity but as a means for the Indian NGO to function in its own field.

Olivier de Sardan (2005, 147) discusses the logic of aid-seeking which refers to making the most of external aid. This kind of behavior can also be identified in this research, since the Indian NGOs had the impression that it would be relatively easy for the Finnish NGO to receive more funding. The Indian NGOs were eager to expand their organization, but it was not possible without external funding sources. The informants perceived the aid-seeking behavior of the Indian NGOs to result in a more cautious behavior which would not endanger future funding possibilities. The present study indicates that this played a major role particularly in the level of openness when facing challenges in project implementation.

The conceptual tool of capital in development was introduced by Alnoor Ebrahim (2003, 17-19) regarding economic, symbolic and cultural capital. The relation of capital to power is most obvious in the case of economic capital which determines relations of economic dependence, as can also be identified in this study. At the one end of the spectrum, there is the funder with the most economic capital and power whereas at the other end of the spectrum there is the local Indian NGO with very little power over the funding, who must have all budgetary changes approved by the Finnish NGO as well as the MFA of Finland. When it comes to symbolic capital, it is again the Finnish NGO and the funder with the most amount of capital. These are highly respected by the Indian NGO and their beneficiaries, as can be seen from the analysis in sub-chapter 5.3.2. However, based on the research material, I would argue that when it comes to local knowledge and how to work in the field, the Indian NGO actually has the most amount of capital. Partnership is largely based on the exchange of these capitals.

As mentioned previously in this research, partnership is a contested and much debated concept because it has been used to describe all sorts of relationships between all sorts of development agencies. There is no clear understanding of the overall concept nor a commonly agreed definition (Fowler 1998, 139, 140; 2000, 3; Mancusco Brehm 2004, 1). This study indicates that there are various forms of partnerships which are implemented in different ways. Instead of arguing whether or not the notion of partnership is the most relevant to describe such relationships, the present study has focused on presenting the narratives, and perceptions of the Finnish volunteers regarding how they define and experience partnership and its different aspects. The Indian NGO was referred to as a partner, although cooperation was used more often than partnership when referring to the joint relationship.

6.2 Further Recommendations

Partnerships have been researched over the past few decades but there is much more to examine in the field. The role of the civil society is becoming more and more important in the world, where responsibilities which were previously considered to belong to national governments are distributed to other sectors of the society. It is important and timely to understand how these civil society organizations cope with the fast-changing world. This study has focused on understanding the establishment, management and end of partnerships between Finnish and Indian NGOs from a rather comprehensive point of view. Further recommendations concerns more specific issues which could be researched in greater detail. For example, there could be more ethnographic research on both the challenges of partnership and also the best practices. This would also provide other actors in the sector with valuable insights. Also, the issue of reliability would be interesting to researcher further in terms of how volunteers perceive reliability when working in an intercultural working environment.

In addition, the voices of local NGO representatives in the global South could be better attended to. This would provide a better understanding of how they see partnerships and whether their view is similar to the views at the Finnish end of the partnership. Another interesting topic would be to examine volunteers' personal experiences, as it became obvious during interviews that volunteers have a need to discuss their personal experiences as well as how they see the cooperation. In this research, all informants were eager to discuss their experiences openly and it was common that in addition to discussing partnerships, they also wanted to discuss how they personally experienced volunteering.

It would also be possible to expand the research on partnerships from the non-governmental sector to other sectors of society. Some of the most common forms of partnership such as public-private-partnership (PPP) and South-South-partnership are the subject of constant debate in current political and academic circles. In addition, partnerships between NGOs and the private sector are getting more attention in the development field but they are relatively little studied. However, it is an interesting field to explore because when you first look at the issue, you would think that NGOs and the private sector have such different approaches to development and core values that it would not be easy to find a common ground, not to mention work in partnership.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Sample Interview Questions

Background Information

For how long have you been working? When did you start working for the organization? What is your position? What kind of background do you have in development cooperation or experience about the country of your partner organization before starting working? How many are there in your organization working for the project? Do you get compensated?
How did the collaboration start in the first place?
How was the decision about collaboration made? Why was this organization chosen?
What kinds of challenges were faced at the early age of collaboration?
How would you describe your collaboration with your partner? What kinds of words do you use? (E.g. partnership, collaboration, development alliance, aid)
What kind of contract have you made with your partner, if any?

Collaboration in Practice

What is the collaboration about?
Describe the roles of your organization and your partner organization in your collaboration. What are the responsibilities of each organization? How are these roles different?
What kind of a decision-making process do you have with your partner organization?
How do you share information with your partner organization?
What works well or is easy in your collaboration?
What kinds of challenges do you face in your collaboration? What bothers you with the other organization? Are there any areas in which you feel your partner should improve its performance? Are there any issues which are sensitive to talk about with your partner?
How do the following effect on your collaboration

a) The small size of your organization, voluntary based work
b) Changing personnel/coordinators in your organization (How would the collaboration change if the people were different?)
c) Role of the donor (Ministry for Foreign Affairs): timetable, project cycle, reporting (How do you asses the role of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs?)
d) Geographical distance between organizations
e) Cultural differences: time, hierarchy, work moral

Is there any need to develop the collaboration? If yes, in what areas? What kinds of skills does your organization need in order for the collaboration to be smoother?
How well do you know the people you are working with? How has your relationship developed over years?
How would you rate your partner's reliability (consistency between words and action)?
How do you define the concept of partnership? What kinds of elements need to be there?
What do you see is the NGOs' role in development cooperation?
Why do you work in collaboration with a Southern NGO? What have you gained from your collaboration?