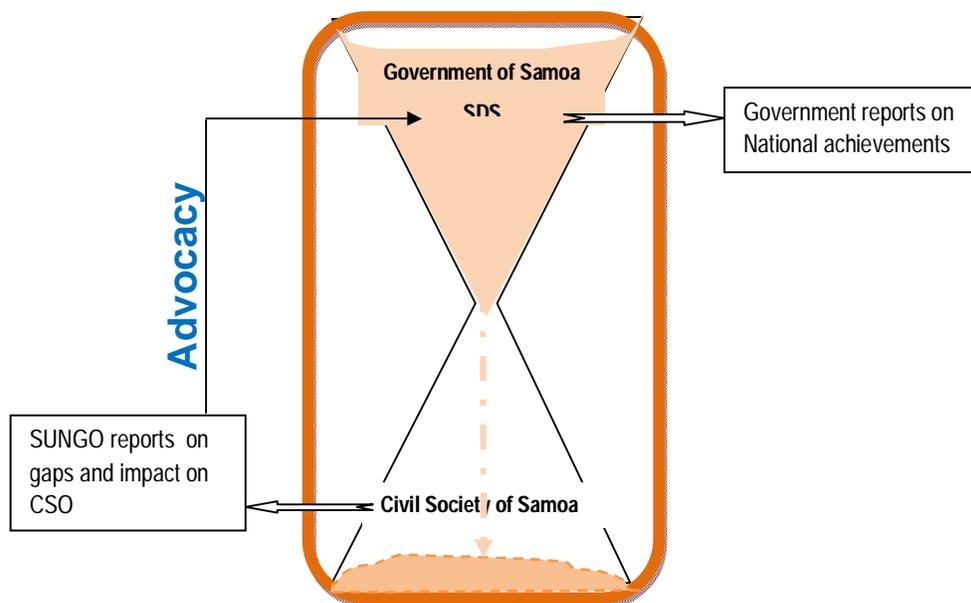


Samoa Umbrella for Non Government Organisations (SUNGO)
Partnership Plan
April 2011

1: Introduction

This Partnership Plan has been developed by the SUNGO Board and Staff during a retreat held on 14-15 April 2011. Workshop techniques were used to discuss the following topics:

- What is partnership?
- Who are SUNGO's partners?
- How can thematic groups strengthen partnerships?
- How should SUNGO partner with Government and Government Ministries?



2: What is partnership?

True partnership was defined by the SUNGO Board as being the sharing of information and resources in a meaningful way to achieve mutual goals. It is a mutually harmonious working arrangement between the parties to effectively and efficiently use available resources to enhance the social economic, cultural and spiritual life for all. It is important that the parties respect and recognise the rights and opportunities of each other to achieve the best results.

3: SUNGO's partners

3.1 Members

SUNGO exists to provide a coordinated voice for the Samoan civil society sector and to serve the needs of its 120 plus member organisations. However its focus and service has also extended to encompass the civil society groups that are not registered members of SUNGO.

The core roles of SUNGO are defined in the SUNGO Strategic Plan

- 1) To provide capacity building.
- 2) To facilitate information sharing and dissemination
- 3) To undertake advocacy and provide policy advice

3.2 The Government

It is important that civil society members have a voice in the national priorities of Government. This principle is outlined in the Samoa Development Strategy (SDS). However, it has been SUNGO's experience that the goals and objectives defined out in the strategy are often developed by officials in line Ministries with little or no feedback from members of civil society.

The complexity of the Strategy framework and the failure to translate it into simple terms, means that it is not a very useful document at a grassroots level. It is not well understood by the civil society groups that SUNGO represents, and especially those in the rural communities. SUNGO aims to bridge the gap between community expectations and what is actually delivered at community level. SUNGO feels that the recognition of the important role of civil society in the development of this final Strategy document will contribute to the effective delivery of national priorities. This would be achieved by more meaningful participation of all stakeholders. The partnership between government and civil society needs to be strengthened.

The Prime Minister plays a key role in any democratic society but especially so in Samoa where Samoan traditional values gives this position addition status and respect. At present he is responsible for the ministerial portfolio that encompasses the NGO sector. This placement has led to both advantages and disadvantages.

A key advantage is that this has made the Prime Minister more accessible to SUNGO for representations. This has led to the recognition given by the PM to the leadership role taken by SUNGO in developing relationships with most line Ministries, and the role model SUNGO has provided for the civil society sector generally. The disadvantage is that there is an unspoken expectation that SUNGO will support government initiatives and conform to government views. This expectation has conflicted with the role of SUNGO in representing and addressing political issues of civil society.

SUNGO recognises the difficulty of managing its role in representing civil society while still maintaining a respectful and useful relationship with the Government and Prime Minister. SUNGO will work to improve this relationship and find new ways to express views and opinions that will be acceptable to both parties and which will work in the best interests of the people of Samoa.

In 2006, SUNGO and Government drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) but this has yet to be finalised. The intention of a formal MOU signed by both parties is to bind the parties and their constituencies to common understandings and principles. This MOU was intended to improve the working relationship between SUNGO and Government through clearly defined roles. However agreement by both parties still needs to be reached. A new government elected in 2011 provides an opportunity to progress discussion and finalise this very important document.

Also, in the recent Civil Society meeting organised by SUNGO in June 2011, the PM indicated in his keynote address that an Act to govern NGOs is currently being drafted in Parliament. In the

development of the Act, it is critical that there is meaningful consultation with civil society. If this process happens with genuine consultation, then a new Act, in conjunction with a newly signed MOU, would greatly help to clarify the distinct roles of Government and the civil society sector.

3.3 Line Ministries

The role of SUNGO in relating at a Government Ministry level is

- to advocate and lobby for policies that incorporate the role of civil society in Samoa
- to provide links to the thematic groups so that thematic groups work toward the SDS and can get support from Ministries where appropriate

SUNGO partnerships with individual Ministries are at different levels, depending on the leadership, vision and values of the Ministry concerned. Some Ministries have opted for transparent processes in which SUNGO allocates NGOs working in these sectors (Thematic Groups), to become representatives on their respective advisory board or committees.

These Ministries benefit from this representation by having better engagement with civil society. It is hoped that this engagement assists with more effective service delivery that gives increased benefit to the community.

The list below gives SUNGO's perceived level of engagement with key Ministries

- | | |
|--|------|
| • Ministry of Justice (MoJ) | Good |
| • Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE) | Good |
| • Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing (MAF) | Fair |
| • Ministry of Health (MoH) | Fair |
| • Ministry of Education (MESC) | Fair |
| • Ministry of Women, community and Social services (MWCSD) | Fair |

There are many reasons why SUNGO has not yet developed a strong, mutual relationship with some Ministries. Some Ministries lack understanding of SUNGO's role and how SUNGO could link and provide useful information and feedback to them. Also many Ministries give inadequate meeting notice which makes it difficult to assign the right people to attend. From SUNGO there has been a lack of commitment by some to be well informed about the issues involved, as well as a lack of suitable people to provide the linkages needed between the grassroots and the national framework.

SUNGO will work to develop better relationships with these Ministries so that SUNGO's role is better understood and valued. In the longer term this will lead to better civil society input into the policies and services of Ministries.

SUNGO can be a focal point for communications between government and the civil society sector and community. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need to be encouraged to channel their concerns through SUNGO which can then act as the voice for civil society through its

representation on government boards and committees. This will help ensure that Government takes account of CSOs and their concerns in the decision making process

4: Development Partners

Since its inception SUNGO has been largely supported by funds from development partners, principally NZAID and the European Union (EU).

NZAID has been core funding SUNGO for the past 6 years and this will cease on 30 June 2011. SUNGO has greatly appreciated this support as this funding has enabled SUNGO to become established and accepted nationally and international as a viable umbrella NGO organisation.

Eight years ago, SUNGO was a weak organisation with no staff and with financial liabilities. It now has a strong structure, good staffing and is financially viable. SUNGO's development has, in large measure, been made possible by NZAID funding. SUNGO hopes to be able to continue its partnership with NZAID in other ways and plans to discuss options with NZAID.

Over the past five years, SUNGO has also developed a strong partnership with the European Union office. Initially SUNGO accessed the EU Microproject funding for some minor capital items. SUNGO then assisted the EU, under contract, with dissemination of information about the fund and with the evaluation of the projects.

In 2008, this association was further developed through a contract under the Water Sector Programme to deliver capacity building to rural communities to upskill water committees. Since 2009, SUNGO has undertaken further CSO capacity building using EU MP funding. Subsequently in late 2009 SUNGO applied for and was granted a Non State Actor grant for two years to develop the capacity of both SUNGO and civil society at large through training. This programme will be completed by the end of 2011.

The newly implemented Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) which is funded at present by EU and AusAID, has also provided SUNGO with further opportunities for development support. It is hoped that other individual country development partners will also join the programme in the future. The CSSP is a very exciting development as it will allow programmes to be developed that fully cost staffing into objectives. This will give SUNGO an avenue to fund staffing support. There is a range of ways that SUNGO can engage with the CSSP and these are being explored with the implementation of an initial contract to 30 June 2011 and the development of a new contract from 1 July 2011.

SUNGO will work to develop an open and honest partnership with the CSSP as it is anticipated that this vehicle will become the key development channel in Samoa, especially as other development partners join.

5: The Way Forward

Increased Membership and Better Communication

SUNGO has traditionally drawn its member base from the NGO sector in part because SUNGO managed the NGO support program funded by NZAID. As addressed in the sustainability plan, SUNGO is looking to increase membership of community based organisations such as school committees, women's committees, youth groups, etc. The SUNGO board has stressed the importance of increasing membership so that we accurately represent everyone in civil society.

As discussed in the sustainability plan, there are many ways SUNGO plans to keep their members engaged including member meetings, consulting members on a systematic basis, improving the training needs analysis, communicating regularly to members with newsletters and through an improved website, and by maintaining the high standards at SUNGO to maintain our reputation.

SUNGO has recently developed a communications plan which will assist to improve communications with members and strengthen this important partnership.

Strengthened Relationship with Government

As mentioned in Section 3.2, SUNGO recognises it needs to overcome the difficulties of the past and find ways to work in harmony with the Government.

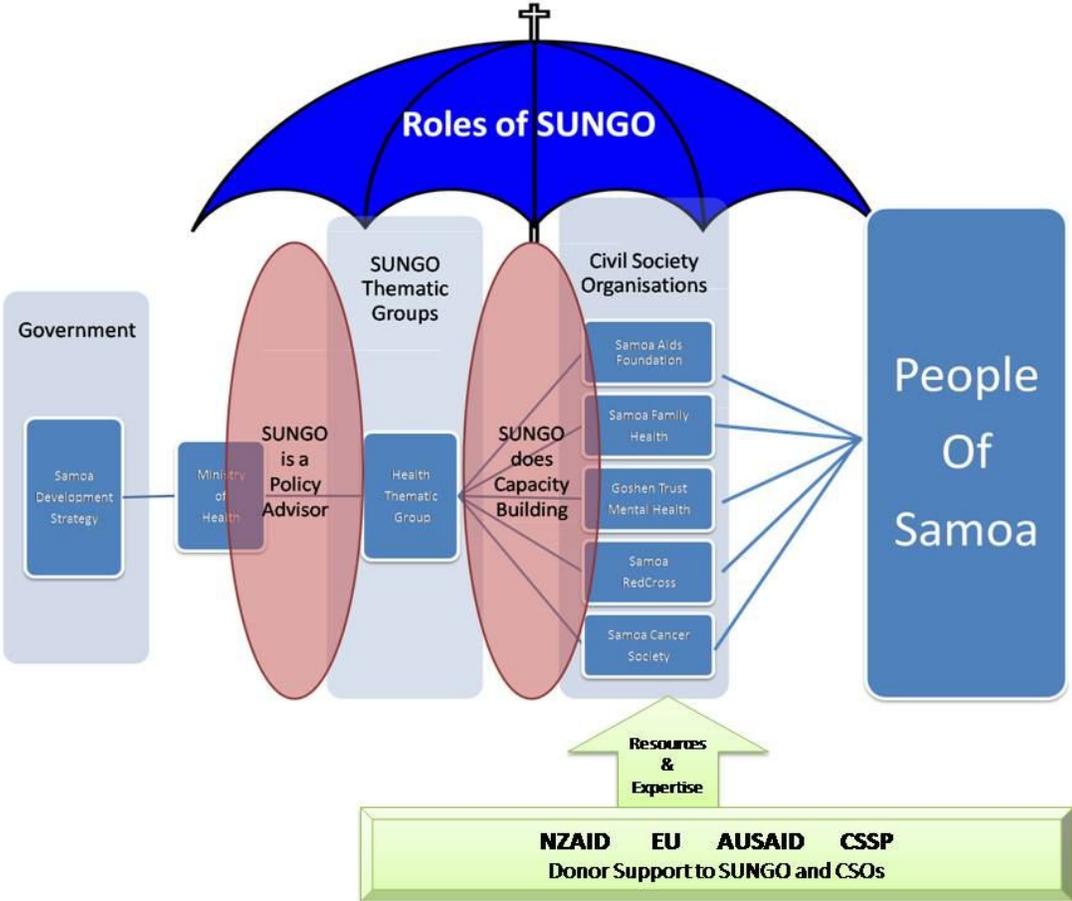
Thematic Groups (TG)

The Board felt that thematic groups were the key to SUNGO's partnership plan. There are five thematic groups within SUNGO covering Environment, Social Services (Health and Education), Community Development, Agriculture and Private Sector. These thematic groups provide a mechanism to create partnerships between civil society organisations working in similar fields and organisations and government ministries working in those areas. SUNGO will work to find ways to make these groups more effective.

1. The setup of the SWaP (Sector Wide Approach) for a few Ministries is a good way in engaging CSO/NGO in an effective partnership development. It has been proposed by the Thematic group leaders that the relevant representatives from the TG represents SUNGO in each SWaP.
2. Given that not all SWaP have directed the NGO/CSO representative through SUNGO, it is hard to engage other NGOs and filter down information to all the NGOs working in that sector. For example if the Health Swap invites Komiti Tumama as the CSO/NGO representative on the Swap, then the challenge is for KT to keep other NGOs working in the sector informed .
3. Lack of resources has been a barrier to information sharing. SUNGO has made an allocation to each Thematic group to facilitate sharing and planning. However this has not been fully utilised given the lack of interest amongst members. This issue has been raised earlier under 3.2.

Partnership Diagram

The Board has created a vision of the role of SUNGO in maintaining partnerships. This is summarized in the following diagram using the Health sector as an example of a partnership.



The Umbrella of SUNGO arches over the thematic groups and all Civil Society organisations. The Role of SUNGO with Ministries is as a policy advisor and a link between Ministries and the thematic group of NGOs. The Role of SUNGO with the civil society groups is to provide key capacity building to assist them to achieve their goals. The role of the thematic group is to build partnerships between all entities working in similar areas.