

# Unpacking the Complexity of Partnerships in Evaluation

Zachariah Su

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# Overview

- What is 'partnership'?
- Some moving parts to understanding partnerships
- 'How' partnerships feature in evaluations
- How have we evaluated partnerships? With what metrics?
- How could we be evaluating partnerships 'better' or differently?

# Introduction – Universalialia

Universalialia has a team of 22 consultants (16 women and 6 men), and offers services in evaluations, organizational assessments, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks and evaluation quality assurance

Experience in conducting evaluations of Global and Regional Partnership Programs, Single and Multi-Donor Trust Funds, as well as project-level partnerships

Recent clients include UN Agencies, International Financial Institutions, Philanthropic Foundations and international and national NGOs, and non-profit organizations

Thematic areas in which we've evaluated partnerships include education, food and nutrition security, rural livelihoods, emergency response and preparedness, water security, health

# A buzzword?



# Some moving parts to understanding partnerships

**Why the partnership?** Drivers, rationale, and purposes of organizations/entities coming together:

- Driven by funding, e.g. donor-recipient, grantee-grant maker relationships
- Initiative-specific collaboration, e.g. collaboration through joint programmes/projects
- Strategic alliances or platforms for shared action towards a range of collective objectives

**Who is in the partnership?** What kinds of entities, and at what levels?

- Global, regional, or national partnership programs; project-level partnerships among ...
- ... donor agencies, multilateral agencies, government institutions, NGOs, community-based organizations, private sector entities, among others

**What is being exchanged through the partnership?**

- Knowledge and information; advocacy and policy dialogue; technical capacity and expertise; communications, calls to action, and network-building; funding

**Related to the why - What are the theoretical underpinnings of the partnership?**

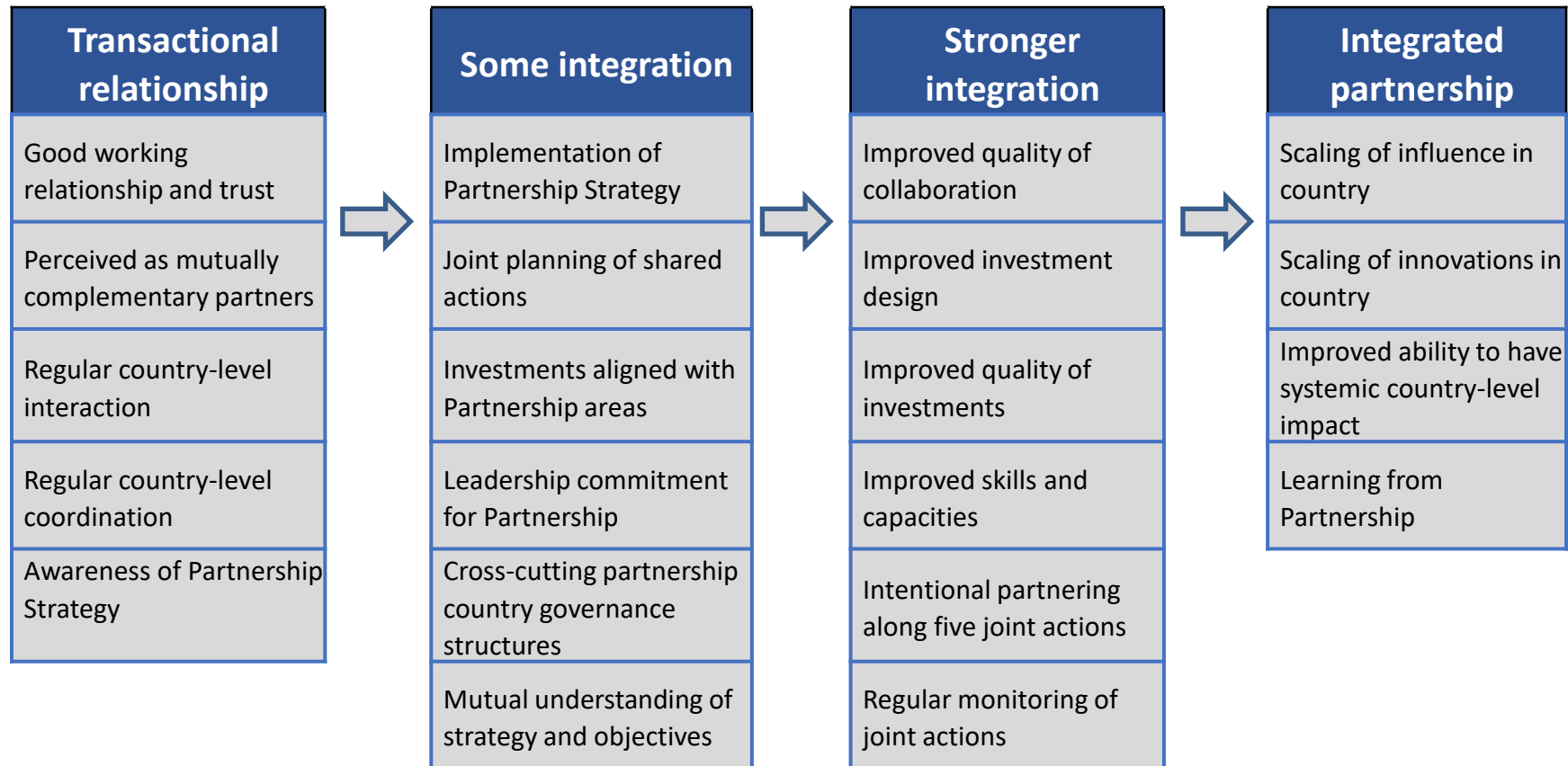
- Structural versus relational perspectives
- Other enablers or 'moving parts', e.g. local or national culture, organizational culture

**Underpinning all of this, SDG 17 – the need for intentional collaboration to tackle the big issues in international development, in the context of the SDGs.**

# How partnerships have featured in our work

- As principal subject of evaluation / as the principal ‘initiative’ for which MEL frameworks are developed (e.g. performance measurement frameworks, Theories of Change)
- As a sub-question, or line of inquiry
- As criterion: Coherence
- As ‘something in the background’ of the evaluation
- **Partnerships as Programs / Partnerships as Relationships**
  - Assessing partnership contributions to programmatic results VS Assessing partnership performance ‘in and of itself’

# Example: Continuum to track progress in a relationship



1

2

3

4

# Organizational Enablers for Partnerships



Proximity of individuals across organizations



Leadership support



Awareness of partnership arrangements



Mutually agreed vision, goals and activities



Convening



Governance functions for partnerships



Metrics for measuring effectiveness of partnerships



Contextualization



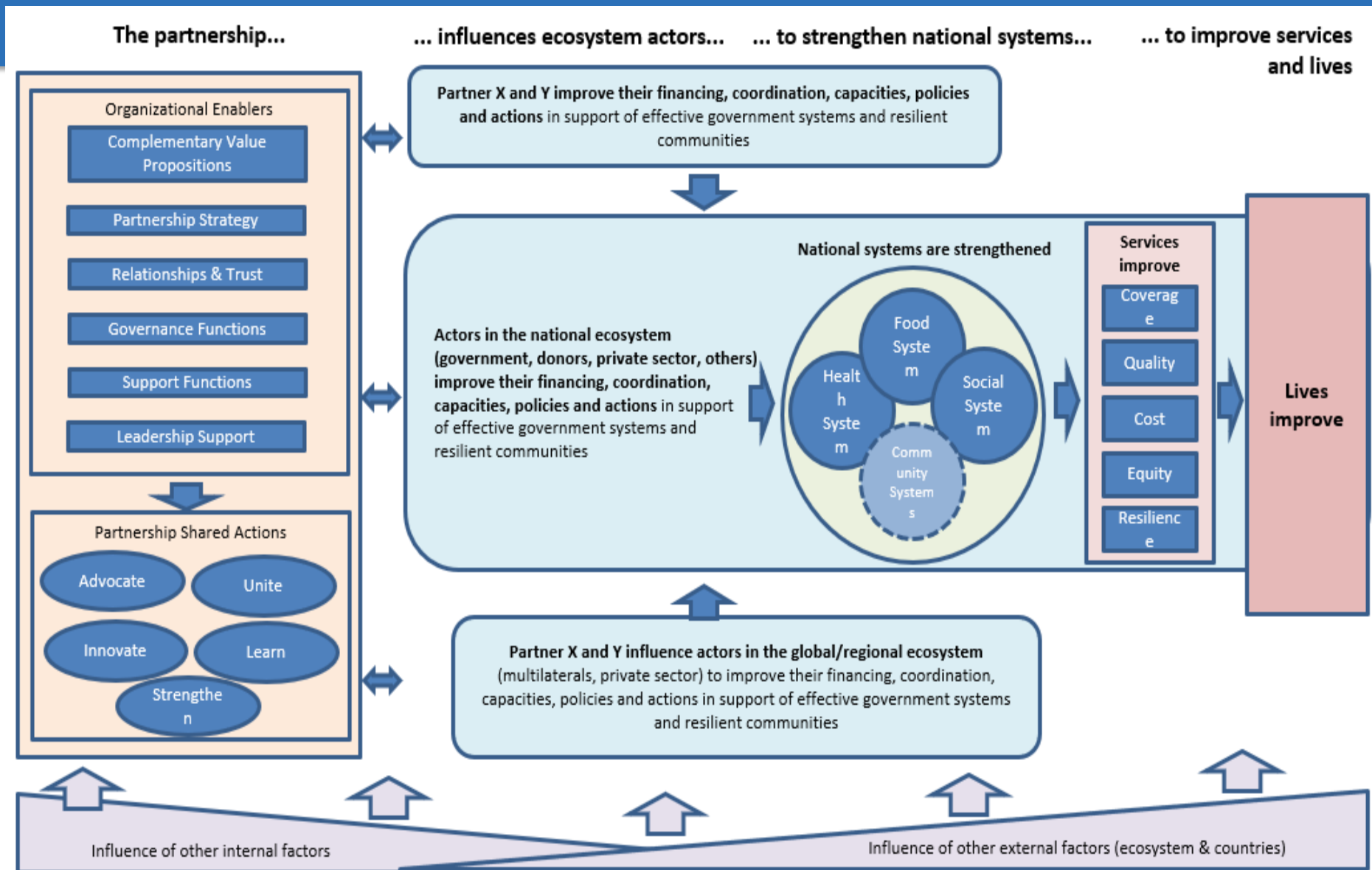
Trust



Resources



# Example of Theory of Change





# Metrics

- Scarcity of metrics for measuring effectiveness of partnerships
  - ✓ “good partnering”
  - ✓ desired changes in the relationship
  - ✓ value add of the partnership
- Responsibilities for measuring *results* usually clear, responsibility for measuring *effectiveness of partnership* is fuzzy
- Putting in place metrics entails commitment of resources (people, time and funds)

# How could we be doing things 'better' or differently?

Some proposed responses to 'So What'?

- Assessing partnership performance 'in and of itself,' entails an examination of power dynamics between partnering entities
- Evaluating partnerships means embracing complexity – unpacking dilemmas and conundrums faced by entities that are working together towards effecting change in complex issues

Yet, one could ask...

- Time and Resources required to nurture a partnership: are they worth the results?
- To what extent can the local and national culture within which a partnership finds itself be more a part of this conversation? Organizational culture?
- To what extent does what we present align well with the need for increased attention on gender, equity and inclusion? To what extent is there adequate attention on who is not 'at the table'?

# Thank you