



# The SEED Initiative

*Supporting Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Development*

## ***Delivering Sustainable Development: Partnerships in Action***

Report of the 2007 SEED Partnership Forum and Practitioners' Workshop

**Pretoria, South Africa**

**October 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2007**



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“We need to grow a network of organisations at a grassroots level that can help each other take their lives into their own hands”

*Jay Naidoo, Chairman of the Regional Development Bank of Southern Africa, Keynote Speaker*

## Preface

Five years on from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the SEED Initiative held its *Annual Partnership Forum* and *Practitioner Workshop* in South Africa. This was an opportunity for senior decision-makers and partnerships practitioners from international and local business, civil society and the public sector to meet together, and share their experiences. The Forum also showcased the 2007 Winners of the SEED Award for Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Development, who then took part in a two-day *Practitioners' Workshop* after the Forum, following a preparatory session over the weekend.



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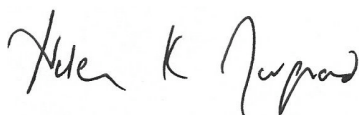
This report sets out the main outcomes and lessons shared about partnership working during both the Forum and Workshop; it documents some of the useful resources which participants highlighted; and it includes some of the tools used during the Practitioners Workshop which may be of wider application.

The *Partnership Forum*, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Science and Technology, Derek Hanekom, saw over 80 participants from business, community projects, academia, NGOs, and SEED Winners and the SEED Secretariat joining in active discussions on “success factors for partnerships” and “scaling-up and replicating partnerships”. These were stimulated by an inspiring keynote speech by Jay Naidoo, Chairman of the Regional Development Bank of Southern Africa, on “The role of partnerships in delivering sustainable development in South Africa and beyond”, and by expert panellists, and an in-depth look at the SEED Award Winners.

The *Practitioners’ Workshop* for the SEED Winners included an interactive self assessment, in which the Winners assessed their current situation and identified key areas for action. This was followed by more in-depth sessions on successful partnership building, mapping and analysing relevant stakeholders, developing value chains for innovative products, and business planning and funding.

The outcomes of the event will be presented at various international meetings, including the next UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2008, and will be promulgated as part of SEED’s Research and Learning activities. We will also integrate the Forum outcomes into SEED’s future programme of work, so that the expanding SEED network can benefit from the valuable feedback and lessons which this event catalysed.

It was only through Derek Hanekom’s backing and generosity in offering us his Department as a venue, together with the strong support from the German Environment Ministry (BMU), that these events could take place. Bringing together SEED Winners from Vietnam, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Nepal, along with the SEED Secretariat, the SEED Support Channel, and the SEED Research and Learning Channel made for a rich and lively exchange throughout the Forum and Workshop. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Deputy Minister, to the BMU and to the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST), and to all who came, prepared to share and explore ideas and experiences.



*Helen Marquard*  
*Executive Director, The SEED Initiative*



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# 1. Key messages and lessons shared

## a) Summary and general messages

The aims of this SEED Partnership Forum were to:

- see how successfully multi-stakeholder, entrepreneurial partnerships are being used to implement the commitments from the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals
- stimulate to the maximum extent possible an exchange between participants to draw out approaches that have been shown to work and share experience about scaling up and replication of successful approaches
- showcase the experiences of SEED Award Winners.

Some **general messages** came through strongly during the Forum and the Practitioners' Workshop:

**Partnerships are thriving:** Partnerships generally evolve where no single actor can achieve his or her goals without partnering with other stakeholders. The many challenges of sustainable development provide fertile ground for innovative partnership approaches and new business models. Entrepreneurial, multi-stakeholder approaches are an essential part of the solution. The need for sustainable livelihoods is increasingly linked to and dependent on environmental sustainability.

**Strong, and broad-based local ownership is an important component:** Any development initiative which aims to be viable in the long-term needs to empower entrepreneurial partnerships at all levels. Rather than viewing people mainly as consumers and markets or beneficiaries, it is important to support bottom-up innovation, unleashing communities' potential to find viable solutions to their own problems.

**Business has a pivotal role to play:** Business as a partner can bring the market and financial acumen to turn a partnership project into a viable enterprise. But concerns were raised that business must move beyond seeing partnership with civil society as philanthropic or corporate social responsibility (CSR), and integrate sustainable development principles into their core business practices.

**Getting the right institutional framework:** Governments and institutions provide the policy framework within which all partnerships operate. A positive enabling environment can drive innovation and scale-up while a negative one can create unnecessary barriers.

**Innovative approaches require new types of support and a shift in perspectives:** it is important to understand the needs of partnerships and to respond with the right kinds of support. Participants showed a strong appetite for the following:



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- **Opportunities to network and share experience with peers:** The Forum provided many new contacts, sources of advice and expertise for the SEED Winners as well as instilling a clearer sense of direction and purpose. Knowledge exchange between local actors facing similar challenges was seen as essential for sustained and sustainable development. It provides an opportunity for practitioners to interact with peers on an equal basis, moving beyond the labels of donor/recipient, rich/poor, environment/development to learn from other examples of successes and failures. Novel approaches, such as the informal marketplace which involved small groups of participants spending interactive time with each one of the winning 2007 partnerships, were seen as a great way to showcase the partnership projects.



*SEED Winners explaining their partnerships in the "Marketplace"*

- **Support networks to consolidate and scale up:** "Matchmakers", people or organisations such as SEED or South Africa's National Business Initiative (NBI), can play a major role in increasing a partnership's profile and visibility. Good ideas with great potential need help to find the right national and international contacts, whether for financing, making links with government officials or permitting bodies, networking with complementary service providers, hooking up with potential clients or partnering with organizations that will strengthen project credibility and help to gain political alliances.
- **Support to strengthen partnerships:** Successful partnerships need help to define common goals, develop business plans, institutionalise procedures and develop governance structures, write Memoranda of Understanding with partners, build capacity for implementation, monitor and evaluate progress, and communicate their successes. Partners need to be linked to the existing resources, while continued research is needed in key areas like monitoring and evaluation.
- **Access to technical and business advice:** Partnerships were particularly interested in tools, publications and contacts on certification schemes; market research; marketing and branding; legal issues such as Intellectual Property (IP) protection and trade marks; product development and quality management; funding streams including soft loans and micro-credit; sectoral sources of expertise; and case studies on, for example, health, fair-trade, tourism, water, and energy.



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## b) Success factors for entrepreneurial partnerships for sustainable development

There are many difficult scales, types and models for partnerships, each driven or created by specific circumstances, partners and aims. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, or defined set of criteria. However, from the panellists contributions and from discussion with participants, the issues below emerged as important factors or components for a successful partnership.

“You can do anything from a basis of trust”

*Gillian Hutchins, Membership Director, National Business Initiative (NBI), Panellist*

*In the initial stages of a partnership it is important to:*

- **identify the relevant stakeholders and explore their needs.** Understanding why different partners want to be in the partnership, getting to know each partner’s motivation and circumstances, discussing partners’ diverging interests and common ones may take time but is worth it to avoid future problems.
- **seek permission and, if possible, engagement from the relevant authorities.** Governments and institutions provide the policy framework within which all partnerships operate. A positive enabling environment can drive innovation and scale-up while a negative one can create unnecessary barriers.
- **develop a shared purpose.** Shared aims, purposes, goals and strategies for the partnership, underpinned by Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between partners where necessary help to build trusting relationships and provide a framework for action. It is well worth considering all the different types of partnership that are possible - for example, public-private partnership, commercial partnership, loose coalitions – in order to come to the arrangement that best fits the prevailing circumstances and ambitions.
- **be clear about the roles and relationships between partners.**
  - **Governments** can convene actors, remove unnecessary barriers and create a supportive environment for action. They are a neutral broker, in most cases have a democratic mandate to act, and are accountable to the electorate for their actions. Government has, or should have, the structures in place to make scale up easier, changing the level of action from local to regional or national.
  - **NGOs and community groups** are important in representing local communities’ interests, can provide contacts for community leaders, and facilitate engagement of communities.



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- **Private sector** is the most important actor in a market chain and has the business acumen to turn an idea into an enterprise.
- **having decided the roles of partners, agree who should be the partnership leader(s).** Without leadership, a partnership can languish and lose focus and impetus.
- **build the business case.** This will help to attract investors and private sector partners, who often lack the time to invest in partnerships. The initial transaction costs to get a partnership started can be too high, and seem too speculative, without a strong business plan in place.
- **carry out a risk assessment.** It is important to get a handle on the most sensitive and the most robust aspects of the partnership and the enterprise by analysing their individual components and asking what the consequences and impacts of various scenarios would be.

*As the partnership develops, other factors start to become important:*

- **Bring in new partners as necessary.** Stakeholders and sometimes partners will change as the partnership matures and the operation becomes established and scales up. Building relationships with new partners and stakeholders is a cornerstone of success.
- **Build trust and respect.** Different partners will have different priorities. Respecting these and investing in building good personal contacts with partners will help to build mutual trust and enthusiasm for continued collaboration. Regular partnership and team-building meetings should be built in if possible, and constructive feedback between partners encouraged. It is possible to be both critical and co-operative at the same time.
- **Empower communities.** Engaging and empowering communities to bring their knowledge and skills to the table roots the partnership in the needs of the local population, making activities more suitable to local circumstances. It can be helpful to identify a local leader who is committed to the community but at the same time can ensure that the broader community participates meaningfully in decision-making and actions. The role of women, who are often closer to the environment, can be significant, or even pivotal.
- **Ensure capacity for implementation.** A clear idea of the technical assistance and business services needed is essential.
- **Evaluate performance regularly.** Working with partners to identify and manage risks, to prioritise activities, to share successes and address shortcomings, are all important factors in successful partnership management.
- **Seek to institutionalise relationships.** As the partnership matures, there need to be consolidated agreements between partners appropriate governance systems for accountability, and a systematic approach to learning



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and sharing knowledge. Regular, transparent reporting is indispensable; partners should take joint responsibility for outcomes, good and bad.

- **Develop a risk management plan.** On the basis of the risk assessment, countermeasures and contingencies should be thought through and put into place.
- **Recognise that partnerships need time.** A business time-frame is often short, whereas partnerships structures, trust between partners, and capacity for implementation take time to build. A careful balance, acceptable to all, is needed.
- **Handle conflicts constructively.** Conflicts in partnerships are inevitable but can be managed. A clear allocation of roles and a high degree of transparency e.g. through regular information, progress meetings, etc. helps to reduce conflicts. On occasion, an external person or body can help to draw out the various interests which have led to the conflict, and to point to options for solutions.

“When adding a new member to the partnership, you need to take a lot of time to work with them”

*Alejandro Heredia, ‘Water for all’, Bolivia, SEED winner 2005*

*Finally, consider that your partnership may need to:*

- **consider an exit strategy.** There can be instances in which a partnership fails or a project turns out to be non-viable. In such cases, partners need a clear idea of how to close down and wrap-up the partnership, including the sharing of any assets and reporting requirements. The time to do this is during the establishment of a partnership. Friction and aggravation are likely to result if it is left until the enterprise fails.

### c) Achieving successful scale up and replication

- **Replication and/or scale-up.** Partnerships need to be clear about the difference between replication (replicating an idea elsewhere) and scale-up, (growing an existing idea), and the reason behind the need or ambition to scale-up or replicate.
- **A clear model for future growth.** It helps, before growing, to have a clear picture of the goal in scale up or replication, and how it will be achieved. A good understanding of the reasons for the success of the initial pilot or project is essential to be able to adapt the model to different circumstances. Objectivity and clear headedness are needed in order to decide what is and is not possible.



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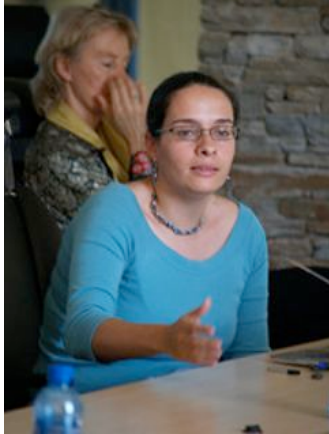
- **Preparedness to change.** Even with meticulous planning, circumstances are likely to change, so it is important to consider the possibilities of negative impacts, both environmentally and socially, how better to measure and value non-monetary contributions and community input. Partners' roles and relationships may change, since a lead actor for a pilot is not necessarily best placed to implement a scaled-up initiative. New partners need to be chosen carefully, and formal agreements and MoUs revisited if necessary. It is possible that specific partners may be needed on a temporary basis, during the scale up process only.
- **Seeking matchmakers.** It is invaluable to make contact with national and international support networks, such as SEED, and to draw on their knowledge and services.
- **Influence government policy.** If people on the ground are encountering big hurdles, it can often be that these can be dealt with only by local or national governments. Feedback and providing evidence to them will help to persuade them of the need for change, and so help to create a more supportive policy framework for action.
- **Maintain entrepreneurial incentive.** There needs to be an incentive for entrepreneurial scale-up. Some well-meaning ideas can lead to a passive, "recipient" culture and destroy markets.
- **Evaluate and monitor progress.** Indicators are important to measure progress and the effectiveness of scale-up plans. Using and reporting on them fosters a learning culture and is useful to the partnership in question, as well as to others.
- **Demonstrate and communicate success.** Without imaginative, sound and compelling communication, entrepreneurial partnerships cannot succeed. Developing measures of success, and bringing achievements to the attention of relevant new partners and the market are essential steps in scale up and replication. Success breeds success, and others will want to be associated with it.



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## 2. Key messages and tools from Practitioners' Workshop



**Some of the 2007 SEED Award Winners, at the Practitioners' Workshop**



### a) Value Chain Development

A value chain means all the direct and indirect activities between the production and the consumption of a product. Value chain development involves a broad range of actors and actions, rather than an examination of a partnership's own activities and products in isolation. It helps to identify and develop strategic partnerships necessary for the initiative's growth, it can help to identify economies of scale, and it can help to meet the requirements for certification and national or international standards.

Important elements of value chain development are:

- trust and long-term relationship/contract building



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- sharing of information, rather than being possessive about it
- identifying and working with facilitators nationally and internationally
- identifying good partners at the appropriate scale
- ensuring good quality and consistency of the product or service
- a thorough knowledge of the product or service
- providing good samples
- trying not to do everything oneself
- having a plan for how to respond to scaling up requests

Market research is a key success factor in value chain development. Partnerships have to be prepared to accept that the market demand could be different from their concept: flexibility is key.

While it is crucial to find suitable specialists and knowledge gatekeepers, going to the market directly is highly recommended (at least once), as well as developing a contact network in the potential market, using personal contacts and even the diaspora, where possible.

Some of the challenges of international value chains (as compared to national value chains) can be major differences in scale, volume requirements, restricted margins and value adding opportunities in- country.

Regulatory requirements, and certification to meet specific standards are usually expensive and can take a lot of time. But where regulation exists, there can be no way around it. For some markets, certification is essential and can be extremely worthwhile. Overall, it is very important to dedicate enough time to do the necessary research and to try to learn from others, and possibly work with other partners.

### Additional resources

Practical information for trade/export/business:

<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/>

<http://www.cbi.eu/>

[http://www.tis-gdv.de/tis\\_e/ware/inhaltx.htm](http://www.tis-gdv.de/tis_e/ware/inhaltx.htm)

<http://www.centad.org/>

[www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)

[www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)

Academic links for value chain development:

[www.value-links.de](http://www.value-links.de) <http://www.valuechains.org/>

<http://www.sedonors.org/groups/group.asp?groupid=4>



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## b) Business Planning and Funding

- A business plan is an indispensable pre-requisite for any funding strategy.
- Well targeted capacity building often underpins the successful implementation of a good business plan and ensures ownership for the process on the side of the people responsible for the project.
- A business planning process fosters partnership building; it is an effective way for partners to coordinate, communicate and collaborate.
- The business plan should make clear the extent of funding needed. Costs should not be under- or over-estimated. Value for money is essential if a product or service is going to be purchased.
- A strategy for raising money is needed, including the identification of the potential sources most likely to be interested.
- Alternatives to raising money should be considered:
  - borrowing (short or medium term loans)
  - donations in money or kind
  - money combined from the group of partners.
- The most appropriate partner(s) might be:
  - central or local government
  - private sector
  - international cooperation
  - banks, cooperatives.

### Additional Resources

- Publication: Promoting SMEs for Sustainable Development <http://www.wbcsd.org>
- Powerpoint Presentation available on the SEED website <http://www.seedinit.org> (See Annexes below)

## c) Tools for partnerships

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can mean that the experiences and competencies of different sectors and stakeholders are understood and harnessed to meet the pressing challenges of sustainable development in innovative ways.

The tools below were used by the SEED Winners at the Practitioners' Workshop to help them to understand better the nature and needs of their partnership, the stage of development they have reached, and perform a "Stakeholder Analysis".

### Partnership building

Partnerships often chart unknown territory. Different forms of organizations with consequently different internal structures, mandates, purposes, values and decision-making procedures meet in a common space, often for the first time.



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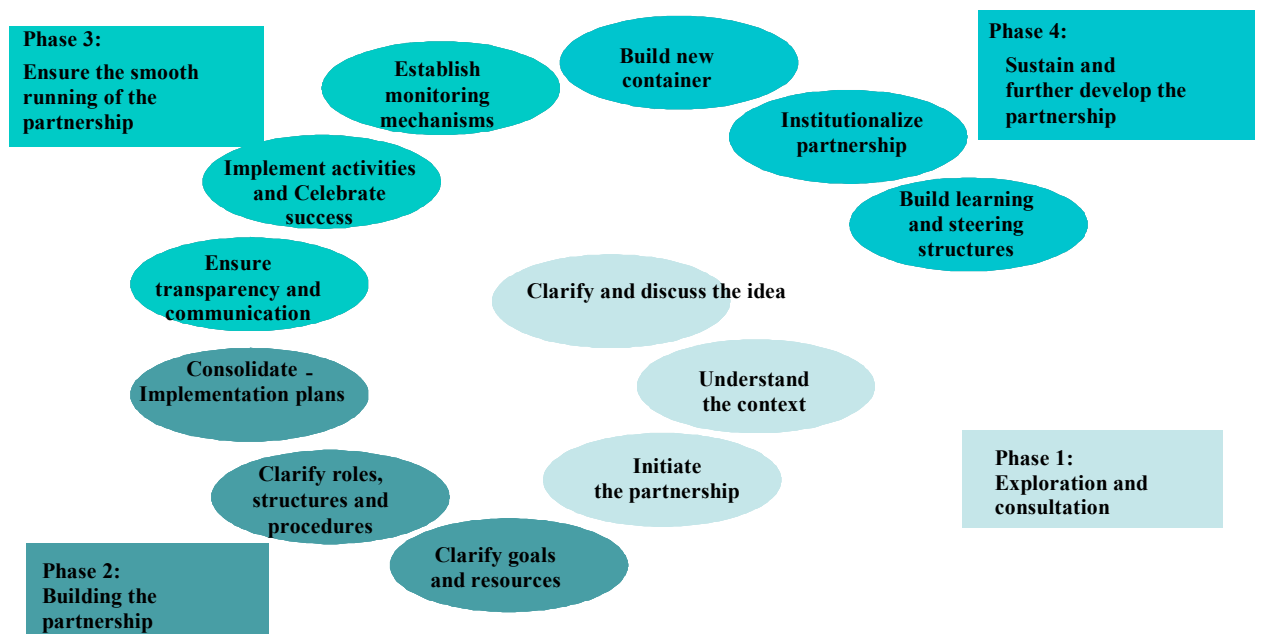
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When people of different backgrounds decide to move into an output-oriented constructive partnership process they need to develop their communicative competency.

The diagram below, developed by the Collective Leadership Institute ([www.collectiveleadership.com](http://www.collectiveleadership.com)), suggests that there are 4 main phases of development in multi-stakeholder partnerships. In the **first phase** it is important to understand the context for success thoroughly, build a group of promoters and explore and exchange with potential partners the purpose and vision without structures which are too rigid. Once partners' commitment is clear it is crucial to move into the **second phase** through a more formalized dialogue, clarify roles and structures and lay down agreements in project plans and memoranda of understanding.

In the **third phase** attention needs to be given to smooth implementation, to celebrating success. At this point it is important to establish monitoring systems. Transparency and good communication procedures help the partnership towards stability. In the **fourth phase**, usually a phase of replicating or scaling-up, the key to success is to manage the transition from the initial partnership towards a larger entity. This sometime requires institutionalisation, new partners, governance structures or a change of management.

The diagram below can help partnerships to assess which stage they are in with regard to the initiation, development, institutionalization, ending or further development of a multi-stakeholder partnership.



*The Four Main Stages of Partnership Building*



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## Self-assessment

The self-assessment is a quick way to assess a partnership's current status, and identify gaps and areas for improvement. It can also provide the basis for a discussion about strategic direction and support further planning / possible redirection, as well as being useful for monitoring the development of the partnership project in a standardised way.

The Self Assessment tool used by SEED Award Winners at the Practitioners' Workshop is included in the Annexes to this report. It was developed by the Collective Leadership Institute for the SEED Support Channel 2007.

"We now know exactly where we are at the moment with our project and what we should aim at"

*Susanne von der Heide, "Growing Seabuckthorn at the top of the world", Nepal, SEED winner 2005*

## Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Analysis is the process of identifying the most important stakeholders for the partnership. The grid below was used by the SEED Winners to help them do this – it may be useful for other partnerships.

### Major steps:

- Identifying who the stakeholders are
- Analysing their power, influence and interest in order to know who to focus on
- Developing a good understanding of the most important stakeholders, being aware of how they are likely to respond and how to gain their support
- Consulting with the major stakeholders about who else to include

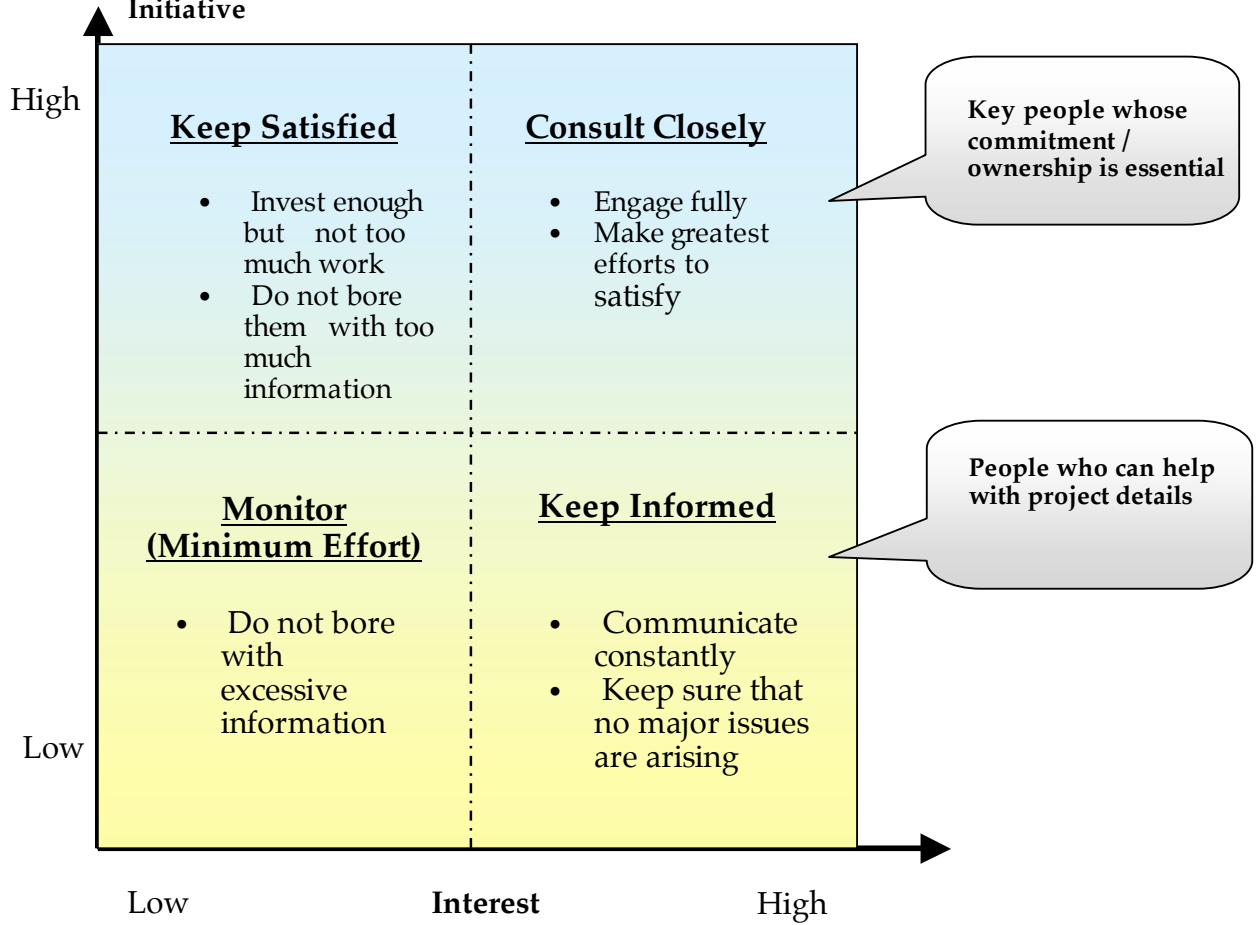


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### Influence/Interest Grid for Stakeholder Analysis

Source: Handbook, Collective Leadership Institute, adapted for the SEED Initiative



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## Annexes

### 1. Speakers and Panellists

- Monica Ledingwane, *Shell, South Africa*
- Dominic Smith, *Pro-poor Business Advisor, International Market Development and Investment, Vietnam*
- Richard Nimmo, *Managing Director; Blue Ventures Expeditions, Madagascar – a SEED 2005 winner*
- Heather Creech, *Director; International Institute for Sustainable Development, Canada – the SEED Research and Learning Channel*
- Sunette Pienaar, *Programme Manager; Murray & Roberts Chair in Collaborative Governance and Accountability, University of South Africa*
- Jennifer Seif, *Executive Director; Fair Trade in Tourism, South Africa*
- Gillian Hutchings, *Director, National Business Initiative, South Africa*
- Ralph Hamann, *Senior Researcher, Environmental Evaluation Unit, University of Cape Town, South Africa.*
- Maria Alicia Eguiguren, *GEF Small Grants Programme, Ecuador*
- Helen Marquard, *Executive Director, The SEED Initiative*

### 2. SEED 2007 Award Winners

This year's *Seed Award* winners all took part in the Forum, along with four out of five of SEED's 2005 Award Winners. The 2007 Winners are:

- In **Vietnam**, *Bridging the Gap* uses sustainable cultivation of traditional medicinal plants to develop high value-added products, the manufacturing and proceeds of which improve the livelihoods of ethnic minority communities;
- In **Peru**, *T'ikapapa* links small-operation potato farmers in the Andes with high-value niche markets in urban centers. T'ikapapa promotes biodiversity conservation and environmentally friendly potato production techniques while giving farmers open access to technological assistance, encouraging local farmer's associations and propagating the flow of market information;
- In **Ecuador**, *Cultivos Ecuandinos*, operating in the Andes, has reintroduced native cereal and tuber crops that diversify food production, improve local food security and reduce soil degradation. The partnership then sells surplus yield through a women's organization it has created in three communities resulting in new economic, financial and marketing engines for the area;



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- In **Brazil**, *Projeto Bagagem*, creates unique travel packages that give visitors a first-hand look at local development initiatives and nature reserves in a novel approach to community-based ecotourism; and
- In **Sierra Leone**, a unique partnership between a traditional healers' association, an academic research institute and local communities will help to protect biodiversity and provide sustainable livelihoods for local communities through the establishment of the *Tiwai Island Health and Fitness Center*—a facility to provide health services based on principles of West African ethno-medicine.

Over the next 12 months, each of the five *Seed Award* recipients will receive targeted support services specifically designed to expand and extend their activities.

### 3. The SEED Initiative – *Supporting Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development*

SEED aims to increase the potential of young partnerships to make a significant contribution to the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. SEED does this by selecting the most promising partnerships through a global competition. It then provides targeted support services for a year and uses SEED's active partners to facilitate expert and financial contacts, to help to build capacity and ultimately, to help partnerships to scale-up and increase their impact. Finally, SEED studies the applicants, the finalists, and other partnerships to identify success factors and problems, and then promulgates the lessons to policy-makers and interested organisations. Further details are in the attached introduction, and on the website: [www.seedinit.org](http://www.seedinit.org).

The SEED Initiative was launched at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development by IUCN (The World Conservation Union), UNEP and UNDP. The Netherlands, Germany, the UK, USA, and South African governments, and Swiss Re have become major supporters. SEED also works closely with the UN Global Compact.



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