SH/FT THE POWER

Equal partnerships between Dutch private development initiatives and Indian community-based organizations?

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Sh*ift the Power*

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Abstract

In the field of international development cooperation, there is a recurring call for shifting the power from Northern-based donor organizations to Southern-based recipient organizations to obtain equal partnerships based on equality, trust, mutual respect and reciprocity. This research analyzes if and how a 'shift in power' (or lack thereof) happens and what the drivers and impediments for an equal partnership are. Eight partnerships between Dutch private development initiatives and Indian community-based organizations are studied, with a specific focus on financial flows, decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms. I argue that there are several impediments for moving towards more equitable partnerships, such as the ad hoc start of the partnerships, the expertise of the PDIs and the influence of private donors and funds on the projects content. Unusually, capacity building commonly perceived as a driver for change, has a smaller influence than expected due to factors such as rural locality or absence of organizations strength that hinder increased access to local financial resources. Lastly, strong personal relationships between partners, although at first a driver for change, prove to be a possible impediment in the long term. Although this study did not find a true indication of a 'shift in power' between the partners, it does recognize the potential of formal rules, such as governmental regulations, to accelerate change.

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List *of abbreviations*

CBO: Community-based organization

CSR: Corporate social responiblity

FRCA: Foreign Regulation Contribution Act

NGO: Non-governmental organization

PDI: Private development initiative

Content

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

In international development, the call for equal relationships between (mostly Northern) donors and their (Southern) partners has been a recurrent theme on the agenda. This theme is associated with concepts such as empowerment, participation, partnership and, local ownership, which all imply changes in power hierarchies and relationships. A recent appeal to this recurring debate is the movement that started in 2016 using the hashtag #ShiftThePower. During a global summit the South African organization Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) launched this initiative. The aim was to start a conversation about "both the need and the ways to move away from top-heavy and top-down systems of international development (…) towards a flatter and more equitable paradigm of people-based development" (GFCF, 2018). Since then the movement has helped to mobilize funders, researchers and activists who are taking individual and strategic collective steps to further change. It also inspired organizations such as Partos, Stichting Wilde Ganzen and CIVICIUS to develop an instrument to make power visible in partnership relations in order to shift the power (TheSpindle, 2020).

Simultaneously, another trend concerning shifts in power can be identified, namely shrinking civic space. In the past 20 years governments across the world have introduced policies and laws shifting power from civil society towards the national government, restricting civil society in their activities (Hossain et al., 2018). For example, the Indian government restricted foreign funding to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that appear to be involved in vaguely defined political actions (Chacko, 2018). These laws and regulations serve to preserve, consolidate or increase the power of the state to decrease the perceived or real increased power of civil society (Mendelson, 2015; Hayman, 2016), thereby silencing critical and dissident voices and shrinking the space for civil society. To counter this trend, the Dutch government aims to strengthen civil society, based on the belief that civil society provides checks and balances that strengthen democracy and ensure an inclusive society (Dialogue and Dissent, 2014). This position is elaborated in the two latest grant instruments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs titled "Dialogue and Dissent – Strategic Partnerships for Lobbying and Advocacy" and "Power of Voices Partnerships". Shifting power to obtain more local ownership

is a core prerequisite for strengthening civil society in the latter document (Power of Voices Partnerships, 2019). Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Sigrid Kaag, also emphasized the need for Dutch development cooperation policy to support more clearly local ownership of African, Asian and Latin American organizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

1.2 Research context

Against this background, in 2016 Stichting Wilde Ganzen (Wilde Ganzen Foundation) developed the Change the Game Academy together with national partner organizations in Brazil, India and Kenya that had similar intentions. Stichting Wilde Ganzen is an organization whose mission is to fight poverty by means of financial contribution, knowledge, and expertise through stimulating projects from small-scale Dutch initiatives – so-called private development initiatives (PDIs) - for the poor. They aim to make "people living in poverty more self-reliant and to ensure that projects can continue without foreign aid" (Annual Report, 2019). The capacity building programme Change the Game Academy supported this aim by providing training to the partner organizations of the PDIs on local fundraising and claim-making (lobby and advocacy) to obtain structural change. The core assumption of the programme's theory of change is that a fundamental shift in power can be obtained by increasing local ownership through diversifying the funding base for local partners (Steinhäuser, 2020). In other words, the programme tries to promote self-reliance through local fundraising to the end that it is not he who pays the piper calls the tune. As self-reliance and organizational growth of local counterparts of PDIs is part of the programme, this is expected to change the power hierarchy in the partnerships. Likewise, in the literature, financial dependence on external funding is seen as hindering equitable partnerships (Elbers, 2012; Olawoore, 2017) and capacity building is seen as a commonly used means in partnerships to strengthen the agency of Southern organizations and their ability to affect the overall framework (Lister, 2000).

The PDIs assisted by Stichting Wilde Ganzen are organizations that differ from traditional actors within international development. The PDIs cannot be included within the traditional multilateral, bilateral or civilateral channel, rather forming part of the so-called 'fourth pillar' of development: the philanteral aid channel (Develtere & De Bruyn, 2009; Kinsbergen &

Schulpen, 2013). The philanteral aid channel is diverse, ranging from (semi) government organization (e.g. fire brigade) to PDIs, but all actors undertake activities related to development on a voluntary basis, which distinguishes them from traditional actors (Kinsbergen & Schulpen, 2013).[1] Private development initiatives are defined as groups of people involved in (funding) concrete individual-exceeding development interventions directly to one or more developing countries (Schulpen, 2007). The main difference with traditional development donors lies in the fact that PDIs offer structural support for organizations, communities, or groups of people rather than one-off, individual support, they do not receive direct funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they are small in scale (average annual budget of around €50.000), and they have a voluntary character (Kinsbergen & Schulpen, 2013; Kinsbergen, 2014). Projects run by PDIs focus mostly on welfare and education such as building schools or providing medical equipment – the so-called first-generation projects (Korten, 1987). What characterizes PDIs is that many of them start due to personal encounters with people living in poverty during travels upon which people decide to 'do something about it'. Commonly, these individual citizens have no previous background in the development sector (Haaland & Wallevik, 2017). Interestingly, most PDIs do not aim to become a development NGO with specialized and paid staff (Schulpen & Huyse, 2017), which can partly be explained as a form of resistance to the practices of the traditional development actors. They call for de-bureaucratization and de-professionalization (Kinsbergen, 2019) as they believe that people-to-people aid is more effective and efficient (Develtere & Stessens, 2007; Schulpen, 2007). Personal involvement is another important element that differentiates PDIs from the traditional development actors. PDIs are involved with every aspect of the project from start to finish, which makes that researchers note that these initiatives tend to display a strong sense of ownership and agency over the project issues (Fechter & Schwitay, 2019), and even refer to the project as their 'baby' (Schulpen & Huyse, 2017). This relational aspect can weaken the project as it is dependent on the involvement of a few people, but at the same time can be a strength as it provides for long-term commitment (Fylkesnes, 2019). Also, personal relations are seen by some scholars to contribute to equitable partnerships as they serve to counter the top-down, rigid structures for which the traditional actors are known (Mawdsley et al., 2005; Elbers & Schulpen, 2013).

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[1] See for classification philanteral aid channel Kinsbergen & Schulpen, 2013

This research aims to contribute to the debates on PDIs by investigating two factors brought forward by the literature that are expected to forge a shift in power. First, the assumption that financial independence of Southern community-based organizations (CBOs) is the main enabler to bring about change is investigated by using the capacity building programme Change the Game Academy of Stichting Wilde Ganzen as a lens to analyse if there is a shift in power within the relationship between donor and recipient. Second, through an analysis of the characteristic feature of personal involvement of PDIs, it explores how strong personal relationships affect the partnership between the Dutch private development initiative and the Indian community-based organization. The presence or absence of equal decision-making processes, mutual accountability mechanisms and financial resources will be used as indicators for change (see below).

1.3 Research question
The following research question with the corresponding sub-questions will be central in this qualitative study:

How does the proposed shift in power (or lack thereof) in partnerships between Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs take place, and why (not)?

1. *What characterizes the partnerships?*
2. *How has change taken place in the partnerships over time concerning accountability, decision-making processes and financial arrangements, if at all?*
3. *What are the drivers and impediments for change towards local ownership in the partnership?*

1.4 Scientific and societal relevance
This study is of both scientific and societal relevance. It contributes to the general debates about shifting power and partnerships. Additionally, although previous qualitative studies on PDIs touched upon the relational aspect, which is a distinctive characteristic of these organizations, an in-depth study is still lacking. This study aims to fill that gap within the literature on PDIs by looking closely into the partnerships between Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs.

The societal relevance of this study centres on enhancing policy related to equitable partnerships by providing insight into the conditions under which a shift in power is realised, especially regarding the factors of local fundraising and personal relations. For PDIs and CBOs the value of this research is to become aware of their level of equitable partnership and to facilitate assessment of their partnerships. Also, to some extent the insights of this study can be applied to partnerships in the development sector in general. The findings of this research will also be presented to Stichting Wilde Ganzen, the initiator of the Change the Game Academy, which could possibly lead to modifications of the programme to the benefit of its effectiveness.

1.5 Outline

This thesis is structured as follows. First, a theoretical framework is outlined that uses concepts like local ownership, equal partnerships, and power, and that identifies drivers and impediments for working towards equal partnership based on the existing literature. The theoretical framework will serve to analyze the interviewed partnerships. Secondly, the methodologies used to gather the data in order to answer the research question are explained. This chapter also goes into the sampling, data collection and analysis, and the ethical concerns of this research. The next section of the thesis presents the findings related to the formulated sub-questions in three separate chapters. In chapter four of this thesis, the characteristics of the partnership are described in order to see if the partnerships start off as equal partnerships or not and to be able to identify possible transformations in the partnerships over time in later sections of the thesis. In the following chapter (five), the changes over time in the partnerships are explained by looking at the financial flows, decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms to see if a 'shift in power' is achieved. In the last analytical chapter, the lack of change is clarified through an analysis of the two main drivers for change identified by the literature: financial independence through capacity building and personal relationships. Here I argue that there is little evidence for a significant shift in power between the partners overall. Finally, the discussion reflects on the broader relevance of the findings, limitations, lessons that can be drawn, and the need for more research on particular aspects. The conclusion will round up the thesis by summarizing the main findings and by answering the main research question.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical concepts framing the research are outlined. A literature review on the central concepts in this study, local ownership, equal partnership and power, will be conducted. Local ownership is the implicit objective of sustainable development interventions and equitable partnership is assumed to serve as the facilitator of local ownership. Combined these factors are presumed to lead to a shift in power. Lastly, potential drivers and impediments for equal partnerships are identified from the literature.

During the past seven decades, there have been several strategies and approaches to aid development. Numerous buzzwords such as 'capacity building', 'empowerment', 'poverty reduction', 'local ownership', 'partnerships', and 'sustainable development' have been in and out of fashion in development discourse. These words play an important part in framing solutions according to Cornwall and Brock (2005). They have become part of a jargon that evokes positive and hopeful connotations. Although these words sound "warmly persuasive" and carry "moral authority" (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. 1043), they are also catchall words. The meaning of the words is difficult to grasp and is subject to the interpretation of policymakers, making them no more than fashionable labels attached to the same underlying systems (Chambers & Pettit, 2013). Harrison (2002) notes that the creation of these terms reflects an asymmetrical power relation, where the defining and giving meaning to these words is often done without including the intended beneficiaries. Therefore, it is necessary to study what meaning these words hold and how they influence both parties, the PDI and the CBO.

2.1 Local ownership

Within development discourse, *local ownership* is often seen as a tool to restore unequal power hierarchies between Northern-based donor organizations and Southern-based recipient organizations, with high levels of local ownership excepted to result in a reduction of financial dependence from foreign aid (Chesterman, 2007). The concept of local ownership originated within the international development approach of participatory rural appraisal during the 1980s, when development became more "people-centred" (Narten, 2009). In later years it was seen as a guarantee for effective aid (Chesterman, 2007), which is reflected in the report "Shaping the 21st Century. The Contribution of Development Co-operation" of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1996). In this report, the

importance of local ownership is stressed, stating that sustainable development is only possible when there is local ownership (OECD, 1996). Only at the beginning of the 2000s it became increasingly used within the development sector as part of the changes initiated in the context of the Great Aid Debate, such as the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Signing this declaration meant for development agencies redefining themselves as facilitators of aid that commit themselves to increase local ownership and build equal partnerships between donors and recipients (Kluczewska, 2019).

Although the concept of local ownership is commonly used by the development community, the exact meaning of local ownership tends to remain unclear, making it questionable whether it is "a term with either consistency or substance" (Chesterman, 2007, p. 3). Generally, the term refers to giving more effective control of the design and implementation of development aid to local actors in aid-receiving countries, including governments, NGOs, and local communities (Donais, 2009). Reich (2006) explicates the intended meaning of local ownership, saying:

> Local actors would not only be involved in the information gathering process or strategy development, but should have the means to decide about the agenda, strategy and budget management themselves, even decide who the beneficiaries of the project should be. (p.13)

In this study, local ownership refers to the involvement of local actors in all stages of a development project, including setting up and taking responsibility for the development agenda and mustering and sustaining support for it (Saxby, 2003; Reich, 2006).

Although the meaning of local ownership is thus not entirely clear, it matters *how* the term is used. Local ownership can be 'measured' in terms of a continuum from passive to active involvement of local actors depending on how much room for participation there is for local actors. Chesterman (2007) distinguished six senses of local ownership ranging from responsiveness (where policies are designed by foreigners to be responsive to local circumstances) to active exercises of sovereignty, such as the eviction of international staff by local governments.

Scholars generally are critical concerning terms such as local ownership as mentioned above. Specifically, for local ownership the critique begins with the term itself. In reality local

ownership is hardly used to signify full control of all aspects of a development programme or project by the local actors, rather referring more ambiguously to the capacity and power of local actors to set and take responsibility for a development agenda and to sustain support for it (Reich, 2006). This formulation can effectively make the definition of local ownership the opposite of the aim of local ownership. It arguably implies a top-down process of 'giving control' that is done by outsiders, concealing exactly 'the local' and their agency. Therefore, several scholars conclude that local ownership is merely a discursive tool used by donors (Grøner Krogstad, 2014; Kluczewska, 2019; Scheye & Peake 2005). It can be regarded as a tool that legitimates their presence and interventions in the field, to increase effectiveness to cut donors' spending, and to offer capacity building programmes where there seems to be a lack of local ownership. Likewise, it may be invoked to avoid the appearance of paternalism or neo-colonialism (Chesterman, 2007). Although local ownership is often seen as a practice which is planned and offered from the outside by donors, local ownership can also be created by local actors to negotiate their space or as a form of resistance from below (Grøner Krogstad, 2014; Kluczewska, 2019).

2.2 Equal Partnerships

To ensure local ownership, equal partnerships are generally assumed to be crucial in the field of international development. Partnerships can be set apart from other types of institutional relationships. They can be defined as follows:

> A dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability and transparency. (Brinkerhoff, 2002b, p. 21)

What makes partnerships truly different from other institutional relationships is the set of values that it is based upon, specifically shared goals, balance of power, shared responsibilities, support, joint decision-making, trust, mutual respect, financial transparency, long-term commitment, and accountability (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013; Lister, 2000). This reflects that the aim of partnerships is a relation based on equality.

Fowler (1998, p. 144) developed a list of thirteen key components to describe the ideal form of partnership or what he calls 'authentic partnership'. Here, 'authentic partnership' can be understood as "mutually enabling, inter-dependent interaction with shared intentions" where changes need to occur not only on the side of the partner but also on the side of the donor in order to reach this 'authentic partnership' (Fowler, 1998, p. 144). In this study equal partnership will be examined using the following three indicators; 1) decision-making, 2) financial resources, and 3) accountability. These indicators are selected from all elements for equal partnership identified in the literature as they are prominently featured as the key elements concerning equal partnership (see for example Elbers & Schulpen, 2013; Fowler 1998). Secondly, these elements are part of the analytical framework of the research project this study forms part of on 'the coming of age of Private Development Initiatives', based on previous findings of the research project.

Characteristics of 'authentic partnership' include the following:

- Common vision, sense of purpose, and clearly articulated goals;
- complementary strengths;
- a sense of equality in the relationship (in size and character of the organization and also in how people are treated and whose voices count);
- autonomous, self-standing organizations;
- shared responsibility and clear understanding of roles;
- mutual accountability;
- joint decision-making;
- a strong, compatible working relationship;
- open and transparent communication;
- a constructive method of resolving conflicts and disagreements;
- willingness to compromise;
- a practice of listening to and learning from each other;
- a common understanding about the future of the partnership

Efforts to achieve 'authentic partnerships' have focused on initiatives such as new policy statements to clarify the values, goals, and practices of partnering and workshops to change individuals' ideas, attitudes and behaviours (Ashman, 2001).

Partnerships are promoted for different reasons. Practically, partnerships are believed to cope better with complex problems as they can build on each other's comparative advantages and divide labour, thereby reaching goals otherwise unreachable (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004). Additionally, partnerships can help to build an environment more amendable to the development of civil society and lead to greater cost-effectiveness, because "when there is sufficient similarity and trust between transacting parties, tasks can be achieved more smoothly, problems are dealt with more quickly because the frameworks of interpretation are akin and understandings can be reached with less effort"(Fowler, 1998). They are beneficial for (Southern) partners as they add (financial) resources, impart knowledge through training and capacity building, and provide a network linking local and international institutions (Hoksbergen, 2005). Elbers and Schulpen (2013) list three reasons for the importance of partnerships brought forward in literature for (Northern) NGOs, which are also relevant for PDIs. Firstly, equal relations are assumed to be a precondition for local ownership to reach sustainable development (see als Fowler, 1997; Lister, 2000). Secondly, legitimacy is derived by NGOs through their quality relationship with their partners, which differs from multilateral and bilateral agencies. This argument also applies to a greater extent to PDIs, as their pride is their long-term commitment to a partner. Thirdly, partnerships have an intrinsic value related to their values and identity (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013). Hoksbergen (2005) points out that for it would be best if donors partner with locally rooted organizations, instead of building from the ground up, hiring and training local people. It is also suggested that it is better not to sign contracts but covenants or long-term relationship agreements, which are formed after deliberations on identity, values, vision and missions of both organizations (Hoksbergen, 2005).

2.2.1 Power and the limitations of partnerships

The role of power and power relations is inextricably linked with both local ownership and partnerships. In this study power is defined as "the ability of an actor to get others to do something they otherwise would not do" (Keohane & Nye, 1973, p. 10). Power in equal partnership should be balanced, in comparison to hierarchical donor-recipient relations. Chambers and Pettit (2013) identify power and relationships to be the governing dynamics preventing inclusion of weaker actors in decision-making. The existing power relationships are reinforced through organizational norms and procedures, combined with personal behaviour, attitudes and beliefs (Chambers & Pettit, 2013). On a structural level, influences on the

partnership include the internal organizational systems of partners and important external stakeholders, such as donors, government and communities, specifically through policies and procedures that shape the partnership activities (Ashman, 2001). Power asymmetries are thus institutionalized in the rules governing the relationship between partners. These 'rules of the game' can be distinguished between formal rules that are established in legal texts (e.g. policy papers and contracts) and informal rules that are more tacit in character, often remaining unspoken and taken for granted over time (Cohen, 1989; Elbers & Schulpen, 2013; Giddens, 1984). Consequently, to truly shift power, changes need to happen within these power relations at a level of agency-structure and internal-external forces to achieve equitable partnerships. In this study the focus will mostly be on the level of agency and internal forces, specifically the behaviour and interactions between PDIs and CBOs.

Views on the benefits and value of partnerships are diverse, with on of the main criticism being that they hide unequal power relations. To start with, the normative character of the definition of partnership makes it unclear to what extent it can be operationalized and if it is universally appropriate, in the end making it impossible to design and implement a partnership in the ideal sense (Brinkerhoff, 2002b; Black, 2020). Again, much of the same critique on local ownership is also voiced about partnerships, which is the disparity between policy and reality. This is according to Mosse (2004) the case for development policy in general, where practice is not driven by policy. The gap can partly be explained through operational structures – funding, evaluation, accountability, and management systems – that encourage Northern control (Hately & Malhotra, 1997). Critics suggest that the notion of partnership disguises and legitimizes the interventions of international development agencies, mystifying power asymmetry (Crawford, 2003; Fowler, 2000). This power asymmetry is implied as donors dominate decision-making, partly through the control of money (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013). Moreover, partnerships are often influenced by the changing conditionality, priority, objectivity and agenda of the donors (Wallace et al., 2006). Although these power asymmetries exist, some scholars find it incorrect to depict local counterparts as solely powerless and without agency. Studies show how these local partners deploy several covert strategies to create room for manoeuvre within the rules set by donors, for example through personal relationships (Baaz, 2005), trust building through face-to-face visits (Mawdsley et al., 2005), selective sharing of information and only superficially conforming to tasks (Ebrahim

2002; Elbers & Arts, 2011). However, this sometimes results in a passive and/or lack of capacity perception of the partner by the donor, instead of a successful tactic for increasing local ownership (Baaz, 2005).

2.3 The path towards equal partnership

With regard to developing more equitable partnerships, scholars have listed several drivers and impediments towards shifting power, such as the few mentioned above. The two main potential drivers most relevant to this research are scrutinized in this section, namely financial independence through capacity building and personal relationships.

2.3.1 Financial independence through capacity building

The first potential driver for a shift in power as identified in the literature is capacity building as a means to overcome financial dependence. Financial dependence on (Northern) donors who hold the purse strings is seen as the most problematic hurdle for equitable partnerships. It has been suggested that this may even make equal partnership impossible to achieve. Furthermore, not only control over the financial resources by one partner, but also the interlinked decision-making processes can obstruct equitable partnerships. The donor has namely the power to unilaterally decide to alter the 'rules of the game' by changing the objectives, goals, accountability requirements and the funding conditions that the recipient has to meet (Kumi & Copestake, 2021; Wallace et al., 2006). Or as Brinkerhoff (2002a) puts it:

> Power imbalances generally originate from one partner controlling the majority of resources. When this is the case, true equality in decision-making can be skewed, whether because the more powerful partners take charge, or more subtly, because the less powerful partners defer to that partner's wishes so as not to jeopardize future resources flows. (p. 224-225)

To overcome this, there needs to be an actual change in funding to ensure that old wine is not simply put in new bottles (Baaz, 2005). This means minimizing financial dependence of partners, for example through their own local donor base by starting local fundraising, local enterprise or investments (Fowler, 1998; Hoksbergen, 2005; Hudock, 1995). Capacity building programmes are seen as a tool that could possibly counter power asymmetries, as they strengthen the agency and ability to affect the partnership by local partners (Lister, 2000).

Capacity building focused on creating financial independence through local fundraising is the aim of the Change the Game Academy.

2.3.2 Personal relationships

Another potential driver when it comes to obtaining equitable partnerships according to the literature is strong personal relationships. Informal, personal contacts and friendship have a positive role in enhancing collaboration between donor-recipient relations (Kumi & Copestake, 2021). When strong personal relationships are developed, partnerships are more likely to be successful. The stronger the personal relationship, the higher the levels of social capital, which enables cooperative problem-solving and helps to overcome gaps created by different levels of power and knowledge (Dichter, 1989, in Lister, 2000). Strong personal relationships can also build trust, which can be achieved through greater personal interaction – increasing the number and quality of face-to-face visits. This will help to "enhance effectiveness by more open dialogue between partners; improving upward and downward accountability; and making monitoring and accountability more rigorous and meaningful" (Mawdsley et al., 2005, p. 77). Yet, within the NGO sector, 'professionalization' requirements can make this more difficult, as donor demands for greater transparency, monitoring and accountability have resulted in micro-managing and obsession with audits, targets, and performance indicators (ibid). Ashman (2001) concludes that the types of changes needed to allow more influence of local partners inherently contradicts these principles of top-down accountability. Visits would cut back the stream of documentation related to 'professionalization' and would make more learning from the partner possible (Mawdsley et al., 2005).

Partnerships between PDIs and their local counterparts are particularly known for their informal character. Representatives of PDIs purposefully distinguish themselves from overly 'professionalized' NGOs and emphasize strong personal relationships with their partners (Appe & Telch, 2020). The PDIs intentionally do not seek to professionalize in order to prevent getting caught up by formal structures, as they believe people-to-people aid is more effective and efficient (Develtere & Stessens, 2007; Schulpen, 2007). The people-to-people contact in the context of citizen aid is seen as beneficial, as it allows for more responsive and flexible approaches and enable higher levels of altruism (Cochrane & Davis, 2020). Additionally, these personal relations inspire commitment, which is shown by the long-term partnerships of PDIs

(Elbers & Schulpen, 2013). Lastly, PDIs show that they are quick to adapt to complex environments and to respond to context-specific challenges, also due to personal relations, which indicates the potential for creative and innovative development (Appe et al., 2019). On the other hand, previous studies on PDIs show how strong personal relations with their partners can also be an impediment for local ownership and equal partnership. Kinsbergen et al., (2017), for example, note how the voluntary and personal character of PDIs can lead to insufficient attention to context analysis, needs assessment, involvement of local actors and a focus on structural change. Additionally, friendship is in many cases the basis for collaboration between PDIs and local partners, which makes it difficult to discuss each other's expectations or division of roles and capacities or to be critical of the partnership. Moreover, the 'fun factor' - the work should stay fun - also plays a role when it comes to PDIs (Kinsbergen et al. 2017). Kumi and Copestake (2021) although being rather positive about the role of informal relations, note as well that close connections with donors can also lead to reluctance to critique the relationship "even when things are not working rightly" (p. 19).

3. Methodology

This research forms part of the research project 'The coming of age of Private Development Initiatives', led by dr. Sara Kinsbergen (Radboud University Nijmegen) and financially supported by Stichting Wilde Ganzen, which is partly about the impact of the Change the Game Academy. The research question and focus is based on previous outcomes of the general study. Almost parallel with this research, a comparable study is done by Anna Vellinga, master's student of the Radboud University, except her focus is on eight partnerships between Dutch PDIs and Ugandan partners. From November 2020 until February 2021 the 'fieldwork' was conducted remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. This desk-study approach influenced the research significantly since observational methods were limited and establishing rapport was difficult, as this is built over time and through 'being there'. Aware of these limitations, this chapter elaborates on which methods were applied, how participants were sampled, and how the retrieved data was analysed. Additionally, a reflection is given on the ethical concerns of this research and the researcher positionality.

3.1 Methods

The research applies a multiple-case study approach (Yin, 2003) as this offers an excellent model for research into the evolvement of the partnerships due to the focus on processes. The case studies within the research are eight partnerships between Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs, of which the latter attended the Change the Game Academy in 2016, 2017 or 2018. Multiple research methods were applied to be able to answer the formulated research questions and to come to data triangulation to improve validity. This research is built on qualitative methods, which is considered best suited for the study at hand, because the aim is to gather insights into behaviour and power dynamics between PDIs and Indian CBOs. These methods consist of a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a document analysis. Data collection for this research was done from November 2020 until February 2021.

3.1.1 Literature review

The first method for data collection was a literature review to acquire relevant information on the main concepts within the research. Academic literature, journal articles and grey literature, such as reports written by NGOs or other institutions within the development arena, were consulted. This literature review provides a framework through which the findings of the subsequent research can be analysed.

3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

The main method within the research was the conduction of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, rather than structured or unstructured interviews, were selected as the preferred method of conducting the interviews. Firstly, it functions as a useful balance by allowing participants to bring in their views and understandings without completely deviating from the topics related to the research (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Secondly, as my research was conducted during COVID-19 times there was limited time to talk to participants, especially the Indian CBOs, rendering semi-structured interviews a practical solution. An interview guide and topic list were created beforehand based on the indicators of decision-making, accountability and financial resources for equal partnerships to facilitate the semi-structured interviews. The guide was not strictly followed depending on the answers of the participants or the course of the conversation, allowing for some flexibility. Interviews were conducted with eight PDIs, seven Indian CBOs, four Stichting Wilde Ganzen employees and one national partner of the Change the Game Academy. Concerning the partnerships, a conscious decision was taken to conduct the interviews with each partner separately to ensure partners felt free to share about their partnership, taking into account the complex power hierarchies and separate agendas of both organizations. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only two interviews could be conducted face-to-face, all the other interviews happened through either ZOOM calls or WhatsApp calls or through written reply due to bad internet connection.

3.1.3 Document analysis

Lastly, the method of document analysis was applied to compare official documentation with the data found through the semi-structured interviews. Document analysis was done through examining organizations' web pages, written communication between the organizations, and official documentation concerning their partnership and Change the Game Academy. These documents consisted of policy briefs, annual reports, project application forms, partnership agreements, and newsletters. One limitation of this method is that is does not provide for a complete overview, due to the fact that not all partners had a web page or digitalised documents. The aim of this complementary method was on the one hand to ask specific partner related questions during the interviews and on the other hand to obtain background information, which can help to better contextualize and analyse the already obtained data. Documentation, as written record of the organization, also allows to gain access to information that could already be forgotten and/or not mentioned by the participants.

3.2. Access and sampling

Access to the PDIs and their local counterparts was granted through existing contacts with Stichting Wilde Ganzen through the main research project led by dr. Sara Kinsbergen. Stichting Wilde Ganzen gave me access to an overview list of participants of the Change the Game Academy. The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on two criteria: 1) only PDIs that partner with Indian CBOs, as India was one of the countries were the programme initially started and also represented the country with most PDIs; and 2) Indian CBOs that participated in the local fundraising training of the Change the Game Academy during the limited period of 2016-2018 so there is sufficient time to see effects of the training on the partnerships until now. With these criteria a large sample list was created by Stichting Wilde Ganzen of which eight partnerships were chosen at random. Stichting Wilde Ganzen officially announced the research to the national partner in India, and to other relevant partners which I would possibly approach. The eight partnerships received an invitation to participate in the research, without Stichting Wilde Ganzen being aware which partnerships were selected to ensure anonymity. In the invitation I deliberately portrayed myself as an independent researcher who is not linked directly to Stichting Wilde Ganzen or any of the PDIs or Indian CBOs to ensure access to all parties within the research.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

All collected data was gathered in the tool NVivo, which is a data analysis tool. The data was organised and afterwards analysed using a combination of the deductive and inductive approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The deductive approach was used by predetermining the majority of the coding structure beforehand, such as the codes "accountability", "decision-making" and "financial resources". These codes link back to the theoretical framework and the topic list, as they are chosen as the indicators for equal partnerships in this study based on their prominence in previous research on equal partnerships and as they are part of the analytical framework in the research project led by dr. Sara Kinsbergen. Main codes were created based on the research questions, and subsequently structured in subcodes. The subcodes were mostly established during the process of coding, following the inductive approach. Excel was another tool that was used to collect more quantitative data gathered mainly through the document analysis. In the Excel file basic information of the organizations was gathered with topics such as the duration of the partnership, size organization, number of donors/sponsors, annual income, etcetera. This

document provided a basis to analyse the partnerships individually and to compare the partnerships with each other. Unfortunately, quantitative data about the impact evaluation of the Change the Game Academy, such as a complete baseline or end line, was not available for the partnerships that participated in this research.

3.4 Ethical concerns and researcher positionality

This research also had to deal with several ethical issues. Firstly, ethical concerns were taken into account during the gathering of data by asking all participants beforehand for informed consent to participate in the research and their permission to record the meetings. Both were accepted by all participants. Anonymity was assured to all the research participants beforehand and confirmed again during the interviews. The interviews were recorded and stored safely. During the transcription, details that could be traced back to the participants were removed. Afterwards, the transcriptions were stored in a manner that only I and the limited number of researchers within the project can access the data.

In qualitative research, the positionality of the researcher has to be taken into account. Especially as this research investigates power hierarchies of which the researcher forms part during and after the time of research, it is difficult to take a 'neutral' stance. Confidentiality established through informed consent and the assurance of anonymity was of the utmost importance within this research. I needed to thread carefully, being sensitive and respectful towards both parties, but not hiding my agenda and my research objectives. The link with Stichting Wilde Ganzen could possibly have led to some politically correct answers of the research participants. After the period of data collection I started as an intern at Stichting Wilde Ganzen, which on the one hand enabled me to better understand the context of this study, but on the other hand could also form a possible risk for the study, as my loyalty could be questioned by the participants. I was also wary not to express any opinions about a particular partnership to any of the partners. During the research I continuously reflected on my positionality, preconceptions on partnerships and the context of the research with the aim of limiting my personal influence. I was aware of being particularly limited in the contact with the representatives of the Indian CBOs, as I was unable to speak their first language, be completely culturally aware, or learn their customs, norms and values being there. Moreover, for the participants my identity could possibly have made a difference in the data I gathered, being a white female researcher with a European background.

4. Part*nership described*

In this chapter, the characteristics of the partnerships will be described to answer the first sub-question. This will be done in order to establish a base on which can be built to see if changes occurred over time and if any power shift happened between the partnerships. Furthermore, power within partnerships is not only visible through the exercise of power over resources such as funds, but also through the interaction between partners and what Elbers and Schulpen (2013) term 'rules governing the relationship', which are the organizational norms and procedures. Through analysing the characteristics of the partnerships, it is possible to see if and how power is being reinforced through the interaction and these 'rules'. This chapter first looks into the general characteristics of the partnerships, such as origins, partnership duration and budget. Afterwards it looks into specific characteristics that have been found to shape the interaction within partnerships, including how the partnership started, the role of expertise from the board of the PDI, and the influence of funds/funders and private donors that can lead to an implicit framework imposed by the PDI.

4.1 General characteristics of the partnerships

In order to understand the partnerships between the Dutch PDIs and the Indian CBOs, it is important to know the basic features of these partnerships, such as their origins, focus of the project, average budget and duration of the partnership.

Firstly, all partnerships started with an already existing Indian CBO, of which only one was founded by a foreigner. Only one PDI started the project themselves and found a matching existing CBO. The majority of partners got to know each other through a personal experience travelling or volunteering in India. Second, only two partnership started off with an official partnership agreement. The other partnerships did not put anything in official writing concerning the partnership conditions, the division of roles, responsibilities, etcetera. Third, half of the partnership had a partnership duration between 5-10 years and the other half between 20-30 years, meaning a rounded average of 15 years for all partnerships. Fourth, the focus of the projects is various, as both PDIs (six of eight) and the CBOs (eight of eight) do not only partner with each other, but also with other organizations. In general the focus lies on projects related to education, vocational training and health care. Fifth and Last, the budget of the Indian organizations ranges between 200.000 and 6.6 million euro and of the Dutch

PDIs between 20.000 and 180.000 euro.[2] These general characteristics are representative for databases on partnerships between PDIs and Southern organizations (Kinsbergen, 2017). An overview of all the characteristics is given in the table below.

Table 1: Characteristics of the partnerships

Characteristics partnerships	Dutch PDI		Indian CBO	
Origins	Travel to India	[4/8]	All Indian organizations already existed before start partnership;	
	Volunteer in India	[1/8]		
	Unknown	[3/8]	Locally founded	[7/8]
			Founded by foreigners	[1/8]
Partnership agreements	Yes	[2/8]	Yes	[2/8]
	No	[6/8]	No	[6/8]
Partnership duration	Range [5 years to 30 years]		Range [5 years to 30 years]	
	Rounded average: 15 years		Rounded average: 15 years	
Focus *Majority organizations have multiple	Education	[6/8]	Education	[6/8]
	Agriculture	[1/8]	Agriculture	[2/8]
	Health Care	[5/8]	Health Care	[6/8]
	Vocational training	[5/8]	Vocational training	[5/8]
	Water	[2/8]	Church-based	[1/8]
	Refugees	[1/8]		
	Church-based	[1/8]		
Donors	Only donor to Indian CBO	[2/8]	Multiple donors	[8/8]
	Donor to multiple organizations	[6/8]	PDI major donor	[2/8]
	Donations mostly from:		Donations mostly from:	
	private donors / (capital) funds		foreign NGOs/ civil society organizations (CSOs)	
Budget	Range [20.500 - 181.035 euro]		Range [196.643 - 6.641.859 euro]	
	Rounded average: 66.000 euro		Rounded average: 3.400.000 euro	

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[2] There was one PDI with an annual budget of 5,3 million as this organization over the years had grown into an NGO. This exception was taken into account while analyzing the data.

The overview of the general characteristics shows that there is variety amongst the partnerships. However, there are a few specific characteristics that shape all these partnership relations, such as the (*ad hoc*) start of the partnership, the expertise of the PDIs, and influence of the private donors and (capital) funds, which contribute to the "rules governing the relationship" (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013, p. 64).

4.2 The start of the partnership

The majority of the studied partnerships between the Dutch PDIs and the Indian CBOs started due to a personal encounter with the hardship of poverty during a holiday visit or internship in the Global South, which made "very deep impressions"[3] on the founders of a PDI. Driven by these deep impressions and fed by an 'accidental' visit to a project or an invitation to help, they feel the urge to do something and start a foundation, the PDI. As the founders of one PDI exemplified:

> When we (…) travelled to India, it soon became clear to us that we had to do much more. We saw the misery of this country pass before our own eyes. Doing nothing was no longer an option for us; we could not ignore this. (…) When we came home, we had to process our experiences. India left a deep impression on us (…) and after deliberation it seemed wise to set up a foundation. We immediately set to work, not knowing what was waiting for us all.[4]

These (accidental) personal encounters during travels characterizes the start of many PDIs, as the literature confirms (Kinsbergen & Schulpen, 2013; Pollet et al., 2014) that the majority enter the field of development by chance, naming these individual citizens '*the accidental aid agents'* (Haaland & Wallevik, 2017, p. 206). In this study, all partnerships started with an already existing locally-rooted Indian CBOs. Four of the partnerships are formed between a PDI and their first partner, while the other four PDIs were already founded and already had different partners when they met the Indian CBO of this study (see more details in table 1 in 4.1).

Another characteristic linked to the start of the partnership is the speed by which PDIs are set up, as they are driven with passion caused by personal encounters with poverty. This is already

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[3] Interview organizations B&E, newsletter organization G (All organizations that participated have been categorized randomly in alphabetical order to secure their anonymity, no names are revealed in this study)
[4] Webpage organization B

illustrated in the previous quotation where the founders started to work immediately, without knowing what to expect.[5] Similarly, another interviewed founder of a PDI said she felt the foundation had "a flying start", explaining how, after visiting a project in India and volunteering there for a time, she was able to find two big funders within a couple of months who were able to support the project that resulted in the founding of the PDI. Quickly a policy plan had to be written and a webpage needed to be built. This made her conclude: "In fact, everything went smoothly and quickly in my opinion".[6] These accidental and flying starts or 'happenchance' initiatives as Fylkesnes (2016) calls it, are typical for how PDIs are founded. With these quick starts the majority of the partnerships do not establish any formal rules such as partnerships agreements or memorandums of understanding. Only two of the studied partnerships had such documents developed at the start.[7] A lot of the partnership conditions, such as partnership duration, division of roles and responsibilities, are left implicit and unspoken.

4.3 Personal expertise

A second feature of the studied partnerships is how the PDIs frequently incorporate their own expertise into the projects, which was the case for six of the eight partnerships. The expertise and skillset of the citizens involved in a PDI start to play a role already when considering initiating a foundation and what kind of projects the foundation will run. One founder whose hobby is sewing and doing all kinds of things with textiles, decided to start sewing schools for women.[8] For another, being a maternity nurse, maternity care was particularly close to her heart, when working in a hospital in India was not possible one of the first projects of the PDI she founded was upgrading baby incubators in the maternity ward in an Indian hospital.[9] At another level, three PDIs decided to share skills with the Indian CBO during project visits, sharing their knowledge on administrative tools, communication strategies or fundraising.[10] Some PDIs mentioned this skills-sharing in their policy plans partly in a context of efficiency. One stated "We give financial and material support to organizations with whom we are closely involved and with whom we actively share our knowledge in various fields".[11] Also, new board

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[5] Webpage organization B
[6] Interview organization E
[7] Organizations D & F
[8] Interview organization A
[9] Interview organization B
[10] Interview organization D, E, G
[11] Policy plan organization E

members of a PDI with a specific expertise can also lead to a renewed focus of the choice which projects to fund of the Indian CBO. This was the case for one of the interviewed PDIs of which the new board members all had a background in education. The focus beforehand was on general maintenance and various projects, but now the focus is on improving the educational system of the school run by the Indian CBO. Therefore, some board members went to the school of the Indian organization for a couple of weeks to teach a new learning method that "is not focused on reproduction as is per usual in India".[12] One common element of all the different involvement of expertise above is that expertise is linked to fun. Kinsbergen et al., (2017) describe how a 'fun factor', which makes work also enjoyable, can be a motivational driver for PDIs. Yes, in the examples above, 'fun' is additionally the motivator for the choice of projects. One PDI justifies this indirectly in an interview through the following statement "If they do not get it from us (the funds), they try to get it from another donor. They also have an interest in us being enthusiastic about the part we have chosen".[13]

The Indian CBOs in general seem to be content with the sharing of expertise by the PDIs. Two Indian organizations commented on how people within the PDI assisted them in learning administrative tools or project related tasks.[14] One representative of an Indian CBO, for example, mentioned how before she was not able to write 'good' project proposals although she tried. One PDI member personally taught her how to write a project proposal, what wordings to use and what difficulties she could expect, which she appreciated.[15] Although such sharing of expertise is being done with good intentions by the PDIs, one critical note can possibly be placed. The risk could exist that by teaching these methods the PDIs facilitate the CBOs in adapting 'aidlish' - the language of what Apthorpe (2005) calls Aidland - making them uniform to the hegemonic western system ignoring other knowledge systems (Apthorpe, 2005; Escobar 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Shutt, 2006). This does not create a shift in power, but rather risks to do the opposite, as it feeds into 'the white gaze' of development that positions western standards as superior (Pailey, 2020). Equal partnerships as described by Fowler (1998) should be characterized by mutual learning, instead of mere learning by the Indian

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[12] Newsletter organization G
[13] Interview organization G
[14] Interview organization J & M
[15] Interview organization J

organization. Yet, this is not directly found in this study. Further studies should prove if this risk becomes real in reality.

4.4 Financial dependency

A third characteristic of the studied partnerships is that the PDIs financially mainly depend on private donors and have a limited budget compared to NGOs. This is according to the datasets common amongst PDIs, as the average annual budget is 50.500 euro (Kinsbergen, 2017). The annual budget of the PDIs in this case study ranged from about 20.000 – 180.000, with an average of 66.000 euro.[16] From the beginning of a PDI, private donors, mostly being family, friends and acquaintances, are the main contributors to the annual budget of a PDI. For 45% of all PDIs, private donors are the most important donors, followed by private foundations (Kinsbergen, 2017). Since PDIs know a lot of their donors personally, accountability towards them is of high importance. One PDI representative remarked: "If we, as a board, want to do a project, we always think that we always have to justify it to our regular donors"[17], thereby highlighting that for this reason good information about the project and reports of the Indian CBO are important. This, together with the fact that PDIs take pride in not spending (almost) any funds on administration costs as every penny needs to go to the project, makes that accountability towards the donors influences the project choice and policies of PDIs. PDIs find it important that their annual reports are easily accessible and that their annual report clearly states the percentage of administration costs. They are critical in showing that the money is spent for what it was intended. As one PDI confirms: "(private) donors absolutely want to see results and want to see concretely, what have you done with my money".[18] Tangible and visible projects, also called first-generation projects (Korten, 1987), such as building a school, are therefore the kind of projects PDIs work on. An Indian CBO representative showcased how this is reflected in the conditions the PDI placed before starting the partnership, explaining that the PDI would not fund operating costs and only wants to do one-off costs.[19] Attending capacity building training such as the Change the Game Academy can also cause conflicts. In the case of the Change the Game Academy the PDIs were asked to fund 10% of the training for their partner. This investment does not go directly into the project, and because it is not

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[16] One PDI which developed into an NGO in the sample population had an annual budget of 5,3 million euros, which is exceptionally high and therefore is not included.
[17] Interview organization H
[18] Interview organization G
[19] Interview organization N

tangible and visible it is harder to justify to donors, which made some of the PDIs decide not to contribute the 10%. In general, this was a problem the Change the Game Academy faced, which led to Stichting Wilde Ganzen to approach the Indian CBOs directly instead of via their PDIs.[20] When asked if the influence of private donors make a PDI act differently, one representative said after a short silence:

> Well, we anticipate it. We look at what donors would think about this (project) and because we are very small we do not have that many donors at all. Almost all of them, I think half of them, are people we know. These are former board members or friends of former board members or family of former board members and those former board members keep in touch with us. In this way, we know who the donor is, what the interest of the donor is. But we try to explain as best we can why our policy is like it is. Sometimes we get critical questions. Yes, of course, you take that into account, we do not want donors to stop, because they do not like our policy. They have to some extent to agree with what we are doing.[21]

This statement exactly summarizes the tension caused by the limited budget and dependence on private donors and the influence it has on the policy of a PDI. Finally, half of the studied PDIs mentioned a drop in the number of their regular donors during the course of the years, which causes them to worry. "I had 90 regular donors from the start, nowadays there are only 30".[22] This drop in regular donors adds up to the (perceived) influence from private donors and also urges the PDIs to explore new funding options, such as (capital) funds.

Additional to the influence of private donors, (capital) funds also indirectly influence the activities of PDIs. The conditions and criteria of some (capital) funds are in some cases copied to the policy plan of a PDI, such as asking for a small contribution of the CBO. Similarly, advice from the funds for the projects is taken up seriously as "it would be a shame to lose (the fund) as an important partner" even if the Indian CBO does not entirely agree or has different priorities.[23] In short, PDIs are also dependent on various actors in the development arena.

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[20] Interview Stichting Wilde Ganzen employee
[21] Interview organization G
[22] Interview organization B
[23] Interview organization A

4.5 Restricting Framework

The characteristics described above, the 'accidental' and quick start, the expertise of the PDI, and the financial dependence on private donors and funds, together determine the framework and the room to manoeuvre within the partnership. Firstly, the quick start of the PDIs limits the time for negotiating the policy framework with the Indian CBO. After a short time of negotiations, the policy framework is set and it seems that it is hardly revised. "[The policy plan] is a bit the same every year. Unless we have major changes in our policy, but otherwise it will be taken over every year for the following year."[24] A regular project cycle guides the partnerships. One PDI noted that in the beginning many meetings were necessary to set up the partnership, but now it is not necessary anymore, "because they are an existing relationship so we do not have to explain our starting points in case of a new project. They know how we work and we know how they work".[25] Another PDI said something similar: "He (the Indian CBO) knowns what we want to know, how we work, and what proposal will likely be accepted".[26] From the interviews the process appears to be that the CBOs propose a project, only to be rejected until they find 'the perfect fit' and become aware of the boundaries of the policy framework of the PDI.

Additionally, the expertise of the PDIs also limits the room for manoeuvre for the Indian CBOs. A PDI who changed the focus to education due to the expertise of the board said:

> Ultimately, we have the last word. We are the ones who give the money. We made the decision to focus mainly on education. […] That has been a decision and we have more or less just announced it, we have communicated why we decided it that way but it was our decision in the end.[27]

Here, the PDI made a unilateral decision that restricts the type of projects the Indian CBO can propose. Another Indian CBO representative clarified: "They (the PDI) chose the area and what type of projects, like that. We look for similar types of projects. […] Once they asked us to submit a project for (a specific focus group), but we said we are not working on that".[28] This

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[24] Interview organization G
[25] Interview organization B
[26] Interview organization H
[27] Interview organization G
[28] Interview organization O

partner knows with what type of project he is able to get approval for funds by the PDI and actively proposes projects that fit into the interest of the PDI. Indian CBOs that have multiple (foreign) donors have the option to 'play the field' by finding a donor to match each project they wish to implement, but Indian CBOs that are dependent on one major donor are unable to do this. At the same time, all the PDIs claim that they work demand-driven, saying "roughly speaking, we pay and they execute. The requests come from them. We do not make it up, it's their need"[29] or "the partner decides what he needs in his specific context"[30]. However, the same PDIs guide, maybe unconsciously, which project the Indian CBOs propose. This has been the case in one partnership in which the Indian CBO was asked to adapt their approach of the organization at the start of the partnership, but when the PDI slowly stepped back, the PDI said the Indian CBO needs to reverse back to the original approach. This, combined with the influence of the donors as described above leave little room for the Indian CBOs.

In short, local ownership that the PDIs proclaim to endorse contradicts the actions and framework set up by the PDIs, which limits the role of local ownership as they circumscribe the type of project that the Indian CBO can propose. The rules are implicit from the start for the Indian CBOs. Elbers and Schulpen (2013) explain how there is a difference between formal and informal rules: "Formal rules are fixed and authorised in legal texts (e.g. policy papers, contracts) [...], informal rules have a more tacit character and typically remain unspoken" (p.53). These informal rules mainly characterize the studied partnerships as Indian CBOs need to read between the lines of what the PDIs say, and the rules are hardly discussed at the onset of the partnership. This indicates that the partnerships did not start off as equal partnerships as power is mainly in the hands of the PDIs. The next chapter will analyse if any changes in the partnership happened over time that affect the implicit framework established at the start and possibly lead towards more equal partnerships.

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[29] Interview organization I
[30] Interview organization F

5. Changes *in the partnerships*

This chapter looks into the changes within the partnerships over time. To answer this second sub-question, equal partnerships is operationalized in three categories: decision-making processes, financial resources, and accountability. For each category, an analysis will be given on if, and if so how, change happened over time. Although the focus on change is central to this chapter, overall all the partnerships concluded in the interviews that "nothing had changed" in their partnership relation over time.

5.1 Decision-making

In terms of decision-making, there has not been an indication of a significant shift in power from the PDI towards the Indian CBO. The Indian organization is mainly in charge of the day-to-day implementation, but there is still some involvement of the PDI, who is ultimately in control. However, what *did* happen is the personal relationships strengthened that because of the duration of the partnership. Some partners even referred to each other in terms of an extended family as a result of the long-term collaboration. The interviewed partnerships on average existed fifteen years, ranging from five years up to thirty years of collaboration (see table 1 in chapter 4.1). Due to the personal connection built up over the years, especially the PDIs feel they are able to be frank towards the partner. As one founder of a PDI said:

> It was a terrible mess in a certain spot (of the project of the Indian CBO). They don't really do waste disposal. It is occasionally burned. Then I suggested why don't you guys clean it up for once. It's awful here, it's killing. Of course, I can just say that because I know them so well.[31]

Afterwards, the Indian CBO did do something about the waste disposal. In the interviews, no change was mentioned in the communication of the Indian CBOs in terms of them becoming more vocal about their opinions.

5.1.2 Ending the partnership

One expected change when it comes to decision-making is PDIs slowly transferring responsibility to the Indian CBOs to eventually end the partnership, but this is not reflected in the studied partnerships. Rather the opposite is found with PDIs stating they would like to continue as long as possible as they feel a strong connection to the Indian partner and the

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[31] Interview organization G

project. Not in any of the studied partnerships an exit strategy was established at the beginning of the partnership. In the two cases where an exit strategy was established, the circumstantial factor of the age of members of the PDI was the underlying reason for this change. The majority of the interviewed PDI representatives were above 60 and according to the database the average age of all PDI representatives is 53 years (Kinsbergen, 2017). These people are not getting any younger as they notice themselves. Their age makes them reflect on how long they are able to continue the partnership. As one of the representatives of a PDI said: "All the board members are above 60. We are going to call it quits sometime soon. We are going to think about how to move on".[32] Handing the PDI over to their children is for most not an option. They do not want to burden their children considering that it takes a lot of time and effort, while other children are not interested in continuing 'the legacy'. An Indian CBO representative aware of the problem is even involved in recruiting new board members for their PDI partner when Dutch people visit the project, remarking: "We indirectly say (name of the members of the PDI) is helping us this much, but nowadays (names) are getting older. It would be nice if any others joined it would be helpful for us also".[33] Finding a replacement is hard, as not anyone wants to take up an unpaid almost full-time job on the side.

The PDI members explain how their age is a driver for change, as they need to think about an exit strategy and self-reliance of the Indian CBO. For one PDI this means slowly phasing out supporting each year fewer and fewer projects and coming up with income-generating projects, for another PDI it (indirectly) meant starting to focus on local fundraising options for the Indian CBO and giving their own fundraising training "to put them standing on their own two feet".[34] Ending the partnership means for the PDI a stop to the funding, but not directly letting go of the advisory role or ending the personal relationship with the Indian CBO. Notably, it is the PDI that decides to stop and change the strategy, sometimes even letting the Indian organization somewhat in the dark about a possible ending of the partnership. The majority of the Indian CBOs think and wish the partnership to continue for as long as possible. The future of the partnership is not an undebated point of discussion for the Indian CBOs that are aware of the decreasing support and the call of their PDIs to become sustainable. To exemplify, an Indian CBO director said: "They cannot just simply say that the partnership will

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[32] Interview organization H
[33] Interview organization J
[34] Interview organization D

end. This is something I am a bit confused about. I don't want to use the word fairness, but the question I ask is: why?".[35] By using the words "they cannot just simply say" the Indian CBO indicates how in this decision his organization does not have the last word. To resume, even in the process of ending the partnership a deliberate shift in power does not take place, as the ending is driven by a circumstantial factor of the age of the PDI members. The change that happens is in a sense a 'forced' exploration of local fundraising and income-generating projects for the Indian CBOs. This is also a seemingly sudden change for the Indian CBOs where there appears to be little space for negotiation left, as the guidelines for when the Indian CBOs are 'ready' for exit are established by the PDIs.

5.2 Financial resources

Financially, all the Indian CBOs are dependent on foreign funding. In the interviews, the Indian CBOs mentioned percentages ranging from 60, 70, or 80 percent of foreign donations, and one even indicated to be funded completely by one foreign donor, their PDI. The funds that are raised locally are mainly to fund the running costs of the organizations, while the foreign funds go to the projects. As one Indian CBO manager exemplifies:

> I would say, the whole budget of the organization now depends on the size of the projects. When we have more projects with partners, sometimes the external funding is more. Sometimes 60% comes from outside and 40% from internal funding, but the internal funding is for running the organization, to be very clear. Outside funding we use for community development programmes.[36]

With two exceptions, the extent of the financial dependency has essentially stayed the same, indicating little change in power. The two partnerships that experienced a change relate this partly to a favourable change in the Indian regulatory context.

5.2.1 Indian regulatory context: deterrent for foreign funds and incentive for local funding

There have been two main changes in the regulatory context of India that impacted the partnerships. Firstly, the Foreign Contribution Regulation ACT (FRCA) provides the framework under which organizations in India can receive and utilise grants from foreign sources to ensure they are not used to harm the national interest. The FRCA originated in 1976 and during the subsequent four decades it has become increasingly restrictive for the non-profit

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[35] Interview organization K
[36] Interview organization K

sector in India. In 2010, an amendment to the FRCA was made obligating all NGOs to renew their registration every five years. This amendment led to several NGOs failing to get such a renewal and raised fear amongst NGOs about their future and receipt of foreign donations (INTRAC, 2019). Recently, in September 2020 another amendment prohibited any funds from abroad being made to organizations that involve 'public servants' and prohibited the transfer of grants received under FRCA to any other person or organization.[37] This prevents Indian organizations that raise or receive funds from abroad to sub-grant to smaller partner organizations. SMILE, the national partner for the Change the Game Academy explains how the FCRA is "a very big challenge" for the non-profit sector in India, especially for the organizations of the interviewed Indian CBOs.[38] One Indian CBO director when explaining how his organization is heavily dependent on foreign funding, said: "So next year we have to renew our licence to be able to receive money (foreign funding). That problem will be there. […] We are closely monitored, therefore, if we don't get foreign funding our work will be paralyzed"[39]. This partner perceives the FRCA as a big challenge, restricting the space for civil society in name of 'national interest'. The FRCA fits thereby in the trend of shrinking space for civil society that has been seen globally with governments introducing policies and laws to shift power from civil society towards the national government, often to silence more critical voices (Hossain et al., 2018).

Secondly, the Companies Act has indirectly affected some of the partnerships as it opened up new revenues for local funding. In India as per clause 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 every company with a certain annual turnover[40] has to allocate at least 2% of their average net profit over the previous three years on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and establish a CSR committee with at least one independent member to oversee these expenditures (Singh & Verma, 2014). The act emphasizes that firms must prioritize CSR expenditures in local areas and must consider activities that would eradicate extreme hunger and poverty, promote education, enhance gender equality and women empowerment, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, improve human health, provide vocational skills for communities, support social business projects, and contribute to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund

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[37] Interview SMILE employee
[38] Interview SMILE employee
[39] Interview organization O
[40] Annual turnover of 1,000 crore INR ($161 million) and more, or a net worth of 500 crore INR ($80 million) and more, or a net profit as low as five crore INR ($800.000) and more

or any other fund set up by the Central Government or the State Governments for socio-economic development and relief and funds for the welfare of historically marginalized populations such as the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities, and women. The Indian CBOs and their beneficiaries fall within this description and are within the target group of the Companies Act. With this act, India the first country in the world to have a legislation for compulsory CSR spending (Panwar et al., 2018).

Two Indian CBOs could take advantage of the introduction of the Companies Act and were able to increase local fundraising. The first Indian organization, which previously was 100% funded by the PDI, will next year receive only 60% of their annual income from the PDI while the rest of the funds will be raised locally.[41] This change was partly due to the Indian CBO's strong network in the city and relations with companies, as well as the recognition the Indian organization received from the government of being a class A NGO, which both helped to get the CSR funds. Additionally, the PDI gave their own fundraising training to the Indian CBO based on how they raised funds in the Netherlands. Although they could benefit from the CSR funds, the PDI also noted a disadvantage: "We are happy with the support of companies nearby, but a few companies are terribly big polluters. Anyway, we can't be that picky. We can't say to these companies they can't (give their CSR funds), because we desperately need the help".[42] This indicates how CSR funding can also have undesirable side effects.

The second Indian CBO experienced – in their words – "a quantum shift" towards raising funds within India.[43] Where in 2015/2016 locally raised funds only contributed 3% of the annual income, in 2016/2017 it was 37%. This partner is a strong and independent partner from the PDI with the PDI only supporting 3% of the annual budget. This partner has a diversified set of donors and already existed a decade before the PDI was founded. The Indian CBO ascribes this change to two reasons, the first being the Companies Act 2013 and the second less available funds from the North. The latter reason is according to the Indian organization the result of India being perceived as a superpower in the West, with Westerners now believing that India should provide aid for its own people. This, coupled with the war in Syria, the refugee crisis, and the economic recession in 2008 all resulted in a decrease of funds from foreign donors,

[41] Organization M
[42] Organization D
[43] Annual report organization N

according to this Indian CBO. Although the partnerships of these two partners did undergo a change in financial resources, they did not significantly change when it comes to the other elements for equal partnership – such as accountability mechanisms or decision-making processes – resulting not in a true shift in power between these two partnerships.

The other Indians CBOs were aware of the 2% rule but mentioned they could not benefit from it as much as they wanted to. This could be due to various reasons such as being relatively small-scale organizations located in a rural area without many companies nearby, or having a different religious background making these organizations unlikely to be picked by companies, although this should not matter according to the Companies Act. It also burdens these organizations with a lot of paperwork. An employee of Stichting Wilde Ganzen adds another explanation saying: "The real grassroots organizations don't profit from it (CSR funds). The multinationals often set up their own foundations. They then donate the money to charities through their own foundation".[44] One Indian CBO representative concludes that CSR funding is only helpful for bigger institutions.[45] Importantly, the two Indian CBOs that were able to benefit had the two highest annual incomes of all the interviewed partnerships. Despite the described changes in financial resources for some, the partnerships still maintained their statement that it did not change their relationship as partners.

5.3 Accountability

Change in terms of accountability is slightly visible in the manner of reporting in half of the partnerships. Reporting from the Indian CBOs to the PDIs is mainly done through sharing quarterly reports with written updates of the project, photographs, and financial details. The Indian CBOs representatives feel responsible when it comes to reporting to the PDI as it is a way of building trust and to continue or even further the partnership. As one Indian CBO director explained:

> The most important is the work we are doing, it should be very clear and also it should be given at the right time with photos, videos and whatever. So if the fund person will be satisfied with my work then definitely she/he will be happy and then she/he will be encouraged and then she/he can tell other donors who are supporting (the PDI).[46]

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[44] Interview Stichting Wilde Ganzen employee
[45] Interview organization J
[46] Interview organization L

or as another Indian CBO representative said: "I think the most important thing is what we call in Bengali বিশ্বাস (biśbāsa), which is trust. You need to be completely transparent, you need to be reporting very well on how the money is being spent".[47] By using words as 'most important' and 'need to' they express the importance reporting has for them as a tool to build trust and maintain donor support from the PDIs. For the PDIs the reports are a tool to check if the project is going well and also serve to inform their private donors and funds. Incorrect reporting is one of the first alarms for the PDI. One of the PDIs who ended the partnership with their Indian partner explained that the first cracks in the partnership started due to incomplete reporting.[48] On the other hand, if reporting is done correctly it can bring about change in the partnership between PDIs and Indian CBOs. As a director of an Indian CBO noticed: "We are reporting like the agreement we made. Mostly, they would share some feedback and what they don't understand, but these days, since one or two years, there is less response. Maybe because they trust us, they know us very well".[49] Throughout the years, the personal connection becomes stronger and results in slightly more reliance on the partner, which translates into PDIs being less strict on reporting, asking fewer verification questions. For one PDI this also translated into fewer visits to the Indian CBO.

The PDIs report to their partner by keeping them informed through e-mail or during meetings. It is not done regularly or seen as that important compared to the reports from Indian CBOs to the PDIs or even as important as the report of the PDIs to their donors and funds. When asked why there is not any official report from the PDIs to the Indian CBOs, one PDI founder said:

> If we see each other a few times a year we discuss what we have done with the projects, but we don't send an annual report because then we have to translate it into English and well that is…We are also very busy ourselves, of course. It doesn't go that far. [50]

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[47] Interview organization N
[48] Interview organization A
[49] Interview organization K
[50] Interview organization B

The official reports are not shared with the partner because they are written not to account to the Indian CBO, but foremost to account to the private donors and funds, and therefore are written in Dutch. In the interviews some PDI representatives were surprised by the question whether they report to the Indian CBO, thereby showing that accountability towards the Indian CBOs is not a priority. Various PDI representatives found the question eye-opening, remarking: "No, we never arranged that (reporting to the Indian CBO). I think that it is a nice idea to make a summary of our annual report in English".[51] Another said: "No (we don't report), but we should actually do it, right? […] Honestly, (name partner) never asked if she could read our annual report, but it is on our webpage (in Dutch)".[52] Indeed, it appears that the Indian CBOs do not ask explicitly for the report, but do search for it indirectly. As one Indian CBO director confirmed: "No they don't send their annual report, neither have I asked them but whatever is available on their website I go through that".[53] In fact, an annual report or an annual newsletter is only shared with the Indian CBO by two of the eight studied PDIs.[54] These two PDIs also have the highest annual income, which could mean the need to report in English arises due to their diversified network of donors and recipient organizations. Again, the citations above show how implicit informal rules govern these partnerships (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013). The partnership do not have formal *mutual* accountability which is a precondition for equal partnership (Fowler, 1998). In the end, there is only 'downward' accountability and no 'upward' accountability in the studied partnerships.

To conclude, the partnerships have shown very little change when it comes to the elements for equal partnership: decision-making processes, financial resources and accountability mechanisms. The personal relationships did become stronger over the years and reporting became less strict. Change did happen to a selected group of Indian CBOs due to the external influence of Indian governmental regulation related to CSR. However, overall the partnerships did not experience a shift in power, indicating that the framework as described in the previous chapter stays in place once, leaving not much room to manoeuvre for the Indian CBOs. The following chapter looks at the two main drivers for change identified from the literature to see if they are drivers or impediments for obtaining more equal partnerships.

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[51] Interview organization G
[52] Interview organization H
[53] Interview organization O
[54] Organizations D & F

6. Drivers or *Impediments for change*

In this chapter, the two main drivers for change towards equal partnerships brought forward by the literature will be analysed, namely the personal relationship of PDIs and financial independence through capacity building. The aim of this analysis is to see whether these two factors are drivers or impediments for change and whether they can explain the lack of a shift in power.

6.1 Friendship

The friendly and informal relations between PDIs and the Indian CBOs, although facilitating collaboration at first runs the risk to be an impediment rather than a driver for change towards equal partnership in the long term. In the first phase of the partnership, personal relations may be a driver for change by helping to collaborate and build trust. The personal relationship is built up through meetings and onsite visits of the PDI to the Indian CBO. Some Indian CBOs also visited the PDI in the Netherlands and stayed over at their homes.[55] One Indian interviewee said about his partnership with the PDI: "It is a very good relation. Some donors act only as official donors, but this relationship is not like that".[56] The difference the Indian organizations experience with the relationship with traditional donors is that there is a certain flexibility in the partnerships with PDIs, for example in terms of less strict reporting and with a more open format.[57] The personal relation is appreciated by the Indian organization. As one Indian CBO director commented on knowing each other by name and being able to address the partner by the first name: "Your relationship can mean so much when you can name a person".[58] The informal setting of the partnership is also used by the Indian organizations to deploy their agency. When PDIs visit their projects they use the opportunity to nudge their partner to support other projects. One Indian CBO, for example, managed to do so as their PDI commented in the newsletter to the donors: "A visit to the projects in India has resulted in (name PDI) "opening up" to project (X)".[59] This was a project the PDI at first was opposed to. This confirms what other studies found about how local partners use personal relationships

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[55] Organizations J&O
[56] Interview organization J
[57] Interview organization O
[58] Interview organization K
[59] Newsletter organization H

(Baaz, 2005) and face-to-face visits (Mawdsley et al., 2005) to create room for manoeuvre within the rules set by the donors.

Another aspect related to the personal relation of these partnerships is the commitment towards each other due to the friendship forged over the years. This is already shown previously in the fact that the PDIs find it hard to exit the partnerships. Additionally, commitment is also seen in case any emergencies or private issues, such as medical problems, arise for the Indian partner. Several PDIs support these individuals on a personal note, strictly aside from the PDI's funds.[60] This shows that PDIs indeed show high levels of altruism and are able to act responsively and flexibly due to the personal relationship, as argued by Cochrane and Davis (2020). When speaking about private donations for emergencies, one founder of a PDI said: "(The donation) was outside the scope of the project, it was more of a form of friendship or responsibility. Well, it was actually a combination of friendship and responsibility".[61] In the interviews, various organizations also referred to their partners as their 'extended family'.[62] However, when the personalised relationship becomes too close to also have a more professional working relationship it can become more of an impediment for change. A few PDIs reflected openly on the tension between the friendship and the professional working relation during the interviews, one saying: "I think I need to be careful it does not become too much of a friendship [...] I am in a certain manner their 'employer', but somehow I am also not".[63] Another said: "The disadvantages may be that you are less critical at times, that you accept what they say or what they need".[64] To overcome this tension between friendship and being critical, this PDI representative adopted a particular strategy, namely hiding behind the PDI and its donors:

> I don't say I think this or that, but the donors or the donors will ask me why as they are really critical. So, I always bring the donors forward, which is also true of course, but this way I can somewhat avoid having a discussion with them.[65]

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[60] Organization A & G
[61] Interview organization A
[62] For example, in the Interview with organization J
[63] Interview organization A
[64] Interview organization B
[65] Interview organization G

Hereby, the PDI shows how covert strategies are used to air a critical opinion in order not to damage the friendship and the stable partnership built up over the years. As also mentioned in a previous chapter, the friendship may result in leaving things unspoken. This is reflected in statements such as "he knows what he can expect and we know what we can expect"[66] in which the division of roles is not being contested over the years, resulting also in hesitance when it comes to proposing different conditions for the partnership. For example, one of the Indian CBOs representatives showed his hesitance to bring up changes in the funding arrangements even though the current arrangements came with much uncertainty.[67] Although the literature in general is positive when it comes to informal relations, Kumi and Copestake (2021, p. 19) also see the negative consequences of "relying too much on personal relations", as it leads to reluctance by NGOs to critique their relationship even when things do not go well. In short, although the informal relations at first facilitate collaboration and helps to build trust, the interviews indicate that the informal nature of these relationships may also stand in the way of structural changes and more equal partnerships when situated within frameworks of implicit, unspoken rules.

6.2 Capacity building

In the literature, financial dependence on external funds is seen as hindering equal partnerships (Elbers, 2012; Olawoore, 2017). Capacity building is put forward as a means to enhance the agency of local partners to shift the power (Lister, 2000). It is suggested to minimize financial dependence by starting local fundraising, a local enterprise, or investment (Fowler 1998; Hoksbergen 2005; Hudock, 1995). The capacity building programme of Stichting Wilde Ganzen, the Change the Game Academy, aims to do exactly that. One of the trainings is local fundraising. The objective of this training is to shift the power by diversifying the funding base of the local partners to increase local ownership (Steinhäuser, 2020). This section explores whether the objective is met for the studied partnerships, of which the Indian CBOs participated in the training between 2016 and 2018.

6.2.1 View on Change the Game Academy

Both the PDIs and Indian CBOs viewed the Change the Game programme as an eye opener, also inspiring some with news ideas to raise funds locally. The Indian CBOs went to the training

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[66] Interview organization H
[67] Intervew organization O

after a direct invitation of Stichting Wilde Ganzen or indirectly through the PDI. Overall, they liked the training, as one Indian interviewee commented: "It is a well-organized programme".[68] Both the Indian CBOs and PDIs said the training provided them with new insights. An Indian CBO director said: "I would say Change the Game was really helpful and we came to know many new ideas and so many things we didn't know".[69] Also, a few representatives of the PDIs said that the training made them increasingly aware that their Indian CBO eventually has to become self-reliant. What was particularly striking is that quite a few PDIs indicated they knew little about the Change the Game programme and its effects, saying things like "You should ask them (the Indian CBO)" or "I haven't asked (the Indian CBO) about the training".[70] This could indicate a lack of responsibility and interest of the PDIs, as they felt the training was mainly focused on increasing the capacity of the Indian CBOs.

6.2.2 Opportunities

The training provided some opportunities for the Indians CBOs to raise funds locally. As said, the training gave the Indian organizations new ideas on how to raise funds, such as in relation to the Companies Act to try to profit from the 2% CSR funds. Additionally, the Indian CBOs mentioned how they learned that it is not only about mobilizing financial resources, but also about people's skills and talents. Three of the organizations succeeded to some extent in raising funds locally, including in-kind donations such as meals or materials. One representative of these CBOs said: "Yes, we see results. Two companies, and a university project. Also during this COVID-19 time, we have been able to collect some funds for the really poor from local people".[71] Another mentioned how he mainly benefited in mobilizing human resources for the projects, which decreased the project's costs in the end.[72] One Indian CBO director persistently tried to raise local funds by approaching people in her social network.[73] The main reason for the founder of this Indian organization was the fact that the major donor had announced to stop funding the overhead costs of the organization due to the high age of this donor. What was different in this case is that the PDI was aware of the situation and became involved in the process to raise funds locally on invitation of the Indian CBO. Together

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[68] Interview organization O
[69] Interview organization L
[70] Based on interviews with organizations A,B,C,G, and H
[71] Interview organization O
[72] Interview organization K
[73] Interview organization L

they managed to secure the interest of one company to possibly fund the overhead costs of the Indian organization in the upcoming year. As described in the previous chapter, two other partnerships have been rather successful in raising funds locally, but their successes are not causally linked to Change the Game Academy, and these partners also mentioned that the training did not provide them with much new information. While there have been some successes in local fundraising, it takes quite an effort to do so as there are many challenges to overcome.

6.2.3 Challenges

The partnerships indicate various challenges when it comes to raising local funds in India. One of the major challenges is raising itself, it is an art for which you need specialized skills. The national partner organization SMILE of Stichting Wilde Ganzen who gives the training said: "The issue is that the organizations need to be prepared to deal with the opportunity (of local fundraising and specifically the CSR act). They need to first prepare themselves to face corporates who are very serious about whether as an organization you have the capacity or not".[74] The two organizations that were able to benefit from the CSR act independent from Change the Game Academy prove this, as these organizations had a high degree of organizational capacity and one was even officially acknowledged for it by the government. Also, a few other Indian CBO representatives mentioned how the lack of specialized personnel for local fundraising is holding them back in being more effective in raising local funds. This is especially relevant, when keeping in mind that raising funds in India is "a whole different ball game", as already mentioned before by some PDIs.[75] In India, local fundraising happens mainly through social networks and social activities, which takes a lot of time and effort. Secondly, it is important that the right personnel of the Indian organizations are trained. Personnel who also have the capacity and time to attend and implement the insights of the training. Unfortunately, one of the Indian CBO interviewee mentioned how the information of the training was unavailable, as the person trained by Change the Game Academy left the organization a few months later. Thirdly, some of the Indian CBOs mentioned how the rural location of their project also impedes accessing local funds or organizing activities to obtain funds, especially as these areas, compared to the cities, are rather poor. Lastly, the majority of the Indian CBOs mentioned it is hard for them to access the CSR funds due to the Companies

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[74] Interview SMILE employee
[75] Interview organizations D & G

Act as they are not likely to be picked by the corporates. As explained by an Indian CBO representative: "We have a nuclear plant very nearby. Actually, we tried there for CSR funding. Only the problem is they (the nuclear plant) use CSR funding only for government-related work. […] So, we cannot get CSR funding, although we tried many times".[76] Another Indian organization representative confirmed the tendency of corporates to play favouritism when it comes to their CSR funds to make sure, for example, that their personnel indirectly profits from it. Altogether, this makes it harder for the majority of Indian CBOs to access CSR funds due to their small-scale, location, and small network, but also not impossible.

In the end, both the Indian CBOs and the PDIs indicated that the local fundraising training did not truly trigger a shift in power in their partnership relation resulting in big changes in decision-making, accountability or financial resources. Some of the partners did mention that their relationship was strengthened through the training, but the power balance within the relationship largely remained the same. The training did not significantly change the financial resources of the Indian CBOs or had a big impact on the implicit framework 'the rules of the game'. Too many conditions need to be met perfectly to be able to increase local ownership through local fundraising. This is a conclusion that Steinhäuser (2020) also came to with regards to the Change the Game Academy. Therefore, although much literature tens to suggest otherwise, in this study capacity building has not proven to be the silver bullet to obtain equal partnerships.

To resume, the findings of this chapter on potential drivers for change suggest that although strong personal relationships may be a driver for change in the first phase of the partnerships, in the long run it can become an impediment for structural change, leaving the implicit framework unchallenged. The second potential driver, the capacity building programme Change the Game Academy, has not led to a significant increase of local funds for the Indian CBOs, and has therefore been unable to significantly shift power from the PDIs to the Indian CBOs.

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[76] Interview organization J

7. Discus*sion*

The overall aim of this research was to contribute to power debates within international development, with a specific focus on an alternative development actor – the PDIs. This chapter integrates the findings of this study with theory on local ownership, equal partnerships and power.

7.1 Power

This study found power in these partnerships to be asymmetrical as it is institutionalized in the rules governing the relationship, mostly by 'informal rules' (Elbers & Schulpen, 2013), as expectations and division of roles and responsibilities are mostly left unspoken and implicit in these partnerships. The characteristics of the partnerships, including the ad hoc start, the expertise of the PDI, and the influence of private donors and (capital) funds due to financial dependence, shape the overall framework of the partnerships. This echoes Ashman (2001) who also found that internal organizational systems (procedures and cultures around financial and management control) and important external stakeholders (donors and governments) lead Northern-based private voluntary organizations to exert greater influence over partnership agreements than Southern-based organizations. Although 'the rules of the game' are defined by the PDIs, the Indian CBOs remain free to choose to break the rules or to play along. The findings indicate that most Indian organizations adopt a strategy of conforming to these rules, as this serves their interests. The Indian CBOs with multiple donors do have an advantage, as they are able to play the field by finding a matching donor to each of their projects. Nonetheless, as long as the rules are still defined by the PDIs, power does not shift towards the Indian organizations.

7.2 Equal partnership

Although not conclusively, this study indicates that PDIs are not truly alternative actors in terms of equal partnerships as they reproduce similar dependency relations as traditional actors, only on a smaller scale and more informalized level, forming a possible setback for shifting power. Haaland and Wallevik (2017, p. 220) acknowledge this as well, saying "personalised aid projects can possibly signify a reproduction of power asymmetries as seen in the early periods of development aid where ideas of participation still were absent and thus represent small projects of civilisation". This study partly shows this through the analysis of the characteristics of equal partnership identified by Fowler (1998), and found a lack of

reciprocity in the partnerships, especially when it comes to decision-making, accountability and exchange of knowledge. This could possibly be partly explained by the lack of expertise of the PDIs as they do not have a professional background in the field of international development. Future studies could help to reach a more conclusive answer whether PDIs can be considered as truly alternative actors in terms of equal partnerships.

7.3 Local ownership

People-to-people aid, one of the main characteristics of the PDIs, is generally seen as a driver for change challenging unequal power relations and creating more local ownership (Kumi & Copestake, 2021; Mawdsley et al., 2005). However, I have shown that this is not directly the case for the studied partnerships, as the strong personal ties make it harder to question the framework of unspoken and implicit rules by Southern-based recipient organizations. While within the NGO sector 'professionalization' or the abundance and strict compliance to formal rules imperil equal partnerships, I would like to add that in the case of PDIs it is – what I call - 'informalization' and the lack of formal rules that prevent structural change. This implicates that a golden mean needs to be found between 'professionalization' and 'informalization' to come to local ownership and equal partnerships. This could mean forming some formal rules, not through contracts but by making covenants or long-term relationship agreements as suggested Hoksbergen (2005), to ensure local ownership can be bargained through these formal rules. Also, this study brought forward how external formal rules in terms of governmental regulations could be a potential driver for change to indeed come to a shift in power. The Companies Act related to CSR funds did have a significant impact on the amount of local funds, although only in specific circumstances. It needs further exploration to see how these external formal rules by government can facilitate local ownership.

Second, this study did not find capacity building programmes, the other commonly seen driver for change, to be the 'silver bullet' to shift power and ensure local ownership. Although in certain conditions local *fundraising* did increase, it did not significantly increase local *ownership*. While the focus of the capacity building programme Change the Game Academy is on generating more agency for Southern-based organizations by trying to create financial independence from foreign donors, this study showed how shift in power is impeded on a structural level through an implicit framework of unspoken rules that govern the partnership. Since a higher degree of local ownership would not directly result into a change in this

framework, there should also be attention to addressing the foundations of this framework by directing the focus on those who define said framework, the power holders in this case the PDIs.

7.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to this research, which limit the internal and external validity of the study. Firstly, there could have been a selection bias, as the studied partnerships were all partnerships with only Indian CBOs who also all attended the capacity building programme Change the Game Academy. Findings of partnerships that did not attend the capacity building programme or with partners from other countries in the Global South could have resulted in different findings, although the similar study conducted by Anna Vellinga that focused on Uganda partnerships did find similar results. Secondly, the sample of eight partnerships as case studies is rather small and also diverse in its characteristics, rendering the transferability of this study limited as well. Moreover, the focus has been on Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs that differ in their partnership characteristics to other organizations like NGOs. Also, PDIs represent an alternative actor in comparison to the traditional actors as explained in this study. Altogether, this makes that it can be questioned to what extent the findings of this research can be directly translated to different contexts. However, this study does contribute to general debates on drivers and impediments for shifting the power.

7.5 Future research opportunities

This study also sees various opportunities for future research. Future studies could deepen the exploration of the impact of strong personal relationships on partnerships. For example, one aspect that future studies could focus on are partnerships between PDIs and their partners which incorporated more formal rules to see if these function differently. Also, as this study mainly focused on internal factors, external factors such as governmental regulations could also be a new focal point for further study to see how this may influence the power relations between PDIs and CBOs. Finally, although not directly found in this study, it would be interesting to see if there are (unconscious) paternalistic views of the PDIs, or 'a white gaze' as mentioned in this study, that shape the power balance and the equality of the partnerships as PDIs could be susceptible due to their lack of a professional background in the development sector. This could involve exploring the factors that influence such paternalistic views and the implications of these views for working towards more equal partnerships.

8. Conclus*ion*

In international development there has been an ongoing debate on how to transform the highly unequal power relationships between Northern-based donor organizations and Southern-based recipient organizations. This research contributed to this debate on shifting the power by analysing potential drivers or impediments towards a shift in power between partnerships of Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs, specifically looking into the role of capacity building and strong personal relationships. It did so by answering the main question: *How does the proposed shift in power (or lack thereof) in partnerships between Dutch PDIs and Indian CBOs take place, and why (not)?*

I argue that there is little evidence for a significant shift in power within the partnerships. The characteristic elements of the partnerships, such as the accidental and quick start of the partnerships, the expertise of the PDIs and the financial dependence on private donors and funds, results in an framework of implicit informal rules that guide the partnerships. At the beginning there is some room for negotiations for the Indian CBOs to finally become aware of the boundaries of the framework set by the PDIs. There is some room to manoeuvre within the bounds of the framework for the Indian CBOs, but the bounds of the framework itself are essentially set in stone and largely determined by the PDI at the establishment of the partnership, resulting in unequal partnership relations from the start. Over time, the framework remains mostly unchallenged, as the existing (informal) rules are left unspoken and unevaluated, which can be concluded when considering the three operationalized elements for equal partnerships; decision-making processes, financial resources and accountability mechanisms. Circumstantial factors, such as the age of the PDI's members, or external factors, such as Indian governmental regulation, do present an opportunity to re-establish the boundaries of the framework. Common drivers for change, such as capacity building programmes or strong personal relationships, are not found to significantly shift the power in the long run. The capacity building programme, although promising, has not been able to create a meaningful decrease in financial dependence on foreign funds, while the informal relationship, although facilitating cooperation at first, forms a risk in the long run due to the hesitance to reframe the formal and informal rules of the partnership in order not to jeopardize the friendship. Altogether, this did not result in the anticipated increase of local ownership or a more equal partnership between the PDIs and the Indian CBOs.

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