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Public Private Partnerships in Global Food Governance

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Abstract

In global health governance and in sustainable development, transnational public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become important forms of cooperation. However, there are only few PPPs in the area of food governance. Furthermore, in this sector we find two very different types of partnerships: an output-oriented and a process-oriented model. So far, the private sector engages only in the output-oriented model. Process-oriented partnerships, while strong in ownership, attract little interest of business actors. As a consequence, those partnerships lack funds and, hence, are less likely to provide for public goods in the short and medium-term.

With this paper, we investigate the reasons for the comparatively low interest of the private sector in PPPs in food governance in general and in process-oriented PPP in particular by exploring two case studies: the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), an output oriented PPP, and the International Alliance against Hunger (IAAH), a process oriented PPP. The major empirical finding is largely unsurprising: the private sector engages in PPPs, when there are high incentives for cooperation (e.g. market access) and when the PPP sets clear goals and targets and closely monitors how funds are spent.

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1. Introduction

Hunger, malnutrition and their effects on health and education are one of the most pressing global development problems.¹ According to the United Nations (UN), more than 25 percent of all children in developing countries are malnourished (United Nations 2005: 8). Consequently, the reduction of hunger in the world is one of the major objectives of the United Nations and its partners. The target to “[r]educe by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger“ ranks first among the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The drafters of the MDGs also observed a lack of cooperation between the different partners relevant for progress in this issue area, especially with regard to private sector involvement. Accordingly, MDG 8 calls upon member states and the UN “[t]o develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development” (UN General Assembly 2000: 5).

However, so far only few transnational public-private partnerships to fight hunger and malnutrition have been established. In comparison to the currency of PPPs in areas such as Global Health or Water and Energy, the scarcity of PPPs for nutrition and food is puzzling. Furthermore, several partnerships in the food sector have been unsuccessful in involving business. It is mostly in partnerships for the promotion and delivery of micronutrients – a food issue often framed as health issue (“hidden hunger”) – where business actors engage.

Why are there so few partnerships in the food sector? And why has the aim of fighting hunger not attracted more partners, especially from the agro-food industry? The aim of our paper is to provide some first insights into causal mechanisms at work in this field. We therefore employ a backward looking research design to compare two very different partnerships in the food sector. Our main result is not very surprising: private sector involvement is higher in cases where it increases market chances of companies.

¹ This article refers to results of the DFG-funded SFB700-project “Transnational Public Private Partnerships for Environment, Health, and Social Rights: Determinants of Success”, part of the Berlin Collective Research Center “Governance in Areas with Limited Statehood” (www.sfb-governance.de/ppp). For the general framework see Beisheim et al. (2005) and Beisheim et al. (2007: 247-271), for an earlier comparison of IAAH and GAIN see Beisheim et al. (forthcoming). For a general discussion of the PPP literature in IR see Schäferhoff et al. (2007).

2. Puzzles in public private partnerships

Public-private partnerships against hunger are not on top of the agenda for international cooperation. The MDG progress report on hunger refers to the term 'public-private partnership' only twice (UN Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger 2005). Until today, no more than six transnational PPPs tackling the issues of hunger and malnutrition have been established.

The health sector, in comparison, is far more effective in creating public-private partnerships. Studies count up to 100 Global Health partnerships (GHP) (Carlson 2004; Utting/Zammit 2006: 14). These GHPs cover a wide range of issues: e.g., development of and advocacy for new medical solutions, distribution of drugs and vaccines, proliferation of mosquito nets. The difference to the food sector becomes even more obvious when we take a look at the budget of the organizations: a study by Buse and Harmer shows that 23 GHPs have obtained funding of over \$4.8 billion, over \$100 million per partnership (Buse/Harmer 2007: 266),² while GAIN, the best funded PPP in food governance, started with a budget of \$70 million. There are also far more PPPs in the field of sustainable development. Over 300 'type-2' partnerships were created in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (Andonova/Levy 2003). These partnerships address the implementation of the Johannesburg principles and are also supposed to involve the private sector. To date, the CSD database lists 31 energy partnerships and 25 water partnerships with business participation.³

Secondly, we can see a puzzling variation among the existing population of partnerships in global food governance. It appears that two very different types of organizational models have emerged for partnerships in the food sector. The first model seeks to secure output or effectiveness. This type of partnership aims at delivering a certain (public) good, such as food security or healthier (mostly fortified) food. These PPPs also have a strong focus on efficiency: their rationale and the stated justifications for their existence include cost-benefit calculations (see e.g. Mannar/van Ameringen 2003). In their governance structures, these partnerships follow a common pattern: they possess a strong executive secretariat, a small board

² Buse and Harmer (2006) have a narrower definition of PPP and therefore look at a smaller sample of only 23 GHPs.

³ <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/welcome.do>. We owe this information to Sabine Campe.

with members from like-minded organizations and strong allies, and a larger stakeholder forum with only weak competencies that serves as a sounding board and, thus, provides for a measure of legitimacy.

The second model is a process-oriented partnership. These PPPs were not established to implement predefined solutions, but to develop strategies through the input and the deliberation of stakeholders advocating a common cause. Their approach is far more bottom-up. These PPPs try to involve the individual partners in their policy processes and put an emphasis on the creation of ownership for their solutions. The focus is less on efficiency and more on democratic legitimacy. Yet, most of these partnerships suffer from a lack of (private) funds due to lower business participation.

Both characterisations are ideal-types. However, arranging PPPs in the food sector in either one of the categories appears relatively straightforward. All cases dealing with food fortification through micronutrients fit into the first category: the *Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition* (GAIN), *the Iodine Network and the Flour Fortification Initiative* (FFI). Furthermore, *Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere* (SSAFE), a coalition of companies and international organizations (IOs) to ensure animal health and livestock production also seems to follow this model. On the other hand, both the *Farmers Forum*, a bottom-up initiative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and farmer organizations, and the *International Alliance Against Hunger*, an initiative of the follow up to the FAO's World Food Summit-fyl, fall into the second, process-oriented category. Both have no strong business involvement on the transnational and the national level.

Overall, on the one hand, there are efficiency-oriented partnerships, which work in a small niche of the food sector, and attract considerable business attention. On the other hand, process-oriented partnerships tackle broader problems with higher democratic standards, but less business attention. What are the reasons for this diversification in the food sector?

When addressing these questions and analyzing the emergence and the institutional design of different partnerships, several methodological problems arise. We are immediately confronted with a large number of independent variables. Some of these variables might be relevant for all cases, while others are specific and occur only in one or few instances. On the other hand, we cannot increase the number of cases in

our analysis due to the small existent sample of empirical cases: there is only a small number of transnational public-private partnerships.

One way to address this problem was brought forward by Scharpf (2000), the backward-looking research design. His idea is, instead of predefining a full set of variables and applying them on all existent cases, to look back from the current state of the dependent variable and to retrace how individual results came about. While this research seems heavily inductive, it can be distinguished from pure inductivism by two means. First, an important emphasis needs to rest on avoiding idiosyncratic explanations. To analyze policy decisions, researchers should define abstract causal mechanisms and test them also on the other cases in their set (Scharpf 2000: 65). In principle, the research design is therefore still comparative. Second, the researcher should attempt to take interactions between his/her explanatory variables into account. Especially interaction between different institutions should be taken into consideration.

In the following, we aim to address our research question questions by using such a retrogressive research design. We analyze one PPP of each type. For the efficiency-oriented partnerships, we will investigate GAIN, and for the type of process-oriented PPPs we will explore the case of the IAAH. Both PPPs contribute to the implementation of the MDGs and operate on a global and a national level. They diverge fundamentally over the approach chosen, their governance structures and the involvement of the private sector (Beisheim et al. forthcoming). Also, while GAIN is most likely to achieve its clear set goals within the next years, the results of the IAAH will only become visible in the long run, if at all. Empirically, the following analysis is mainly based on publicly available documents and interviews conducted at the secretariats of FAO and the IAAH. The preliminary results and causal models described here will be cross-checked at a second, larger round of interviews at the Secretariat of GAIN, IAAH and with representatives of food-NGOs and private sector representatives next month.

3. Global Alliance on Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

GAIN is a transnational PPP working against vitamin and mineral deficiencies in developing countries. According to its statute, GAIN aims at reducing infant mortality, increasing economic productivity, promoting the physical and scientific potential of

people and reducing the costs of public health provision. GAIN states that its approach contributes to the attainment of eight MDGs, among them fighting hunger and poverty, reducing infant mortality, promoting gender equality and achieving universal primary education. The PPP seeks further legitimacy by referring to its cost-effectiveness; it claims to prevent malnutrition for 25 cent per year and person.

The fortification strategy is part of current discourses on global health and legitimized by several UN conferences and meetings. In 1994, the World Bank declared: „Probably no other technology available today offers as large an opportunity to improve lives and accelerate development at such low costs and in such a short time“ (quote taken from GAIN N.d.: 4). The UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children, held in March 2002 in New York, recommended micronutrients (United Nations 2002: 11). Until 2010, vitamin A deficiency should be eliminated, until 2005 all health and development problems, related to iodine deficiency, should be solved. Finally, in its report on the implementation of the MDGs, the UN mentions four strategies against malnutrition, among them fortification with micronutrients

GAIN operates on two levels.⁴ At the *international* level, to which 20 to 30 percent of its activities are related, GAIN furthers initiatives for cost-effective food fortification. It offers a platform for the harmonization of national policies and for the exchange of IOs, the private sector, development organizations and other public actors. It supports the establishment of regional alliances and program-oriented research, the development of new products, and the mobilization of resources. The central aim is to create an enabling environment for food fortification. The majority of activities are, however, related to the *country-level*. GAIN supports national partnerships between governments, business actors, and non-governmental actors / civil society. In order to strengthen local capacities for food fortification, it finances fortification projects and offers technical advice. Its main steering instrument is a competitive grant system, which provides financial support for local projects. 77 percent of GAIN’s budget is reserved for funding. In a competitive procedure, interested national alliances must apply for funds and present a fortification plan. In order to qualify for one of the grants of up to 3 million USD, each national alliance has to include representatives of the government, the food-producers and food-distributors, and civil society.

⁴ Cf. Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (N.d.: 10ff)

China was the first beneficiary of funding from GAIN (Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition 2003; Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition N.d.: 6-7). In order to fortify soya sauce with iron over a period of five years, the executing agent, the *Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention*, was awarded three million USD. In a second project in a western region of China, some 49 million people are seen to benefit from the fortification of flour with iron, folic acid, vitamin A und zinc. Until 2005, further grants were awarded to single projects in 13 states, among them Bolivia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. As this record reveals, GAIN has mostly cooperated with developing economies and less with the least developed countries. An attempt to reach out to countries with fewer capacities but greater need was not of a long-lasting nature. GAIN had established *Programm Development Workshops* to assist national alliances by strengthening their technical capacities and, to this end, set up a small grants scheme to enable the development of fortification strategies (GAIN N.d.: 15), but abandoned the program after a short period.

Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, CIDA, and the German and Dutch governments in 2002, GAIN was set up as an independent non-profit foundation. The initiative gained momentum at the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children, where fortification strategies were recommended. The approach was not new to companies. Fortified food had been available in several industrialized countries for the last decades. Organizations such as Helen Keller International, and the *Micronutrient Initiative* are members of the global alliance. The private sector is represented by companies such as BASF, Coca Cola, Danone, Heinz, Tetra Pak und Unilever (GAIN 2006: 4). As a result of early criticism, GAIN is not partnering with companies who sell or market tobacco, alcohol or weapons, or do not comply with the *International Code for the Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes* (Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition 2002: 14; Bekefi 2004: 39; cf. Richter 2003). The PPP is governed by a board of 16 members, mostly consisting of donor organizations, and a small executive secretariat.

Over the first two years of its existence, the partnership relied on the expertise of international organizations, but soon became independent. Its goal was to develop *successful* fortification programs. The consultation of all stakeholders and a deliberative dialogue are no priorities in this PPP. Several successful health PPPs,

such as the *Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization* (GAVI) and the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria* (GFATM) provide a framework of reference or “model” for GAIN. The scientific reference points are several fortification programs of the 1990s. In the first two years, GAIN sought the World Bank’s support for the identification of eligible project proposals, for monitoring, and the administration of funds. UNDP and WHO staffed the Secretariat.

GAINs output oriented approach has been heavily criticized, mostly because it relies on technical solutions, which do not tackle the roots of hunger and malnutrition. The PPP was accused of ignoring the structural causes of malnutrition, e.g. poverty. Marion Nestle, professor at the New York University and author of *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, described GAIN as “reductionist, single-nutrient techno-fix to a problem that is much more complex” (quoted in Zimmerman 2002). Another concern is GAINs market approach (Zimmerman 2002). The Alliance assists companies with market access to developing countries and helps to establish fortification friendly regulations. There are huge incentives for companies to participate in this alliance. Costs and risks are low, while reputational benefits are high.

To underline this point, GAIN has also started to improve its communication and evaluation strategy (Bekefi 2006: 32f). The secretariat has now established a *Communication Program*, which supports social marketing strategies and advocacy campaigns. To prove its effectiveness and its success in attaining its own goals , it appointed a *Senior Manager in Performance Measurement* and developed an evaluation scheme with 17 indicators. This scheme is used to monitor annual progress and allows for a comparative analysis of GAIN’S effectiveness. Furthermore, it aims to increase accountability towards the partners. Different from the practice of other public institutions, this data will not be available publicly, but is seen as a tool for institutional learning (Bekefi 2006: 39).

How did GAIN emerge in such an output-oriented way, and why is the private sector strongly represented? GAIN provides opportunities for market access and offers reputational gains to its members. As mentioned, the fortification strategy has been legitimized in several UN forums and is part of the global strategy to implement the MDGs. The UN expects a sufficient supply of iodine to minimize early childhood development risks, while it, moreover, reduces the risk of maternal mortality in birth-

giving by 20 per cent (United Nations Department of Public Information 2002). At the same time, participation is not cost-intensive. GAIN is funded by foundations and western governments; the private sector does not pay for its institutional set-up. Fortifying wheat, rice, and other elementary products of the world's diet is a cheap method to prevent health risks, illnesses, and early mortality rates. Currently, fortified flour is available in over 50 states, which totals 15 percent of milled wheat globally (Cf. Mannar/van Ameringen 2003). In the 1990s, fortification was supported by some 400 million USD public funds and 1.5 billion USD private funds.

4. International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH)

The International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH) is a partnership between civil society and international organizations to increase the public awareness of hunger, to mobilize for public campaigns and to facilitate local and national initiatives against hunger. Compared to GAIN, the IAAH has hardly defined any clear-cut goals and instruments to fight hunger. Instead, its overall objective is to invite and strengthen initiatives of individuals, groups and organizations: „the Alliance [is] aimed at enhancing political will and commitment against hunger. [...] We must be the motivating force to encourage more people to take action“.⁵

The IAAH promotes a two-track approach, which combines long-term and short-term activities (FAO 2003: 2) and focuses on political – not technical – solutions for the problem of global hunger:⁶ in the long run, political initiatives shall mobilize further investments for agriculture and rural development, and people at risk shall have direct access to food. Short-term programs are set up to provide food for those in need, e.g. through school feeding and “food against work” (FAO 2003). Projects are to be developed and implemented by national alliances. By enabling the exchange of best practices, the international alliance mainly seeks to mobilize a broad, civil society based network at the national level. In sum, IAAH can be seen as a “forum for advocacy”, that feeds the different national initiatives into a global movement.

⁵ Interview with Ms. Eva Clayton, Assistant Director General of FAO and Special Adviser to the Director General on World Food Summit Follow-Up, June 2003 available at:

www.rdfs.net/nedws/interviews/0306in/0306in_clayton-en.htm

⁶ E.g., it demands from developed countries to open their markets for agrarian products (FAO 2003).

So far, the IAAH has been less successful in mobilizing the financial and political support of the private sector. Although several documents envisage participation of “agribusiness firms” (FAO 2003), companies are not participating in the global alliance and engage only in some of the national alliances. Two of the few exceptions are the *Global Food Bank Network*’s involvement in the US alliance or the hotel chain Mercure’s funding for small projects in Burkina Faso, which support female farmers growing vegetables (cf. International Alliance against Hunger 2006b). The PPP is mainly an alliance of intergovernmental organizations with transnational associations of civil society organizations. Its focus on alliances with civil society organizations, which were active in setting up the alliance in the first place, hinders the involvement of the private sector. Furthermore, the governance structure does not envisage a role for companies or private sector foundations. IAAHs steering committee is composed of the founding members only.⁷ Membership in the international and national alliance is open to all groups and organizations that disclose their mandate and ongoing activities and commit to the fight against hunger. If these criteria are not met, an organization may (only) become an associate member (International Alliance against Hunger 2004: 2f.). Another obstacle for participation is the close association with FAO, which hosts the small and under-equipped secretariat. In its own understanding, the IAAH is an independent organization composed of several partners:

“The Secretariat is housed at FAO and has access to FAO staff support. However, it is an independent entity truly representing the constituent partners of the International Alliance and its National Alliances.”⁸

Yet, FAO itself views the IAAH as one of its partnerships, not so much as a discrete body. In an article, several of FAO’s high officials state:

“The Heads of State and Government, who gathered at the [World Food Summit – five years later], called upon ‘all parties (governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector) to reinforce their efforts so as to act as an *international alliance against hunger* to achieve the [World Food Summit] targets no later than 2015’. Together with partners, the FAO has subsequently been promoting the realisation of the alliance.” (de Haen, 2003:391, own emphasis)

⁷ FAO, IFAD, IPGRI, WFP als UN-Organisationen, das International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) und die AD Hoc Group of International NGOs in formal status with FAO (International Alliance against Hunger 2004: Fn 2).

⁸ http://www.iaahp.net/intern_en.html#5.

FAO evaluations revealed that the close association with FAO undermines ownership at the transnational or global level, as other actors in the UN fear dominance by FAO (FAO 2006: 49 und 44; cf. also UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security 2004: 31f). Furthermore, negative experiences with industry-cooperation in FAO have led to an organizational culture in which a skeptical appraisal of private sector involvement prevails (Bekedi 2006: 34; FAO 2006).

Due to its “bottom-up” approach, the IAAH refrains from strong process management and relies on a rather low level of intervention in the activities of the national alliances. Projects are not monitored by the international alliance; the national alliances evaluate their activities themselves. IAAH reports on national projects in its newsletter “allied against hunger”. Another tool to share best practices is the homepage of the network.

For the IAAH, the absence of private donors has consequences. The PPP lacks funds for its secretariat, for marketing the initiative, and for activities at the country-level. The lack of resources is seen as one of the major obstacle to an effective functioning of the alliance (FAO 2006: 49). Even FAO perceives the IAAH to be a weak PPP. Yet, the international alliance achieved the establishment of 24 active national alliances. Further alliances are being developed, and 47 states signalled their interest in building a national alliance (International Alliance against Hunger 2006a; as of 2006). So far, the growth of national and local alliances has been the greatest success of the IAAH. Furthermore, the global alliance helped to establish ownership of processes in the participating countries. The parties themselves value the concept of “twinning” – and the respective projects (International Alliance against Hunger 2006c). While the international alliance does not provide expertise and funds for capacity building, but rather collects and disseminates best practice, it is the task of the national networks to support each other. Projects are entirely sponsored by national donors, e.g. aid agencies and governments. Following this concept of twinning, the US alliance has provided expertise by sending a farmer to Ghana. However, IAAHs overall output is still regarded as suboptimal (FAO 2006: 49). Notably, the goal to mobilize “financial resources, so that the poor and hungry in every country are enabled to achieve food security on a sustainable basis” (deHaen et al. 2003: 691) has not been met.

5. Conclusions

We started this paper with two puzzles: despite the fact that hunger and malnutrition is on the top of the international agenda, only few transnational public-private partnerships emerged. Also quite astonishing is the fact that business actors do only engage in these partnerships if they are characterized by an output-orientation. As our short empirical case analysis has shown, the divide also seems to be goal-specific: the classical fight against hunger does not seem to be attractive for partnering. There is no incentive for partners and, in particular, for business partners to create such a PPP and to engage in the promotion of broadly defined programs. There is no money to earn with self-sustaining agrarian strategies and twinning concepts, and there are already very strong actors and powerful IOs active in the field of classical food aid as well.

This is different if hunger is framed as malnutrition, for which technical solutions are available. While hunger has been an issue for a long time, malnutrition and especially the lack of micronutrients has become a development issue only in recent years. Interestingly, in this issue area the partnership model is often used to create organizations, thus by-passing the UN programmes and agencies. New donors, such as the Gates Foundation, support the installation of independent PPPs, and companies are willing to take part in this new form of cost-efficient cooperation expecting reputational gains. More practically, involvement in such output-oriented food partnerships might even increase a company's competitiveness by granting market access and producing opportunity structures.

The idea of creating multiple win-win-sets for all parties does, however, not materialize for process-oriented PPPs that develop national strategies against hunger. With funds lacking, these PPPs run risk of ineffectiveness.

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