

# PARTNERSHIP POLICY

**Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)**  
**Fund for Governance and Human Rights Initiatives**

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Partner selection of MJF.....	1
3. Rationale for Partnership Policy.....	1
4. Principles guiding the Policy.....	2
5. Initiating the Partnership; .....	2
6. Formalizing the Partnership.....	3
7. Developing and Maintaining Partnerships.....	4
7. Evaluation.....	5
8. Audit.....	5
9. Handling complains and irregularities.....	5
10. Project completion .....	7
11. Roles and Responsibilities.....	8

## **1. Introduction**

During 2002 to 2005, Manusher Jonno as CARE-Bangladesh project worked with approximate 100 organizations in partnerships. This includes different types of organizations all over Bangladesh and followed the CARE Bangladesh Partnership Policy which was written on the lessons learned from CARE's vast experience of partnership. The basic difference between CARE's partnership and MJ's partnership is MJ's partners implement their own project they are not sub-contracted for implementation of donor's program.

In April, 2006 Manusher Jonno became an independent organization as Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and realized to adopt a partnership policy for effective relationship with it's partners. Some of the major basic principles of MJF's partnership policy is adopted from CARE's Partnership Policy.

At present, Manusher Jonno Foundation works primarily with the organizations that are registered with NGOAB or Social Welfare Department through grant support. Although MJF has developed and implemented at a smaller scale from its operational budget, formal partnership with other organisations and agencies, Community Based organisations, trade unions and activist groups, the diversity in the types of organisations with whom MJF is likely to increase in the future. The possibility of working with commercial and private enterprise and GOB sector is also in effect. An attempt has been made to keep the policy flexible to accommodate the wide variety of organizations as well as the different types of arrangements that may occur in the future.

**This partnership policy includes a series of standards to guide projects in undertaking partnership. MJF expects Partners of MJF partners also follow the similar policies to make their partnership effective with other organizations.**

## **2. Partner selection of MJF:**

***Partnerships can be defined as “formal, mutually beneficial relationships based upon a common goal and a vision, which are an integral part of project strategy. Partnerships are based upon mutual trust and respect, are characterized by shared responsibility and accountability, and result in shared ownership of the outcomes.”***

MJF provides fund to organizations and follows a definite system for partner selection. Final approval of partner selection comes from the Governing Board via sub-committee review. By the end of 2008 MJF expects that the total number of partners will be 150.

## **3. Rationale for Partnership Policy:**

The Partnership Policy will be an important process toward transforming partnerships as organizational arrangements. As a distillation of lessons learned from current and past experiences, the policy will assist MJF and partners in clarifying specified steps within the various phases of partnerships in a systematic fashion.

The Partnership Policy will serve as the basis for adopting a unified MJF approach toward the partnering arrangements. The policy will encourage all partners and MJF to incorporate a set of values that guide in determining the development of relationships.

The policy will promote a process of transparency desired in developing effective partnerships. The policy will assist in setting standards to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of partnerships.

#### 4. Principles guiding the Policy:

MJF identified the following guiding principles for partnership

- **Mutual trust and respect:** Mutual trust and respect is demonstrated by respecting the priorities of the partners, creating opportunities for partners to participate in decision making, and valuing their opinions.
- **Joint Accountability** In a successful partnership, both partners are responsible for achieving the goals, objectives, and outputs of the project. Each partner is therefore responsible to the other for the tasks they have undertaken, as well as in communicating their perception of the most appropriate means of effective project implementation. An open communication process will include ongoing explicit dialogue so that each of the partners has similar perceptions of each other's responsibilities.
- **Transparency** refers to the degree of openness in a partnership and implies a degree of information available to each other. Transparency, however, is not to be achieved at the cost of organizational integrity, which must be maintained and respected by both partners.
- **Two-way learning:** Partnerships should result in mutual benefit based on respective experiences and strengths. In this regard it is important to distinguish what each partner expects and can learn from one another.
- **Commitment** refers to the degree of importance placed on the joint initiative by each of the partners. Commitment is demonstrated through timely allocation of resources, quick response, and flexibility in approach.
- **Joint Participation:** Successful partnerships are based upon principles of equality, despite the differences in strength and resources. Both partners should be involved in the decision-making process. Joint participation as well implies an effort in facilitating participation of staff at different positions within each of the organizations.
- **Shared ownership:** An effective partnership results in benefits for both organizations with results owned jointly by both partners.

The concepts are interrelated and are not mutually exclusive. The degree to which they are manifested will depend on the length of partnership, with clearer manifestation as the partnership progresses.

The Partnership Policy is presented in different sections that present the process from its inception to closing and is applicable to current and future projects.

#### 5. Initiating the Partnership;

MJF looks for the following criteria into the process of partnership initiation:

- ❖ **Organisations with compatible visions:** Compatibility in vision which includes the issues of promoting human rights and governance is the most important for initiating a partnership with MJF.

- ❖ **Organisations with high credibility amongst stakeholders:** MJF will partner with organisations respected by key stakeholders. Each project should identify the stakeholders depending on the types of partner in the selection process.
- ❖ **Partners should respect diversity:** Organisations that appreciate diversity in culture, religion, class, caste and gender will be selected as partners of MJF's in development.
- ❖ **Partners' internal governance:** Organizations should have a well defined constituency to whom they are obligated. Proper functioning EC/Governing Board and acceptable internal governance system is a prerequisite for MJF partnership.
- ❖ **Partners should be sensitive to environmental concerns:** MJF will ensure that its partners are not involved in activities that harm the environment.
- ❖ **Organisations committed to the empowerment of women:** Potential partners should promote the full participation of women in designing, planning and implementing project activities. Their organisation should be committed to equal opportunities of women and men for employment and promotion.
- ❖ **Legal status of the organization:** Partners must be registered with the Department of Social Services and or the NGO Affairs Bureau, Bangladesh.
- ❖ **Sub partnering:** MJF encourages sub partnering of the partners, which will provide opportunity to MJF to produce multiplier effect of working with human rights and governance. MJF expects that the partners would follow similar partnership policy with their partners.

## 6. Formalizing the Partnership

After identifying appropriate partners, the partnership is formalized through the process of specifying responsibilities, terms of accountability, expectations and limitations, which will culminate in a formal agreement between two organizations. All partnerships will be formalized through a “Deed of Agreement (DoA)” the most commonly used document to legalize the arrangement. A team was involved to develop a prototype Agreement tool which was scrutinised by legal expert to ensure its validity. This DoA was shared with the partners for their comments and understanding.

- The DoA should be between two organisational entities: All DoAs should be signed by the appropriate representative for MJF (nominated by GB) and the Chief Executive Officer or Head of the Institution of the partner organisation (as per constitution and or by Power of Attorney if differ from constitution.)
- The DoA is to be developed at the end of the process through which specific roles, responsibilities, expectations, and limitations are clarified.
- The Directors of MJF will review the DoA to ensure that all necessary clauses are added in it.
- A **certified true copy** of the DoA will be given to the partner.

- The partner of MJF should have same type of DoA with their partners if any.

All DoA shall include the following:

- A generic **General Agreement** with a section on miscellaneous clauses where additional points may be added by the user project, if at all required.
- **Specific Sections** that entail details of project-specific terms and conditions agreed upon by MJF and the partner.
- An **Action Plan** for the activities and outputs to be implemented under the DoA.
- A **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**
- A breakdown of costs – the **Budget** – attached separately, as applicable.
- Policy Towards Irregularities.

## 7. Developing and Maintaining Partnerships

This section will highlight some essential salient points related to the process of developing and maintaining effective partnerships.

1. **Partners as individual organizations:** MJF ensures that the unique features and strength of each organization are recognized and valued. Partner should have a well functioning EC/GB who provides support and guide the organization for programming and establishing fair internal governance system which also ensures gender equality in the organization.
2. **Follow-up and Feedback:** A follow-up and feedback system should be in place for each partner. Appropriate contact person for each organisation should be identified and introduced to each partner.
3. **Capacity Strengthening Process:** One of the important objectives of MJF is capacity development of partner organizations. It should develop a process that takes into account each organization's strengths and weaknesses. The partner organizations are involved in all stages from needs-assessment to training plans and the provision of inputs. The NGO have full ownership on the process of capacity development. A large part of the capacity development activities are initiated and managed internally by the NGOs and the primary focus of capacity development is not the project rather the organization itself. MJF employs its core competencies to the capacity development of the partner NGOs.
4. **Two-way institutional development:** Partnerships contribute to MJF's experience in development. Partners may create forum to share experiences and establish an environment conducive to critique.
5. **Financial Management:** Financial management includes **budgeting and finance monitoring**. MJF has developed a specific financial monitoring system, which has been compiled in separate financial guidelines to be applicable for all partners. MJF will ensure that the requirements for financial management are discussed with and clearly understood by the partners. Wherever possible, partners can follow their own existing financial management system as long as MJF financial management regulations are covered. The budget should be sensitive to the needs and the activities planned by each partner. The approved budget can be revised after one year of the project period by keeping the global budget intact unless the change is vigorously justified by the contact person.

**6. Program monitoring:** All projects working with partners will develop systems to monitor the program, their outputs and impact. Monitoring includes ongoing and periodic assessments that determine if (1) the plan is proceeding according to schedule, (2) the inputs are properly utilized, and (3) the outputs and effects of project activities are being realized. The quality of partnerships as well as the quality of activities will be monitored. However, MJF does not compromise in ensuring comprehensive and effective monitoring system that targets each of the three levels of project implementation mentioned above.

**7. Evaluation**

Programmatic evaluation of all projects will be done to see the achievements and impacts in comparison to the objectives set out and agreed in the project proposal. All the three years duration projects will have a midterm evaluation and the other project of lesser (2 years) duration will have end project evaluation. MJF will propose the name of Consultants for this purpose from MJF Consultant's data pool and finally partners will commission the assignment. The results will determine future potential types of relationships that may evolve or be developed.

**8. Audit**

All projects shall be audited for transparency and accountability of the fund used by the partner. Both internal and external audit provision shall be kept for the project.

a) **Internal audit**-Internal audit may be instituted by MJF, however, if feasible, it may also be instituted by the partner itself either from their own internal audit department or by recruiting internal auditor. The internal audit report shall be shared with the partner and the partner will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations of the internal auditor. MJF may take their own decision based on the report of internal auditor.

b) **External audit**- For the annual audit of the project, the external auditor shall be appointed by MJF under certain ToR. The ToR shall be shared with the partner. The fees for the external audit shall be kept in the partners' budget. The Partner shall not appoint the auditor unless under certain circumstances mutually agreed upon by both the parties. The external auditor's recommendation shall also be implemented by the partners.

**9. Complains and irregularities Handling:**

MJF receives complaints against different irregularities from various sources and in different forms like letter, fax, phone call etc. Majority of these complaints are against the management of partner organizations from their previous or existing staff and other NGOs, donor and also from other stakeholders. MJF also receives few complaints against some MJF staffs. Investigation does not only take place for outside complaints, it is also decided when MJF internal team apprehends high risk irregularities during monitoring, then it is suggested to go for investigation.

**a. Type of complaints will be addressed:**

- Written complaints submitted by name with full particulars.
- Complaints identified by finance and program monitoring.

**b. Complain are not taken into consideration if:**

- Anonymous
- Verbal complaints
- Complaints under trial
- Not related with MJF project activities

However, if the Committee feels that though the complaint is anonymous, but it carries significant gravity and helpful of MJF, the committee can recommend for consideration and next course of action.

**c. General principles to be followed:**

For the complaints against the partners who are implementing projects:

- Confidentiality will be maintained regarding the complaint/s;
- TOR will be discussed with implementing PNGO before finalizing it;
- Before finalizing the investigation/review report, it will be shared with implementing the partner
- Investigation report findings with PNGOs comments will be sent to respective implementing partner's board
- Investigation file should be maintained by the investigating committee.

For the complaints during appraisal stage:

- Confidentiality
- Related reference will be checked very strongly
- Rejection letter ( if proved) may provide some hints

**d. How to handle:**

*i) Complaints against partners:*

**Recording of Complaints-** As soon as a complaint is received, it should be recorded in a register to be maintained by the Member Secretary of the Committee. The Director-F & A shall act as the Member Secretary of the Committee who shall perform the administrative work of the committee.

All written complaints should go to a committee consists of the Director Finance & Admin, Director-Governance, Adviser M & E & Programme Manager (PM). The PM position in the committee will rotate considering the complaint. This committee will decide the next course of action considering the extent and reliability of the complaint and will share with the SMT.

The constitution and duration of the committee shall be decided by the SMT and atleast one quarterly meeting of the committee shall have to be organized to see the progress and issues of complaints.

If Committee recommends for an Investigation, they shall develop a ToR and suggest whether the Investigation Committee members should be from within MJF or Outside MJF or a combination of both. The MJF management should then inform the PNGO or the complaint about the investigation. The Investigation report shall be shared with the PNGO.

**Review and recommendation of Investigation report response-**The Investigation report response must be reviewed by the Complaints Handling Committee and recommendation to be placed to the Executive Director.

*ii) Complaints against MJF staff:*

Same process will be adopted in case of any complaints against MJF staff. For investigation of this type of complaint ED of MJF will form a committee with a specific Terms of Reference.

## **10. Project completion**

There are various ways to conclude a MJF supported project.

**a) Next phase of the project:** After completion of the project period the project can get approval for implementation of next phase if the program and finance contact people recommends and the evaluation findings are positive.

**b) Separation:** The selection process of MJF takes six months to begin partnership with a new organization. It involves lot of resources so it is not very easy decision to discontinue the partnership. However, separation of the partnership may be the best option if the arrangement is not yielding the results desired. In the following situation decision of separation can be happened:

- Project is not achieving desired output which was mentioned in the approved project proposal,
- If the partner is found to be supporting discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, caste, and class.
- If the partner is found to be involved in misappropriation of resources, especially the Chief Executive is engaged in such offences and the BOARD doesn't take the responsibility and action.
- If the partner is too closely affiliated with a political party or engages in conflict of interest due to this affiliation and detrimental to the goal and objectives of the project.
- MJF changes its' priority areas and focus.

Separation can be undertaken through offering withdrawal of partnership by the partner itself or MJF can terminate the partnership by issuing official letters. Both partners will have the right to terminate the partnership if the conditions mentioned in Agreement are violated. Another situation of separation is closing of partnership at the end of the project without renewal or extension. In this case, the Chief Executive of the NGO may be called to inform the inability of MJF or simply an official letter may be issued.

**c) Procedure of separation-** When MJF decides that a partnership cannot be continued, it will arrange a bi-lateral meeting with the concerned NGOs. The Chairman or General Secretary of the Board or EC committee and the Chief Executive of the NGO shall be invited. They shall be offered to withdraw the partnership within a certain date. If the offer is not accepted or delayed in receiving the offer of withdrawing partnership, the MJF Management shall issue letter of termination with specifying terms and conditions. However, decision of

Termination must be approved in the SMT and before that recommendation must be obtained from both the Programme and Finance Contact Person.

In case of serious complaints which are ethically and morally cannot be accepted, withdrawal option shall not be offered.

Taking back of Assets of the convicted NGO shall be intimated by MJF in the final letter of termination or acceptance of withdrawal.

In case of withdrawal of partnership, the NGO can apply with a fresh PCN after one year of withdrawal but in case of termination, the NGO will be black listed and will never consider for partnership with MJF.

If the partner withdrawal the partnership or MJF terminates the partner, this shall be notified to other partners associated with this partner.

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

The Partnership Policy can only be implemented through a thorough process of promoting and realizing its uniform understanding, which necessitates an ongoing continuous support system. In order to accomplish this, various sections and departments in MJF need to proactively remain engaged in the process.

**The Partnerships Group:** The Partnerships group will take on the responsibility of communicating and disseminating the policy to the various parts of the organization and partners. This group will also assume the responsibility of ensuring compliance of the policy in developing new initiatives and assessments. The Partnerships Group will be comprised of Senior Management Team (SMT) with the mandate to ensure wide acceptance of and adherence to the Partnership Policy across all projects. Issues of disputed partnership will be discussed in this group for final decision.

## **12. Adaptation and Review:**

The Governing Board of MJF approved the Partnership Policy and will follow-up the implementation of the policy. Review of the policy will be done after two years or earlier if situation arises.