

**SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP IN AN ICT-BASED  
COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION TO EMPOWER CHILDREN  
IN ORPHANAGES: PERSPECTIVES FROM MULTIPLE  
STAKEHOLDERS**

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Appendices .....	xiii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	xiv
Abstract.....	xvi
Statement of Candidate.....	xviii
Acknowledgement .....	xix
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Introduction .....	1
1.2    Importance of the research .....	3
1.3    Research aims and questions.....	5
1.4    Overview of the thesis.....	5
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS IN A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1    Introduction .....	8

2.2	Brief overview of Malaysia and Klang Valley .....	8
2.2.1	Location and demographic profile .....	9
2.3	ICT and development policies in Malaysia.....	10
2.3.1	The key National Policies .....	10
2.3.2	Vision 2020: promoting partnership .....	12
2.3.3	National Information Technology Agenda for social development .....	13
2.3.4	Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS) .....	15
2.4	ICT projects within Malaysia.....	17
2.5	Background to the concept of collaborative partnership in Malaysia.....	19
2.6	Community service organisations .....	20
2.7	CyberCare historical background.....	24
2.8	Conclusion .....	31
<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>		<b>32</b>
<b>SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....</b>		<b>32</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	32

3.2	Background to the concept of collaborative partnership.....	32
3.3	Definition of collaborative partnership .....	35
3.4	Collaborative partnership: End versus means .....	36
3.5	Reasons for forming a partnership determine the types of partnership .....	38
3.6	Collaborative advantage.....	39
3.6.1	Reaching common aims and agreement .....	40
3.6.2	Joint resources and working solutions to solve problems in the community .....	42
3.6.3	Creating synergy and power sharing .....	44
3.6.4	Trust as a precondition for successful collaborative partnership.....	45
3.6.5	Multifaceted membership structures.....	49
3.6.6	Creating environmental stability versus a dynamic structure .....	51
3.6.7	Members lead the collaboration.....	53
3.7	Collaborative partnership maintenance and sustainability.....	57
3.7.1	Communication and nurturing .....	57
3.7.2	Sustainability .....	60

3.8	Conclusion .....	64
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>		<b>66</b>
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>66</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	66
4.2	Aim.....	66
4.3	Research Questions .....	66
4.4	Methodological approach.....	67
4.5	Why a case study?.....	68
4.6	Positioning the researcher .....	70
4.7	Research Design.....	73
4.8	Definitions of key concepts.....	73
4.9	Site of study .....	78
4.10	Gaining access and gatekeeper approval.....	79
4.11	Methods of data collection and management .....	79
4.11.1	Document review .....	80
4.11.2	Field Observation .....	83

4.11.3	Interview .....	89
4.11.4	Overview of participant characteristics.....	97
4.12	Data analysis and synthesis .....	100
4.12.1	Document review .....	100
4.12.2	Participant observation.....	101
4.12.3	Interviews.....	103
4.13	Quality and credibility of the research .....	109
4.13.1	Triangulation.....	109
4.13.2	Member checking.....	111
4.13.3	Ethical Considerations .....	112
4.14	Conclusion.....	115
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>		<b>116</b>
<b>THE DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP IN A LONGSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION.....</b>		<b>116</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	116
5.2	Forging and sustaining collaborative partnership .....	120

5.2.1	Key initiators of the collaborative partnership .....	120
5.2.2	Personal relationships and individual personality .....	122
5.2.3	Outstanding project proposal .....	125
5.2.4	Project and programme features forging and sustaining collaboration .....	126
5.2.5	Available opportunities and shared resources to sustain collaborative partnership 129	
5.2.6	University course requirement for internship, peer influence and personal interest 131	
5.3	Convergent aims in longstanding collaborative partnerships .....	133
5.3.1	Service organisation objective as collaborative partnership objective .....	134
5.3.2	Forging commonalities out of differences as a collaborative partnership objective.....	137
5.3.3	Corporate focus as being in common with the aim of the service organisation 139	
5.3.4	Partner organisation focus as collaborative partnership objective.....	141
5.3.5	Collaborative partnerships' objectives as set by government.....	143
5.4	Long-term partnerships: not necessarily more effective partnerships .....	146

5.4.1	Long-term project/programme or strategic driven partnership.....	146
5.4.2	Short-term programme driven partnership .....	150
5.4.3	Short-term problem-oriented partnership .....	154
5.5	Drivers of change in collaborative partnerships.....	156
5.5.1	Change in the collaborative programmes .....	157
5.5.2	Change in the collaborative partnership structure .....	160
5.5.3	Change of collaborative partners .....	162
5.5.4	Change due to the completion of the programme and lack of financial resources 164	
5.5.5	Change due to the lack of committed individuals.....	165
5.6	Summary .....	168
<b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>		<b>170</b>
<b>CHALLENGES OF MAINTAINING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP IN A LONGSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION .....</b>		<b>170</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	170
6.2	Sustaining collaborative partnership .....	171
6.2.1	Lack of resources .....	171



6.2.1.1	Challenges related to financial resources .....	171
6.2.1.2	Human resource challenges .....	181
6.2.2	Rules and regulations.....	191
6.2.2.1	Restriction on venue .....	191
6.2.2.2	Restriction on the usage of facilities .....	192
6.2.2.3	Restriction on children's activities .....	193
6.2.2.4	Conflicting programme schedules .....	194
6.2.3	Insufficient support from corporations .....	195
6.3	Programme as sustaining collaborative partnership efforts .....	195
6.3.1	Continuation of collaborative partnership programmes .....	196
6.3.2	Challenges of participation in sustaining collaborative partnership efforts .....	198
6.3.2.1	Lack of commitment led to discontinuation of programme .....	198
6.3.2.2	The perils of participation .....	199
6.3.2.3	Philosophy of and resistance to participation .....	200
6.3.2.4	Language as a barrier to participation .....	202
6.4	Communication and organisational cultures .....	203
6.4.1	Communication and cultural constraints among the stakeholders .....	203
6.4.1.1	Miscommunication with the corporation .....	203
6.4.1.2	Assumptions about discontinued programmes .....	204
6.4.1.3	Imprecise collaborative partnership's benefits .....	206
6.4.1.4	Lack of direction in moving forward .....	206
6.4.1.5	Difficulties in adapting to cultural and religious differences .....	207
6.4.1.6	Anticipated difficulties in getting support at the new location .....	209

6.4.2	Communication and cultural constraints between CyberCare and the Lions Club	210
6.4.2.1	Adhering to the protocols of the Lions Club .....	211
6.4.2.2	Different understandings of sponsorship promotion .....	212
6.4.2.3	Difficulties in understanding different organisational approaches.....	213
6.4.2.4	Disputes over shared resources .....	214
6.5	New direction for setting up as a stand-alone organisation .....	214
6.5.1	Leadership for sustainability.....	215
6.5.2	Challenge in setting up a new organisation .....	216
6.6	Conclusion .....	217
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN.....</b>		<b>219</b>
<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....</b>		<b>219</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	219
7.2	Limitations of current research and recommendations for future research.....	219
7.3	Contribution to knowledge.....	222
7.4	Communication and nurturing are needed to sustain the collaborative partnership	224
7.5	Long-term partnerships: not necessarily more effective partnerships .....	227
7.6	Change as integral rather than a threat to collaborative partnership .....	232

7.7	Merging different aims rather than reaching agreement on common aims .....	236
7.8	Agreement is not necessarily a promise or precondition to collaborative partnership 237	
7.9	Expectation of benefits from joint resources .....	239
7.10	Creating synergy encouraged community involvement and ownership.....	240
7.11	Imbalances of power did not prevent collaboration .....	242
7.12	Building trust is not a precondition for sustaining collaborative partnership .....	244
7.13	Open and autonomous structures bring advantages rather than disadvantages....	246
7.14	Government as enabler not constraint .....	248
7.15	Leadership for sustainability .....	250
7.16	Cultural and structural constraints.....	252
7.17	Implication for theory.....	254
7.18	Implication for policy and practice.....	257
7.19	Conclusion.....	260
<b>References.....</b>		<b>261</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>		<b>274</b>

## List of Tables

	<b>Page</b>
Table 2.7 <i>Numbers of recipients receiving merit awards and scholarships of the Education Excellence Programme from 2001 – 2006</i>	28
Table 4.11.4 <i>Summary of demographic characteristics of stakeholders interviewed</i>	99
Table 4.12.1 <i>Sample of a codebook for document analysis</i>	101
Table 4.12.2 <i>Sample of transcription excerpts and field notes of observation for Care4U Batch 5 (8 June – 29 August 2009)</i>	103
Table 4.13.1 <i>Sample of data source triangulations</i>	111
Table 5.1 <i>Summary of the characteristic of participants interviewed</i>	118

## List of Figures

		<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.2	<i>Malaysia Map</i>	8
Figure 2.3.3	<i>The Framework of the National IT Agenda</i>	14
Figure 2.7	<i>Map of CyberCare's linked orphanages throughout the country</i>	25
Figure 3.6.4	<i>The trust building loop</i>	47
Figure 3.6.5	<i>Example of diagramming methods for mapping the complexity of collaborative structures</i>	50
Figure 3.6.6	<i>Dynamics in the membership structures of collaborations</i>	53
Figure 4.7	<i>Research design and processes</i>	74
Figure 4.11.2 (a)	<i>Dimension of field observation</i>	84
Figure 4.11.2 (b)	<i>Sample of seating arrangement</i>	86
Figure 4.12.3(a)	<i>Compiling and categorising transcriptions of stakeholders in internal data source</i>	106
Figure 4.12.3 (b)	<i>Attributes of the stakeholders</i>	107
Figure 4.12.3(c)	<i>Initial and final themes developed for discussion</i>	108
Figure 5.2.1	<i>Example of multiple roles and positions of a key founder of CyberCare</i>	121

## **List of Appendices**

	<b>Page</b>
Appendix 1 List of collected document	274
Appendix 2 Summary of the stakeholders who can be included and cannot be included to participate in the interview	280
Appendix 3 Sample of interview protocol	284
Appendix 4 Sample of transcription template	290
Appendix 5 Sample of member-checking letter	291
Appendix 6 Consent form for adult participant	292
Appendix 7 Consent form for child participant	295
Appendix 8 Ethics approval letter	299
Appendix 9 Proofread certification memo	300
Appendix 10 Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 1	301
Appendix 11 Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 2	316
Appendix 12 Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 3	323

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

3CS	CyberCare Community System
BODs	Board of Directors
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSP	Community Service Project
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DA	Demonstrator Applications
DAGS	Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme
DOT	Digital Opportunity Task
EEP	Education Excellence Programme
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
FOKD	Friends of Kota Damansara
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GKP	Global Knowledge Partnership
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KPWKM	Ministry of Women, Family, and Society Development
LCCKL	Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur
MAD	Make A Difference/ <i>Mengecapi Aspirasi Diri</i>
MAINPC	Mastering Internet and PC Application ( <i>Menguasai Aplikasi Internet dan PC</i> )
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MDeC	Multimedia Development Corporation
MIMOS	Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems
MOSTI	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
MSP	Multi-stakeholder partnerships
MUPSA	Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award
NEP	New Economic Policy
NDP	National Development Policy
NFP	Non-for-profit
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NITA	National Information Technology Agenda
NITC	National Information Technology Council
NLP	Neuro-Linguistic Programming
NVivo	Software for qualitative research
NVP	National Vision Policy
PID	Rural Internet Programme ( <i>Program Internet Desa</i> )
PIKOM	The National Information and Communication Technology Association of Malaysia
PMR	Lower Secondary Assessment ( <i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> )
POOL	Putting Orphanages OnLine
ROS	Registrar of Societies
SMASY	Smart Society
SITA	Student Industrial Training and Assessment
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UPSR	Primary School Assessment ( <i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i> )
USA	The United States of America
UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
SPM	Malaysia Certificate of Education ( <i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> )
STPM	Malaysia Higher School Certificate ( <i>Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia</i> )
YLM	Youth Leadership Mentoring



## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to discover, from the perspective of multiple stakeholders, how collaborative partnership survives over the long-term. This aim is addressed through a case study of a community service organisation focussing on ICT use by orphanage communities in the developing country of Malaysia. This case study will identify factors that influence the development and sustainability of collaborative partnerships. A wide-ranging literature exists around collaborative partnerships with multiple stakeholders, especially between profit making organisations and government. While research on collaborative partnerships between non-profit organisations is emerging, this work is most established in developed countries such as the USA and UK, with little written about community based service organisations outside Europe and the US. This thesis addresses this gap.

Beginning as a community group initiative in April 1998 and later developing into non-profit service organisation, CyberCare, the organisation which is the focus of this case study, worked collaboratively towards a vision of bridging the digital divide and improving the lives of the children in orphanages. Many collaborative partnerships begin as small scale and grow progressively larger. In contrast, this partnership rapidly became a nationwide e-community project with strong support from government and major corporations. Under the umbrella of a non-profit service organisation group, CyberCare has linked children in 90 orphanages throughout the country online and came to be perceived as one of the successful e-community projects in the country. However, in the process, this collaboration faced challenges that required it to reduce scale and find ways to survive. These decisions included becoming independent, in 2009, from a network of well-established service organisations.

This study identifies drivers of change in collaborative partnerships, and maps stakeholders' perspectives on challenges across collaborative partnership. A qualitative case study design is used in this research, using the methods of document review, participant observation of two programmes, and interviews with 58 participants from seven stakeholder groups: the community service organisation; government; corporations; non-governmental organisations (NGOs); orphanage administrators; volunteers; and children. The data collected were analysed and triangulated with the aid of NVIVO, qualitative analysis software.

While the existing literature on collaborative partnerships stresses the importance of a shared vision at the foundation of a project, this research suggests that sustainable partnerships may be grounded on objectives shared by pairs of partners, rather than agreement across all partnerships. Equally, the case study suggests that pragmatic rather than strategic motives are drivers for the establishment of and direction of partnerships. Much of the literature also studies collaboration from a managerial perspective which deals specifically with governance issues rather than a whole of community perspective which considers the views of multiple stakeholders.

The findings of this thesis provide a rich evidence base reflecting the challenges and benefits of collaborative partnership and divergent understandings of key concepts including partnership, sustainability, achievement, and volunteering. Financial, human resources, and time management emerge as the crucial challenges in sustaining the community efforts, leading to tensions between community organisations and business or government funders. This thesis also makes a contribution to academic accounts of the role of information technology in community development, by tracing the changing understandings within the collaborative partnership of the links between personal development, ICT skills, and community service. The evolution of this collaborative partnership emphasises the possibility of transformation within such relationships, and suggests mechanisms for sustaining partnerships during such transformations.

## Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled *Sustaining collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organization to empower children in orphanages: Perspectives from multiple stakeholders* has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of this thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: HE24OCT2008-D06164.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Individuals, organisations, businesses, communities or local neighbourhood, and even nation states form partnerships, alliances, coalitions or joint ventures to carry out collaborative efforts - solving problems or conflicts, or achieving something together. Collaboration has been defined by Gray (1989) as a process through which parties or stakeholders who see problems differently can explore their differences and find ways to resolve the problems that go beyond what they can think of as possible. More broadly Huxham and Vangen (2005, p. 4) in their book *“Managing to collaborate: the theory and practice of collaborative advantage”* see collaboration as any situation where *“people are working across organisational boundaries towards some positive end.”* Stakeholders may include all individuals, groups, or organisations that can influence or be influenced by the achievement of either organisational or partnership objectives (Freeman, 2010). This thesis investigates how collaborative partnerships with community service organisations develop and change over the long term. Deploying and interrogating conceptual aspects of collaboration, partnership, and theory of collaborative advantage, this case study draws on the findings of multi-stakeholder perspectives. The study also examines how the findings from the practice have confirmed or contested the related theories and previous findings on the collaborative partnership approach especially in the context of developing a community.

Many scholars regard sustainability as critically important for the success of collaborative partnerships, yet partners face many challenges to achieve it (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2008; Perrault, McClelland, Austin, & Sieppert, 2011). Alexander et al. (2003) discuss three obstacles to sustaining collaborative efforts. First, the nature of partnerships, which are based more on voluntary action than on hierarchical control, suggests that partners are not strictly bound to the organisation, and in

certain circumstances are free to decide to leave without facing serious consequences. Second, a diverse range of public, non-profit, investor-owned, and community-based organisations may increase issues of cultural differences in management. Third, different members from different organisations may face tension in differentiating individual, organisation and collaborative aims. Despite an extensive emphasis on the sustainability of collaborative partnership in the literature, scholars disagree on the things that should be sustained (Alexander et al., 2003). Authors like Doz and Hamel (1998) highlight some dilemmas such as whether to sustain the partnership as organisation, its values, or its initiatives. To describe this dilemma further, Alexander et al. (2003, p. 133S) give an example which questioned, “*is a partnership sustained if it disbands as an organisation but one or more providers in the community adopt its functions?*” They further argue from the design perspective that “*sustainability is by definition a future-based concept and cannot be assessed directly (other than in retrospective fashion)*” wherein researchers are forced to depend on the evaluated features of sustainability as precursors to future sustainability.

My case study in this thesis is on a multi-partner community project aiming to support disadvantaged children. Historically, community developers who are inspired to improve outcomes for children tended to focus on children alone. Family Support America in 1996 revealed that many service providers have realised that the best way to serve children is to preserve the supportive networks that benefit them (Brown, Amwake, Speth, & Scott-Little, 2002). Brown, et al. (2002) also state that many researchers have discovered that the components that contribute to children’s well-being begin with individuals who are very close to the children, radiating outward to include the family, early child care and education, neighbourhood, community, and beyond. This viewpoint has motivated an increasing number of communities to put extra focus on the need for collaboration, which in the process is believed to allow the community to address many problems at once rather than singularly (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Tripartite or tri-sector partnership is a type of collaborative engagement which involves joint action between public, private, and civil society sectors (Glasbergen, 2007; Selsky & Parker, 2005). It has gained popularity around the world, especially in the UK and US, as a strategy

for addressing social problems. As a developing nation which has always looked towards practices in “developed countries,” Malaysia is now showing signs of this collaborative trend. This study reveals the effects of the changing trends in community development in Malaysia, from government initiated projects to community initiated projects. Almost all previous community development projects in Malaysia were initiated and conducted totally by the public sector. However, since the launch of Vision 2020 in 1990, the trend has been towards collaborative partnerships and community initiatives which also involve the private sector, including multinational corporations. This may due to the policy emphasis on the social responsibilities of the private sector and the increasing focus on developing future human resources in the country. Nevertheless, there is a lack of academic empirical research being done on the subject area, particularly within Malaysia. My study seeks to fill this gap. With special focus on the sustainability issue, this thesis investigates how collaborative partnerships in a community service organisation develop and survive over time.

## **1.2 Importance of the research**

This thesis takes a case study approach to its investigation of community collaborative partnerships. As Flyvbjerg (2011) suggests about this approach, such research is important to get closer to real-life situations and discover the richness of detail that cannot be easily explained by theory alone. For example, the literature on collaborative advantages frequently reports factors enabling success within collaborative partnerships (Ansari, Phillips, & Hammick, 2001; Perrault et al., 2011), or describes collaborative processes in a way which suggests collaboration works out well if the activities are carried out in stages (Gray, 1989; Henneman, Lee, & Cohen, 1995). In term of sustainability, Alexander et al. (2003) argue that “sustainability” can only be assessed retrospectively because it is a future-based concept. Following this argument, I suggest that this rich practice-oriented research offers an opportunity to evaluate sustainability from diverse perspectives. The present research aims to offer “*thick and hard-to-summarise*” accounts, seen by Flyvbjerg to signify research that has discovered “*a particularly rich problematic*” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 311).



This study adds a local perspective to research on collaborative partnership in the region. There are many studies being done in other countries around collaborative partnerships in community settings especially in the UK and USA. However, such research is only just beginning to be undertaken in Southeast Asia including Malaysia, with some of this work carried out by international researchers. As a Malaysian researcher, my insider's perspective offers important advantages to the research undertaken here.

This research provides a new empirical case study of collaborative partnership in the context of a developing Asian country. Despite emerging community projects in the region, the academic research in similar areas is still under way. The closest research to the present study is the e-Bario Project by Bala, Harris et al. (2004) which searched for a methodology to identify opportunities for remote and rural communities in Sarawak to develop socially, culturally, and economically from the deployment of ICTs. Funded by the Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS), it is the most prominent research project of e-community in Malaysia. However, it was a large scale research project applying participatory-action-research methods involving the indigenous community. This was different from my case study which only targeted one segment of society (children in orphanages) in urban areas. Moreover, e-Bario focused on an ICT-based project, its implementation and impact on the community from the human-computer interaction area, whereas, my study focuses on collaborative partnership from diverse human perspectives.

This thesis will contribute to the literature through its exploration of sustained collaborative partnership in the community service organisation that experiences change and transformation throughout the process. A qualitative approach has been chosen as the study aims to explore, understand and identify the reported experiences of multiple stakeholders. This includes the stakeholders' expectations of voluntary services and the extent to which they believe government policies should support voluntary work.

### 1.3 Research aims and questions

As Stake (2005) suggests, pursuing the case study with scholarly research questions in mind can help optimise understanding. This means that the case study researcher emphasises what can be learned from a single case study, in particular, with detailed attention to its activities (Stake, 2005). Therefore, the central research question for this study was: How do collaborative partnerships in an ICT-based community service organisation develop and survive over time? This is further extended into two subsidiary research questions:

1. What are the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation, from the perspective of multiple stakeholders?
  - a. How do collaborative partnerships come to be forged and sustained?
  - b. To what extent do different partners in a longstanding community service project have similar aims?
  - c. Are long-term partnerships necessarily more effective partnerships?
  - d. What are the drivers of change and transformation in the collaborative partnerships?
2. What are the challenges of collaborative partnerships facing a sustainable ICT-based community service project?

The answers to these questions will assist in considering the implications for research in terms of theory, policy and practice in relation to sustaining collaborative partnership.

### 1.4 Overview of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter One** is the introduction to the research. It also explains the research questions and approach of the study. A rationale for and significance of the study are linked to the international and Malaysian perspectives. This is

followed by the contribution to knowledge and practice. The next chapters are organised in the following structure:

**Chapter Two and Three** consist of the review of relevant and current literature. In accordance with a case study approach, Chapter Two provides insight to the case study context. It briefly introduces Malaysia and the Klang Valley to give initial information about the stakeholder involved, and the case study setting. Chapter Two further provides information about the evolution of the related national policies, collaborative partnership, and service organisation in the country. The historical development of CyberCare provides a specific context for the case study in question.

Chapter Three reviews the literature in relation to sustaining collaborative partnerships, and discusses their perspectives more broadly. The review further leads to the identification of the research issues, and serves as the basis for my thesis. Additionally this third chapter provides a review of the main theoretical and empirical studies that my findings seek to supplement.

**Chapter Four** describes the research methodology, methods and techniques used in this study. The details of the suitability of a case study approach to the research are explained. This chapter also describes how the methods of document review, participant observation, and interview are applied to the study, and how the data is treated. I also discuss my insider-outsider status, and the steps taken to increase the quality and credibility of the findings, and ethical issues that have been considered.

**Chapter Five and Six** present the findings of the case study that address the research questions. In Chapter Five, the emphasis is on the findings for the first subsidiary research question which focuses on the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. The findings mainly reveal that the nature of this collaborative partnership working arrangement is relatively flexible, which is driven by funders, and partnerships are mostly pragmatic and programme-based.

Chapter Six discusses the findings on the second subsidiary research question about the challenges of maintaining collaborative partnership in a longstanding ICT-based community service organisation. Based on the views of multiple stakeholders, this chapter discusses five major challenges of collaborative partnership in the setting. The varying responses from different stakeholders are influenced by their different involvement and roles played in this collaborative setting.

**Chapter Seven**, the final chapter, discusses the findings and outlines the conclusions of the study. It reflects on the findings that are linked with the broader literature concerning sustaining collaborative partnership. This chapter begins with the discussion of the limitations of this research and recommendations for future research. Finally, it explores the ways in which the findings contribute to knowledge, policy and practice.

## CHAPTER TWO

### COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS IN A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the literature review which continues in the next chapter. It starts with an introduction of Malaysia and the Klang Valley to give an overview of the country and an understanding of the multicultural Malaysian people which will give initial information about the stakeholders involved. It further provides information about the evolution of the related national policies, collaborative partnership, and service organisation in the country. The historical development of CyberCare provides a specific context for the case study in question. These understandings of the country and its people provide insights which are relevant to this study.

#### 2.2 Brief overview of Malaysia and Klang Valley



Figure 2.2

Malaysia Map

Source: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/field/003/AC279E/AC279E16.htm>

### **2.2.1 Location and demographic profile**

Malaysia is one of the developing nations in the Southeast Asian region. The name Klang Valley is taken after the Klang River, the principal river that flows through it. The Klang Valley area is covered by ten municipalities surrounding metropolitan Kuala Lumpur, which currently accounts for about one third of Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Each municipality is governed by local authorities.

Malaysia is a country of diversity, particularly in regard to its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-linguistic population. The 2010 census reported that the total population of Malaysia has reached 28.3 million people consisting of 91.8% Malaysian citizens and 8.2% non-citizens. Malaysian citizens consist of three major ethnic groups: 67.4% Bumiputera<sup>1</sup>, 24.6% Chinese, and 7.3% Indians, while the balance of 0.7% is categorised as others (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011b). This multi-religious and multi-cultural nation has Islam as the most professed religion with the proportion of 61.3% of its citizens following this religion, 19.8% follow Buddhism, 9.2% follow Christianity, 6.3% follow Hinduism, and 1.7% embrace other religions. The small portion of 3% have no religion or unknown.

Of the whole population, more than 9.5 million are children under the age of 18 years. Based on that number, we can divide the total distribution of children across age groups, ethnics, and states. From those 9.5 million, 29% make up the age group of 10 to 14 years, 28% for the age group 5 to 9 years, followed by 25% for the age group of 0 to 4, and 18% for the 15 to 17 years age group. Ethnically, the child population comprises 55.2% Malay, 18.4% Chinese, 13.9% indigenous groups, 6.2% Indian, 5.4% non-Malaysian citizens and 0.8% is classified as others (2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to Malay and Indigenous groups

The distribution of the population by state shows that 7.2 million reside in highly urbanised areas of the Klang Valley, with 5.46 million being in the most populous state of Selangor, and the remaining 1.67 million in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, and 0.07 million in Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya respectively (2011a). The child population distribution shows the highest population of more than two million live in the Klang Valley with 1.6 million in Selangor, 456 thousand in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, and 24 thousand in Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya (2013). The key national policies are outlined in the following subsections.

## **2.3 ICT and development policies in Malaysia**

The information provided on the background of Malaysia and its related policies and initiatives such as the series of National Development policies, Vision 2020, and the National Information Technology Agenda serves as the context for the case study, which was prompted by the concerns and opportunities within that policy environment.

### **2.3.1 The key National Policies**

Since 1970, the course of Malaysia's development was shaped by its key national policies, ranging from the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990) to the National Development Policy (NDP) (1991-2000), the National Vision Policy (NVP) (2001-2010), and the latest Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015). These key national policy frameworks are central to the social and economic planning of the country, and are based on the understanding of the need and challenges of the time, and the responses required for the nation. As Nain (2003) claims, it is also to be noted that the country's policies and strategies have been developed based on a top-down decision from the government, which is often implemented without much prior consultation with the people at the grassroots.

In the early 1970s, the country faced problems of high poverty, unemployment, and economic disparities among ethnic groups. Therefore, the NEP (1971-1990) which consists of the First to Fifth Malaysia Plans, was devised to restructure the Malaysian society to correct economic

imbalances, so as to reduce and eventually eliminate through many means the identification of race with economic function (United Nations Country Team Malaysia, 2005).

While maintaining the basic strategies of the NEP, the NDP (1991-2000), which includes the Sixth and Seven Malaysia Plans, policy adjustments included the shifted focus of the anti-poverty strategy to the eradication of intense poverty, improved strategy to increase Bumiputera participation in the modern sectors of the economy, greater reliance on the private sector to generate economic growth and income, and emphasis on human resource development as a primary mechanism for achieving the objectives of growth and distribution (United Nations Country Team Malaysia, 2005). In this period, the most important strategic plan, Vision 2020 was introduced shortly after the first part of the NDP, the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) commenced (United Nations Country Team Malaysia, 2005), and the National Information Technology Council (NITC) was also formed in 1994 (Shariffadeen, 2004). Vision 2020 and NITC will be briefly reviewed in the subsequent section of this chapter.

In the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000), the second part of the NDP, the country continued to give more attention to the development of ICT, which was seen to play a dual role as a production sector and an enabler. Consequently, Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) which aims to achieve economic development, and the National Information Technology Agenda which aims to be a strategic enabler for social development, were launched under this Plan in 1996 (National Information Technology Council, n.d.; Shariffadeen, 2004). DAGS was introduced in 1998 to help to finance the ICT pilot projects (Ahmad, 2000, 2002). The shift of focus towards privatisation and ICT elements was a part of the impact of globalisation where the government followed from the developed countries on how they can share the cost with other sectors. Equally, ICT was widely promoted to capitalise upon the country's high investment in the MSC project. I will return to these ICT-related plans in the following section.

In keeping with the NEP and NDP, the NVP (2001-2010) proposed that the private sector would spearhead economic growth, while the public sector would provide the supportive



environment and ensure the achievement of the socio-economic objectives. Key strategies to achieve these goals included developing a knowledge-based economy, emphasising human resource development, and accelerating the shift of the key economic sectors towards more efficient production processes and high value-added activities (Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001; United Nations Country Team Malaysia, 2005).

A brief review of the key National Policies provides a general view of the flow of the development and how the focus changes and continues from one period to the other. However, the review is selective on what is relevant to this study only. It is important to note that most of the key national policies emphasised partnership and collaboration, especially between private and public sectors and NGOs, contributing to the significance of this research. My overview of these national plans locates the context for CyberCare, established in 1998, with ICT as key to their collaborative partnership project. The following strategies and initiatives provide further description of some of the national drivers which play significant roles in moving the National Policies forward. This will provide a further understanding of the country's aspirations on human development and tripartite partnership in Vision 2020, which shows a strong connection with the approach taken by my case study.

### **2.3.2 Vision 2020: promoting partnership**

The Vision, which consists of the Malaysian aspiration to become a fully developed country by the year 2020 is significant to my case study, as this policy emphasises the social responsibilities of the private sector and the importance of developing future human resources. The emphasis in the Vision is for the country to be developed in its "own mould": fully developed in all dimensions of national life including national unity and social cohesion, the economy, social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, and national pride and confidence (Mohamad, 1991).

In moving towards these goals, the government stressed the importance of physical and spiritual human resource development and capacity building<sup>2</sup>. The government also emphasised the importance of private-public sector partnerships, as the private sector is the primary engine of economic growth. The implementation of privatisation is viewed as one of the ways to reduce the administrative and financial burdens for the government and accelerate the attainment of national distributional goals. At the same time, the government stressed the importance of the public needs and urged the private sector to think not just of personal profit but also to exercise their social responsibility to the country. Therefore, the private sector is called to work together with the government to engage foreign investors in mutually beneficial partnerships and joint ventures for economic development. However, such a demand is greater on the domestic investors than on their foreign counterparts. The significance of this brief review is to highlight how the national objectives pursued in the country's development planning are situated in visionary terms, emphasising the holistic nature of the development endeavour (United Nations Country Team Malaysia, 2005).

### **2.3.3 National Information Technology Agenda for social development**

I will focus here on the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA), another ICT plan launched under the Seventh Malaysia Plan in 1996 by the NITC. NITC was formed in 1994 (Abu Hassan & Hasim, 2008; Nain, 2003; Shariffadeen, 2004) to advise the government on matters concerning ICT development especially the forming and implementation of ICT-related policies (Abu Hassan & Hasim, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> Capacity building here is what commonly refers as strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and communities in developing societies, so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering.

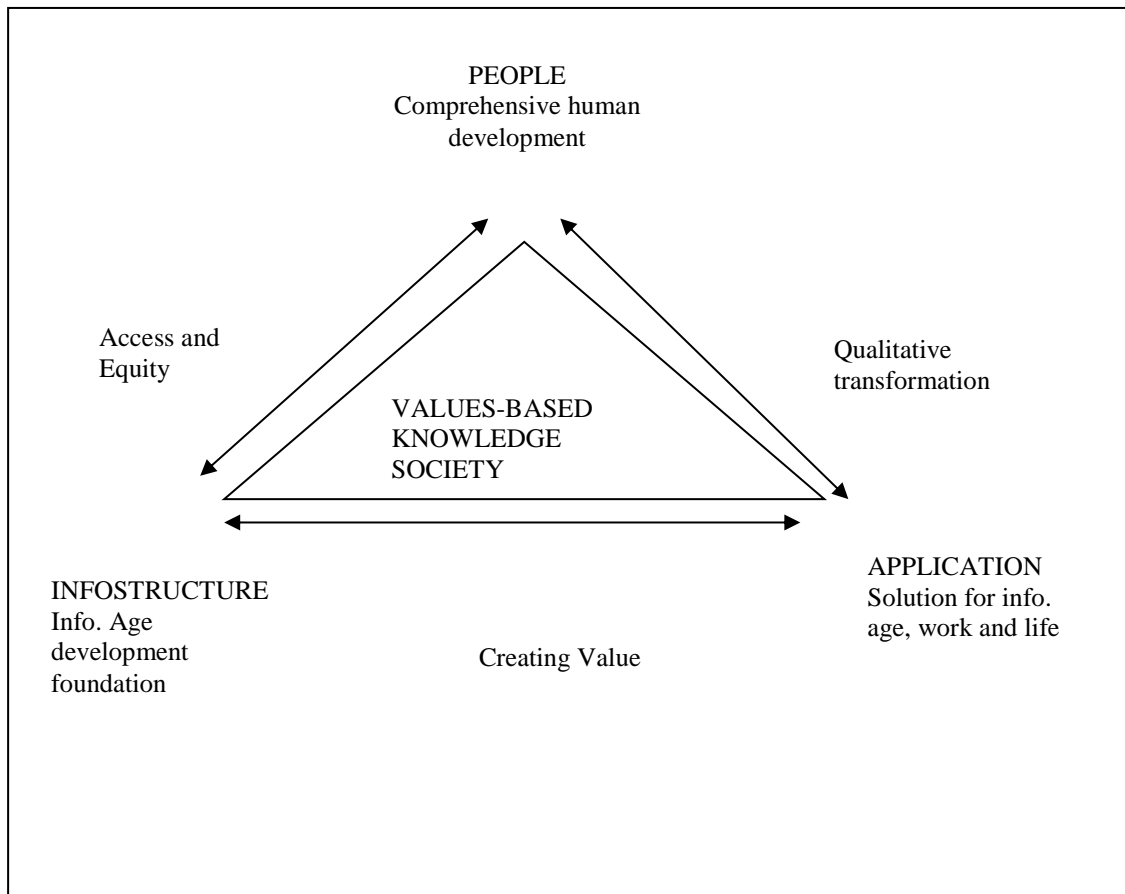


Figure 2.3.3  
*The Framework of the National IT Agenda*  
 Source: National Information Technology Council

The working model for the NITA is the National Information Technology Framework (Figure 2.3.3) which put the “people” element at the peak of the triangle, to stress the importance of the human factor in the changing environment of the information era (Shariffadeen, 2004). The framework rationalises the fact that people equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, supported by the appropriate infostructure (i.e., both hard and soft infrastructure), and provided with equal access to ICT and applications, are able to create social value. It is expected that the virtuous chain of constant improvement in creating social value will transform Malaysian society into a values-based knowledge society, as envisaged in Vision 2020.

With the national policies developed placing more emphasis on partnership and ICT, the projects to develop the community have also changed over time. Since the introduction of the NITA, the community projects have started to integrate various stakeholders in the collaborative partnership through the utilisation of ICTs. Despite the advantages and opportunities which are claimed to be brought by development of ICTs, there are concerns in society that the development might not reach all segments of the society, particularly those who might be described as “underprivileged.” My case study, CyberCare as a long-term project involving multiple-stakeholders is an important example to discover the development and impact of this emphasis on ICT within a community context in Malaysia.

#### **2.3.4 Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS)**

Community participation remains as a critical element in realising the NITA. In the process of attracting individuals and communities to develop electronic clusters of communities nationwide, NITC realised that many people are interested in getting involved in such projects, but the average Malaysian does not possess enough financial start-up capital. In 1995, the Malaysian average earnings of around RM2000 a month made purchasing computers and getting access to the internet a costly affair (Ahmad, 2000).

Consequently, the NITC introduced the DAGS in 1998 as a grant assistance plan to remove the financial burdens of start-ups, or what NITC refers to as Demonstrator Applications (DAs) who showed unique and innovative e-project ideas in their pilot projects. Specifically, DAs are projects aimed at creating, developing and promoting new applications using ICT, and which create new content for community development within specific contexts. In granting the fund, DAGS identifies five priority areas for further development which include e-community, e-public services, e-learning, e-economy, and e-sovereignty. E-community, which refers to the project's aims to facilitate community interest and confidence to collaborate in utilising ICT applications to improve the quality of life of the people (DAGS Secretariat, n.d.), is the priority area of this case study. In order to qualify for a demonstrator application (DA) and receive funding, the projects are required to meet the objectives of the scheme, such as to enhance tripartite partnership through joint ventures and institutional

linkages (DAGS Secretariat, n.d.); and contribute to the acculturation of Malaysians to ICT and multimedia applications (Ahmad, 2000). In principle, these projects should also be ICT-based, small, focused and short-term projects not exceeding twelve months (Ahmad, 2000).

The implementation of the DAGS was not without its challenges. Based on their experiences and difficulties in facilitating and monitoring the demonstrator application projects, the DAGS Secretariat (n.d.) identified some crucial lessons that can be learned. The first lesson is the need to identify a strong promoter and knowledge broker to participate in and drive successful DA projects. This is because the promoter, who generally plays the role of the knowledge broker, takes ownership of all development concerning the demonstrator application project. This makes the promoter instrumental in encouraging, and inspiring the completion of the task. This is applied to my study, as the project was promoted by a corporate partner, Hitechniaga. Second is the need for a willing and available pilot community as a target. The demonstrator application team, which regards the community as the direct beneficiaries needs to have the right mental attitude and correct mindset to succeed, and head, together with the promoter, towards a common objective. Third, the promoter and community are needed to have an innovative experimental attitude to encourage creativity for more improvements and innovation. Private partners, especially the technology providers, are suggested by the team to have a risk-taking spirit that goes beyond the mere profit oriented approach. Finally, the team also learned that a project without sustainability and self-sufficiency plans risks collapsing after the twelve-month award period. Therefore, it is important to develop a clear sustainability and commercialisation plan from the very beginning of the project plan to ensure project continuation (Ahmad, 2000; DAGS Secretariat, n.d.). Here it is interesting that commercialisation is seen as an inevitable outcome, rather than being seen as possibly continuing as a non-profit existence.

Despite the lessons learnt highlighted by the DAGS Secretariat, and with many projects having approached or approaching the end of the pilot stage, the viability and sustainability of the projects receiving grants are still unclear at the time as Nain (2003, p. 195) suggests:

*...Before grandiose plans are made for the next stage, perhaps more information on the earlier stages should be made available to the public to enable greater public scrutiny and independent analyses and to enable genuine people participation, as often stressed in the numerous objectives and in what seem like mission statements.*

Success stories are often exposed to the public but unsuccessful projects are not given publicity. Yet the meaning of “success” is subjective. As Nain (2003, p. 195) again points out, it is insufficient to simply declare that:

*...the pilot smart school project has been a success just because more schools have been provided with computers and more students are now “computer literate,” no matter how vague that term may mean in a real sense (p. 195).*

For this reason, Nain (2003) calls for systematic qualitative follow-up studies to be conducted to acquire more substantive and valuable data on the projects. This is one of the key gaps that this study will investigate. As CyberCare is one of the first nine projects awarded within DAGS, has existed for a long time, and has been widely reported as one of a few successful projects, it is a valuable case study which offers the potential to examine its ability to sustain collaborative partnership practice. I note that the terms success, successful, and successfulness are used interchangeably to show some kind of accomplishment, achievement or attainment of something

## **2.4 ICT projects within Malaysia**

An important study by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the regional development arm of the United Nations that serves as the main economic and social development centre for the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, suggests there are three main approaches to ICT based projects within Malaysia. Its “Guidebook on Developing Community e-Centres in Rural Areas: Based on the Malaysian experience” describes these approaches as the Top-Down, Down-Up, and Top-Down-Up (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2006). In the Top-Down approach, the projects are initiated, planned, and implemented mainly by government agencies. Community or corporate sectors may be involved too but their involvements remain minimal. The examples offered by

the report of such projects are *Program Internet Desa (PID)*, and State Government projects. The Down-Up projects are the projects initiated mostly by NGOs or corporations, with some collaboration from community-based organisation and government agencies. The projects like SMASY (Smart Society), e-Bario, and CyberCare are examples of the Down-Up projects in Malaysia. These projects were funded by the DAGS. CyberCare as a Down-Up project will be further explained in the section on CyberCare background. There are also government initiated projects, but they are being implemented with strong community participation. This is known as a Top-Down-Up approach. Under this category, the project concept and framework was laid out by the NITC, but the implementation was with direct collaboration with the respective target community. *E-WargaKota*, and *Warga Emas* Network are the pilot project examples approved for implementation with the DAGS funding.

The guidebook (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2006) further states the differences between these three types of approach as lying in major critical elements: site selection, identification of needs, strategies for meeting needs, and funding. In selecting a site in the top-down approach, the practitioner's knowledge is generally employed: for instance, the project management or government agency determines the location of the project. In contrast, in the down-up approach, the community determines the site. In terms of funding, in both top-down and top-down-up approaches, funding would have been identified and available before the project was initiated compared to the down-up approach, where funding is sought afterwards. In identifying needs, all approaches are based on the analysis of the current situation to identify the starting points for a project, known as base line study. All approaches also meeting the needs based on possible solutions or choices of technologies are also available.

As stressed on various occasions early on, my main concern in this study is to discover the experiences of multiple-stakeholders in implementing collaborative partnership for community projects. It is significant to study CyberCare which is based on the community development model and was among the down-up projects that received much attention regionally and nationally.

## 2.5 Background to the concept of collaborative partnership in Malaysia

The historical development in Chapter 3 shows collaborative partnership research and practices as being well established and documented in countries like the UK and USA. However, it is not the same with developing countries like Malaysia. A privatisation policy for the service sectors was first announced in Malaysia in 1983, followed by the announcement of a master plan in 1985, which was approved for implementation in 1989 (Asian Development Bank, 2001). However, a report on this initiative (Asian Development Bank, 2001) shows that the actual implementation of privatisation has been slow, and has been done with a strong emphasis on gradualism and partial privatisation, unlike in the early adopter countries. This may be due to the different contexts of Malaysia to the Anglophone West countries, such as the readiness of the community to accept change. However, similar to all goals shared by neoliberal governments elsewhere, such as in the UK and USA, the purpose of the privatisation in Malaysia is mainly economics driven as it means to:

*Facilitate the country's economic growth, reduce the financial and administration burden of the Government, reduce the Government's presence in the economy, lower the level and scope of public spending and allow market forces to govern economic activities and improve efficiency and productivity in line with the National Development Policy (n.d.).*

Since the implementation of privatisation, public-private partnerships have become a common feature of practice in Malaysia. However, partnership has been less common in the non-government sector. While the push to privatisation has encouraged public-private partnerships, because the state organisations are trying to get the private sector to provide services previously provided by the state, the government interest in privatisation has been a driver of emerging collaborative partnership in the community service sectors, involving NGOs in Malaysia as well.

In neoliberal economics, government sectors formed partnerships with the private sector to reduce the financial burden of servicing the public. In a multi-stakeholder partnership context, it also involves shared resources. However, the practice of free market economics and the increasing demand of democratic decision-making make it more difficult for the central



government and municipal authorities to achieve a true balance in carrying out their civic duties involving sustainable development. There are always challenges in regulating the market to ensure corporate responsibility, inviting foreign investment to stimulate employability which includes job growth and upskilling workers, ensuring social inclusion, encouraging environmental protection, as well as providing affordable public services and responsive governance (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003).

Little has been published about the context for emerging collaborative partnership with the community service sectors in Malaysia or the success or otherwise of such community partnerships. My study will potentially provide a case for explaining the situation.

## **2.6 Community service organisations**

Simply, the third sector includes all organisations that are not the public sector (which provides basic government services) or the business sector (which involves profit-making corporations or organisations). It is also referred to as the tertiary sector, not-for-profit sector, non-commercial sector, NGO, and non-profit organisation, to mention the terms that I have come across. In the context of Malaysia, the third sector is commonly referred to as NGO.

The Registrar of Societies (ROS), the body responsible for the registration of societies in Malaysia, allows NGOs to be formed either as a charitable corporation or as societies/associations. The charitable corporations are regulated by the Companies Commission, while the societies/associations are regulated by the ROS. While other non-for-profit (NFP) organisations that constitute NGOs include advocacy and lobbying groups, for causes such as women's rights and the environment; service organisations for disaster relief, humanitarian aid and economic development; and policy institutes, think tanks and specialised educational organisations focused on international affairs (Registry of Societies Malaysia, 2006). Based on the classification, community service organisations are regarded as an NGO in Malaysia.

As community service organisations can be considered an NGO, studying the growth of the NGOs offers insights into community service organisations. In the following discussion, I will trace the development of NGOs in Malaysia and refer to community service organisation, the third sector and NGOs interchangeably.

Historically, the NGO community in Malaysia has evolved from a range of associations traced back to the colonial period, before independence in 1957 (Weiss & Hassan, 2003). Muzaffar (2001), the political scientist and activist, is more specific, claiming that the NGOs pressing for meaningful social change first began to appear in the 1960s shortly after independence. According to him, NGOs at the time were not positively viewed by the government. As a consequence, the NGOs passed through four phases: 1) establishing their presence; 2) articulating their rights and defending themselves from the state; 3) coming to terms with an overwhelmingly powerful ruling elite; and 4) challenging that political power without sacrificing their integrity. Finally, the government, given the popular support for NGOs, has come to embrace these NGOs as a valuable contribution to civil dialogue (Muzaffar, 2001).

In the early days, the organisations were often linked with religious institutions, clan networks, and such like. Their concerns were primarily with the socioeconomic and moral welfare issues in the communities. As more NGOs have come into existence, some of these groups have maintained a focus on political issues since their inception, but most initially focused more on service delivery, and then evolved towards advocacy (Weiss & Hassan, 2003)

Action groups or new social movements are also viewed as part of civil society. Regardless of the terminology chosen, Weiss and Hassan (2003, p. 4) define the organisations involved as *“groups of citizens engaged in collective action for self-help or issue advocacy outside the aegis of the state.”* These are social organisations that are *“formed voluntarily for common objectives and collectively engaged in economic activities or public affairs”* (Yamamoto, 1995, p. 6). Claiming that the concept of civil society has been developed in the West, Weiss and Hassan (2003) view civil society as functioning to provide the needs not met by the state.

Weiss and Hassan (2003) also view civil society in Malaysia as functioning to play the advocacy role, which can help to articulate citizens' voices regarding the need for transformations to the state.

There are various mechanisms for a civil society to perform these roles. Weiss and Hassan suggest that the roles be performed through the proliferation and advocacy initiatives of NGOs in public. NGOs can help to keep the state in line with the preferences and interests of the citizens by presenting their vision of a better society and striving to be "*catalytic agents for change*" through their public involvement (Yamamoto, 1995, p. 7). However, the chances for NGOs to achieve their demands depend largely on how open and susceptible the state and society is to such pressure. On the government's side, they may define state interests as the general good and deny influence to the '*special interests*' represented by societal associations (Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

Looking at the Malaysian scenario from Weiss and Hassan's (2003) viewpoint, the state has led rural development, provision of social services and the like itself, rather than leaving a space to be filled by the developmental and politically engaged NGOs. They further adopt the view that the country's disinclination to accept assistance from outside agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) results in less external pressure for the government to involve NGOs in development projects, which would have legitimated and reinforced these groups. The IMF has had a renewed focus on the role of civil society, in an attempt to rehabilitate its reputation in the wake of the poorly handled Asian financial crisis in mid-1997 (Dawson & Bhatt, 2001). At the time of the crash, Dawson and Bhatt (2001) regarded civil society opposition to the Fund as being against the IMF because it was perceived as imposing "*austerity*" especially on the poor in those countries in a difficult situation. Many civil service organisations often described the IMF as an "*unapproachable, secretive, undemocratic organisation that is resistant to public opinion and participation*" (Dawson & Bhatt, 2001, p. 3). In contrast, the IMF perceived the civil service organisations to have insufficient understanding of the role and operations of the Fund (Dawson & Bhatt, 2001). This has created tension in the relationship between the IMF and civil society. There have been subsequent calls for the IMF to find ways to convince civil society of the need for

collaborative rather than adversarial relationships (Dawson & Bhatt, 2001). Such relationships are hardly apparent in Malaysia as yet. However, the focus on economic growth, distribution, and security struggles or what Weiss and Hassan (2003, p. 9), termed “*old politics*,” remains highly germane in the Malaysian political scene. This makes the state, rather than society or business, the target of Malaysian social movements. (Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

Despite such limitations, NGOs are growing in both influence and number in Malaysia. These NGOs are promoting a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political causes, interests and agendas. The relationship of these groups with the government ranges from collaborative to confrontational and may change with the specific issue or time (Weiss & Hassan, 2003). For example, NGOs that place more focus on welfare or recreation complement the government by providing social services, which is the type of NGO discussed in my case study. These groups often work closely with government ministries like the Ministry of Science and Technology Innovation, and Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Conversely, other groups which are more critical may challenge government policies that are incongruent with their social justice ideals. They may put their efforts into engaging the state in negotiating on perspectives and aims, to empower the grassroots to enable citizens to raise their concerns with the government, or to work directly with the government to improve specific public policies (Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

Collaborative partnership can be one of the mechanisms for the NGOs to provide services previously undertaken by the state. Yamamoto (1995) views that through collaborative activities civil societal associations are able to nurture opportunities for individuals to pursue their specific interests and societal and institutional linkages to enable community building. Inherent within the notion of civil society is the principle of civic virtue and an emphasis on rational, co-operative and moral interactions, both among the members of a society and between them and their government (see Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

For my study, CyberCare, the NGO in focus is a community service organisation aiming to improve the life of the children in orphanages through the mechanism of collaborative partnership to achieve their goal. This NGO has been initiated and run by the community, and

served as the key player that is responsible for inviting corporate and government sectors to collaborate to serve the orphanage community. Collaborative efforts have been carried out based on outside funds from the corporations and government.

## **2.7 CyberCare historical background**

CyberCare's objective to form an e-Community by connecting the children of orphanages, home administrators, public sectors, private sectors and NGOs to an e-Community System provides an interesting case by which to study collaborative partnership. CyberCare was among the first ICT projects that were set up when the Malaysian government started to focus on ICT development. It was a National Pilot programme under the NITC, which aimed to seed and nurture an e-Community of orphanages (National Information Technology Council, 2002). As an e-Community, CyberCare aims to integrate all the stakeholders - comprising children in orphanages, orphanage administrators, the government, corporations, NGOs, and volunteers (National Information Technology Council, 2002) - to work collaboratively to bridge the digital divide and improve the lives of the children in orphanages with the utilisation of both technical and human elements. Accredited with the DA status by the NITC, CyberCare was awarded a grant for almost RM500,000 for one year in August 1999 (Ahmad, 2000; Muda, 2009).

CyberCare was formed in April 1998 by a group of Malaysians comprising of NGOs, academicians, medical doctors, professionals and businessmen (National Information Technology Council, 2002) who aspire to make a difference to the abandoned, abused and orphaned children (CyberCare, 2007a). They faced difficulties in being accepted as a group by the orphanage administrators, which led them to partner with the Lions Club and establish themselves as a community service organisation named the Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (LCCKL) on 12 December 1998, with its initial founders becoming the Board of Directors (BODs) and members of the club. Reporting to the Lions Club International and being governed by the regulations of the Registry of Societies, CyberCare wished to provide the public and its sponsors with confidence in its transparency and credibility.

In February 1999, the creation of a Professional Community Care System allowed the club to hire a fulltime community service team to develop a professional organisational structure, processes and systems to carry out the CyberCare project and refine the CyberCare initiatives into repeatable community projects that can be adopted in other countries and by other NGOs (Muda, 2009). The project team also assists in coordinating registered volunteers to sustain their participation level. Overall, the fulltime team at the time helps to provide continuity and build momentum, in order to align the efforts of other volunteers, corporate sponsors, public sectors, and other community interest sectors to leverage on.

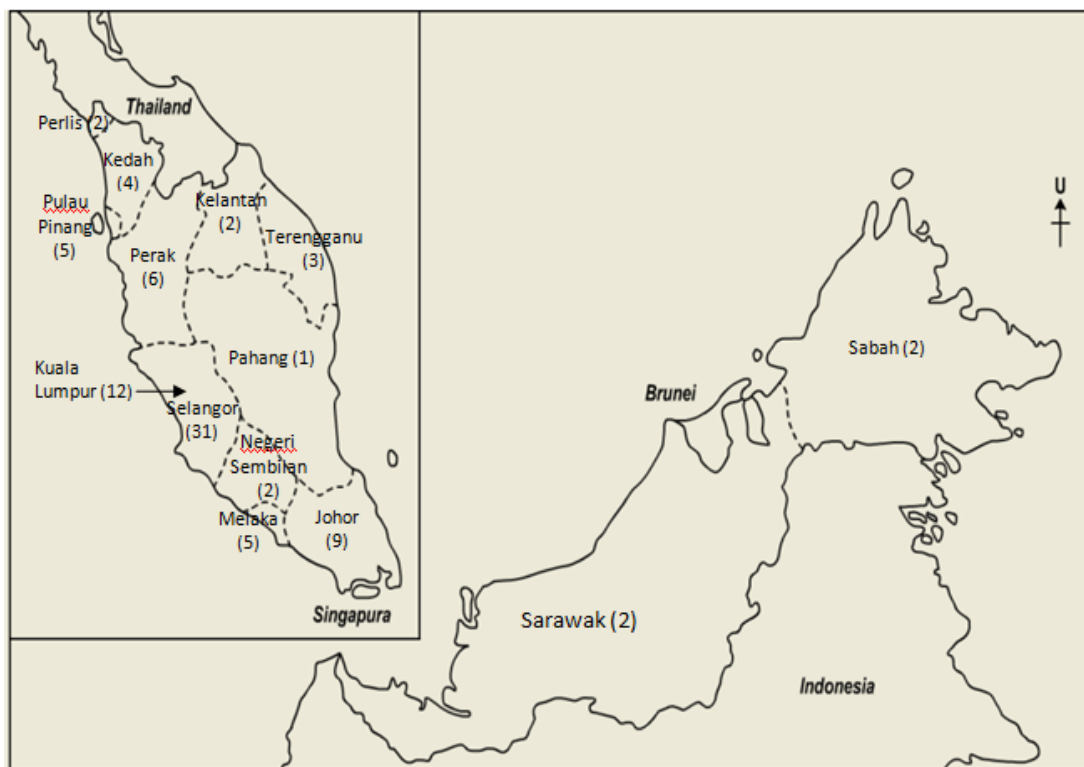


Figure 2.7  
*Map of CyberCare's linked orphanages throughout the country*  
 Source: CyberCare, 2013

Beginning with just seven orphanages when CyberCare was first formed in 1998, and increasing the link to twelve orphanages when it established as the LCCCKL in the same year, it achieved its aim to expand its connection to twenty five orphanages nationwide by the end of the one-year DAGS award, which it received in 1999. It had achieved more than its initial

aim under the DAGS funding when it was eventually linked 90 orphanages throughout the country in 2005 (Chong, 2005). Eighty six of these orphanages remained connected in 2013 as in Figure 2.7. It has attracted many international-based corporations such as Microsoft, and Hewlett Packard to join the partnership and support their collaborative programmes, enabling CyberCare to raise over RM3 million within four years. This is more than six times the amount of the initial seed funding. Although CyberCare was a newly established community service organisation exemplifying a new approach of community initiative in the country at the time, various reports in the media, and some community development bodies demonstrated CyberCare as a successful project, benefiting over five thousand children in orphanages (Mei, 2009-2011a).

The success of CyberCare was also shown through its recognition by other bodies and associations. For example it was given an award for the Best Practice in community care in the Global Knowledge II summit in March 2000 and the UNDP recognised it as one of the organisations around the world that has bridged the divide through the use of ICT during the commemoration of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2001. The organisation was selected by Microsoft to be showcased as one of Microsoft's community affairs and partnerships, and heavily featured in their publication of Microsoft's 25 years of achievement. CyberCare also received the Recognition of Excellence from two District Governors of the Lions Club over their terms of service (Ahmad, 2002; Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme, 2002; Cybercare, 2010; DAGS, 2003; Mei, 2009-2011b). These further justify the selection of CyberCare as a valuable case study.

CyberCare, together with its partners, has established a number of programmes for children in orphanages. The following describes some of the main programmes. The first effort by CyberCare to link the orphanages in the first two years was to set up ICT infrastructure such as computers, software and internet connections in orphanages through its programme called **Putting Orphanages OnLine (POOL)** (Wai, 1999). This programme was also meant to gain the trust of the orphanage administrators. Then, CyberCare began to teach the children ICT skills in ICT training programmes such as E-workshop and CyberCamp (John, 2003).

**E-Workshop** trained the children in what it describes as computer technology. The aims of the programme were to give an opportunity for the children in orphanages to gain adequate computer knowledge and education prior to joining the workforce; to build the children's confidence by using ICT as a tool to encourage expression and innovation; to develop overall presentation skills; to help the children to open up to the borderless world which will help improve their knowledge; and to encourage a positive attitude to learning (CyberCare, 2011). E-Workshop also included activities like team building to bond volunteers with the children, and to develop confidence (CyberCare, 2011).

**CyberCamp** was a two- or three-day programme where the children stayed with volunteers away from the orphanages. The programme aimed to teach the children computer skills, as well as to develop teamwork, leadership, presentation skills, and confidence. A similar programme was later known as **Leadership Camps**. This programme targeted building leadership qualities through teamwork, problem solving, creativeness, and concentration activities (CyberCare, 2011). Compared to CyberCamp, which was heavily ICT focused, the Leadership Camp adds the element of nature appreciation through its outdoor activities, and intends to maximise learning among the participants (CyberCare, 2011). Sometimes the children got the chance to travel overseas to CampVision organised by CyberCare Singapore (Mei, 2009-2011a) which replicated the model of CyberCare in this study.

In order to achieve strategic implementation of e-Community, **CyberCare Community System (3CS)** was introduced. 3CS was a system built as a platform to align the efforts of the community members, and allow the programmes to be tracked. It used the website to give information on the activities they have, with feedback from the children, volunteers, sponsors, and the projects' team about the conducted programmes. Administrative tools were developed to help orphanage administrators manage their orphanages, have online discussion with child experts, and facilitate resource sharing (CyberCare, 2007b; John, 2003). It made an easy task of recruiting volunteers as they can just sign up online, and if selected, they will be trained before they can volunteer in orphanages. After the programme, the children could also give their feedback, and the volunteers could sign up online and if selected would log on to check it. In 2004, CyberCare took the initiative to let the orphanages take ownership of their



websites by training the orphanage administrators, and identified children to be webmasters (CyberCare, 2007b). However, this system did not last, due to the lack of readiness among the community to learn to manage the websites by themselves at the time. As a result, around 2005 or 2006, the focus was shifted away from the community system (Wai, C. Y., personal communication, 25 March 2010).

CyberCare and partners also made efforts to recognise the children's academic performance by setting up the **Education Excellence Programme (EEP)**. EEP refers to the programme to help the children in orphanages to reach their highest level of education by rewarding the children for every distinction achieved in the local government examinations including Primary School Assessment (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* – UPSR), Lower Secondary Assessment (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah* – PMR), Malaysia Certificate of Education (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* – SPM), and Malaysia Higher School Certificate (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* – STPM) (CyberCare, 2011) as in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7<sup>3</sup>

*Numbers of recipients receiving merit awards and scholarships of the Education Excellence Programme from 2001 – 2006*

*Source: CyberCare 2011*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Scholarship</b>	<b>STPM</b>	<b>SPM</b>	<b>PMR</b>	<b>UPSR</b>	<b>Total</b>
2001			13	34	13	60
2002	1	1	18	35	23	77
2003	1	1	28	52	50	131
2004	1		38	62	62	162
2005	1	7	43	55	125	230
2006		4	61	117	110	292
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>952</b>

The fund was allocated by Microsoft Malaysia, the key corporate partner at the time, through its Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award (MUPSA). MUPSA was formerly

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<sup>3</sup> This table only represents the recorded data of EEP scholarship/award from CyberCare, and the columns are not directly tied to each other. It does not represent orphanages' academic achievements in Malaysia as students with great results may not get recognised by EEP if the orphanages did not submit their results on time, in accordance with the scholarship/award guidelines.

known as Microsoft Foundation Campaign Education Excellence Programme aimed at enabling recipients to further their formal education beyond secondary level into university (Microsoft Press Release, 2005). Rather than aiming to reward the ‘best student’, the EEP rewarded the children for showing academic improvement in their studies, such as improving their grade from ‘C’ to ‘B’, or from ‘B’ to ‘A’ as well as high achievement (Karim, 2005). Those eligible also received higher education scholarships (Karim, 2005) to further their studies to tertiary levels.

Later, CyberCare developed a more human focused programme called **Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM)**. The programme started with a clear objective to “*develop the leadership in the youth through mentoring*” (Wai, C. Y., personal communication, 25 March 2010). Originally it was funded by Samsung Asia under its DigitAll Hope programme in 2004 (Chong, 2005). It consisted of a series of interactive activities lasting between three to six months, focusing on character-building, where coaches nurture and coach junior youth in orphanages on becoming principle-centred leaders through three stages (CyberCare, 2007c). The first stage is building the vocabulary of the youth, and enhancing the power of positive expression using a series of selected reading texts. Second, it sought to teach the fundamental values and principles that govern their choices in life. The final stage leads to the Leadership Camp mentioned.

Through this process, CyberCare realised the need to develop a sustainable source of volunteers to carry out the programmes. Then, CyberCare started to get university students involved through the internship programmes. The first internship programme was known as **Student Industrial Training and Assessment (SITA) programme** which was conducted weekly (2-3 hours) from two to five months. The programme was created to take ICT students from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) for internships helping to develop the CyberCare Community System (3CS). These students also helped to build and manage websites for around thirty orphanages who previously had nothing of this kind (CyberCare, 2007b).

Another programme involving university students is that of **Care4U**, which started in 2007. Under the Care4U programme, Psychology students from UTAR are recruited as interns in CyberCare for a period of fourteen weeks to complete their given assignment. During the internship, the students are trained to be personal trainers and coaches by the professional life coach who is partnering with CyberCare. These interns then coach children in their selected orphanages in life skills, and ICT skills, and guide the children through the completion of the community service project (CSP) of their choice. This coaching or training method is based on the Make A Difference (MAD) curriculum, which was first developed in 2008 by the interns from this programme. The curriculum was previously known as *Mengecapi Aspirasi Diri* (Living my Aspirations) curriculum. It was developed to provide hands-on coaching to interns in particular. At the time of my fieldwork, CyberCare had recruited five batches of university students for the internships. This is one of the programmes that was still active and seemed to receive high priority from CyberCare and its partners at the time of my fieldwork.

Based on its structure, historical and programmes development, and challenges faced along the process, CyberCare represents a good example of a sustainable collaborative partnership project in Malaysia. The ability of CyberCare to maintain its on-going efforts, and bring partners to carry out the on-going programmes for the children collaboratively is an important criterion that makes studying the sustaining collaborative partnership in this case important and interesting. However, in general, most of the programmes seemed at their broadest reach beginning from the CyberCare's establishment as the LCCKL until 2006. Based on the availability of reported newspaper articles, CyberCare is believed to have lost its largest range of programmes and popularity from 2007 onwards.

At the time of my fieldwork in 2009-2010, the scale of the programme coverage had been reduced, from covering the whole country to just focusing on the Klang Valley areas, with just a few orphanages involved at a time, and only one fulltime staff member. Only two programmes (YLM and Care4U) were still ongoing at that moment with very limited funding and volunteer capacity. In the midst of my fieldwork, CyberCare had also separated from its key NGO partner, the Lions Club. The change can also be noticed in CyberCare's vision, from being particularly focused on connecting the children globally and bridging the digital

divide in the earlier set up, to the new vision, “Every child has the right to dream and every child has the right to fulfil their dream,” in which it places more emphasis on children as individuals rather than being heavily ICT focused. All of these changes make CyberCare an appropriate case to explore the role of change in a collaborative partnership setting as a focus of my study.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Collaborative partnership, and research into it, may be a long established practice in most of the developed countries, but this is not true of Malaysia. However the increasing profile of a tripartite partnership approach in Malaysia can be ascribed to similar causes as in those countries including privatisation policy, a neo-liberal system and an emphasis on participatory governance. Existing research into ICT-based collaborative partnership in Malaysia has focused more on the impact of ICT itself rather than the collaborative partnership elements. For example, the research involving the collaborative partnership project by Wood-Harper et al. (2004) has focused on the delivery of government service and policy in implementing electronic government. E-Bario was another interesting ICT-based community project implemented through a collaborative partnership approach. Research on this project focused on the ICT access rather than collaborative elements in the project (Bala et al., 2004). There is no research specifically focusing on community initiative service provision for children in Malaysia. This research provides new insights into the collaborative partnership practice in community service organisations that focus on empowering children in the developing country of Malaysia. The literature review continues in Chapter Three, shifting attention to the international context that provides a framework for understanding and interrogating collaborative partnerships like the one under consideration here.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I have outlined the policy and contextual aspects of community service organisation and collaborative partnership pertinent to my research setting. In this chapter, I review the works of scholars, researchers, and practitioners in relation to sustaining collaborative partnership, and discuss their perspectives more broadly. This discussion will frame my fieldwork and point towards key debates in the literature. There is a paucity of empirical work on community services for children in need. To frame my study, my literature review, then, draws on a range of fields to identify key work, including: business and management, public policy, community development, and various areas of social care.

I note that throughout this review the words ‘partners’, ‘participants’, ‘actors’, ‘parties’, ‘collaborators’, and ‘stakeholders’ are used to refer to the individuals and organisations involved in the partnership or my selected interview participants, unless stated otherwise. The words ‘multi-stakeholder’ and ‘multiple-stakeholder’ are also used concurrently throughout this thesis. Similarly the words ‘orphanage’ and ‘home’ are used interchangeably where the participants in my studies normally refer to orphanage as home.

#### **3.2 Background to the concept of collaborative partnership**

Nowadays, collaborative partnership is becoming one of the preferred methods to address complex social problems such as providing social services for persons living with HIV and AIDS (Takahashi & Smutny, 2002), providing basic services to the urban poor (Kumar, 2004), sustaining local development (Ninson, 2012), and promoting youth development to improve their health outcomes (Dötterweich, 2006). In the area of child welfare, collaborative partnerships are employed to cope with issues like building community to reclaim children

and families at risk (Barter, 2001), improving child and family services integration (Farrell, Tayler, Tennent, & Gahan, 2002), and improving children's services for maltreated children (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). The common aspects emphasised by the authors of child service are around the importance of collaborating to sustain and improve the services for children, and strengthen the child-family relationships. For example, Barter (2001) regards collaboration as a part of permanency planning, the complete reorientation of child welfare service delivery from "*child rescue*" to recognition that both parents and their children's needs and interests were "*interrelated and complementary rather than conflicting*" (p. 265). Additionally, Horwath and Morrison (2007, p. 66) suggest "*attention to nurturing relationship*" and constructing trusted networks as vital to move towards more collaborative work. They suggest that neglecting people issues is a main cause of failure of such interventions.

In general, since the 1990's, collaboration and partnership have become the catchphrases of a "*strategy for systemic change in human services, education, government, and community agencies*" (Kerka, 1997, p. 1) with many research aims to develop practice-oriented theory to help organisations manage their collaborations (Huxham & Vangen, 2008). Decentralisation (McQuaid, 2000; Thomson & Perry, 2006), rapid technological advancement (Thomson & Perry, 2006), and shrinking resources (Kerka, 1997; McQuaid, 2000; Thomson & Perry, 2006) have contributed to the growing interest in collaboration (Kerka, 1997; Thomson & Perry, 2006) and partnership (McQuaid, 2000). Block grants<sup>4</sup> in the USA have required states to integrate their economic, work force, technology development, and locally controlled services. In the USA, the changes in funding and the shrinking of resources caused many

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<sup>4</sup> Before the mid of 1960s in the USA, categorical grants in which the national government provides money to the states for specific purposes, became a major policy tool of the national government. But state and local officials began to criticize this method of national support because of the costly application and implementation procedures. They also complained that it was difficult to adapt the grants to local needs. Then, the block grant was introduced. This grant which combined several categorical grants in broad policy areas into one general grant started to be popular in the mid 1960s. States prefer block grants because they allow state officials to adapt the grants to their particular needs. Congress, however, is reluctant to use block grants because they loosen Congress's control over how the money is spent (for more detailed information, see for example: Annenberg Learner: [http://www.learner.org/courses/democracyinamerica/dia\\_3/dia\\_3\\_topic.html](http://www.learner.org/courses/democracyinamerica/dia_3/dia_3_topic.html))

organisations to think about the potential advantages of collaboration (Kerka, 1997). In addition to these economic drivers, Kerka (1997, p. 1) claims that the realisation that the complex problems and needs of families, workers, and communities are not being met effectively by existing services because of the issues such as *“fragmentation of client needs into distinct categories that ignore interrelated causes and solutions”* has become the most important factor contributing to the changing ways of providing services.

In the particular area of providing services to children, the language of collaborative partnership is increasingly used to describe ways of diverse stakeholders (United States Department of Education, 1996) providing a more holistic effort (Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1996; United States Department of Education, 1996; White & Wehlage, 1995), and comprehensive responses to children whose problems tend to be complex and multifaceted (Melaville et al., 1996; White & Wehlage, 1995). Collaborative partnerships are used as the instrument to devise comprehensive strategies that aim to strengthen the children and families (United States Department of Education, 1996). These partnerships normally begin when an individual or small group of catalysts *“lights the spark of collaboration, school leaders join with families, community leaders and representatives, and health and human service providers to forge individual programmes into comprehensive strategies”* (United States Department of Education, 1996, p. 2). Consequently, the United States Department of Education (1996) suggests that this core group develops into a collaborative effort by understanding the collaborative context; growing by including parents and community partners; forming a partnership; and creating an effective governance arrangement.

The increasing corporate involvement in community partnerships demonstrates that partnership is advantageous to the corporate sector as it can allow the company to carry out its corporate social responsibility (CSR). Warner (2003, p. 4) suggests a *“business model that exploits its core competencies while partnering with those who bring the necessary complementarities to form more complete solutions”* for sustainable development. For example, the corporations can apply their capabilities in project management skills to enhance the quality and sustainability of the activities of their strategic partners such as government agencies and the third sector. These necessary complementarities will potentially allow the

stakeholders to increase their mutual dependence, which may serve the purpose of the partnership. To enact its corporate social responsibility more effectively, usually the company will establish the partnership with its selected community organisation or third sector as this organisation is closer to the community, making it easier to the corporate sector to reach the community.

From another perspective in the literature, Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), the world's first multi-stakeholder network promoting innovation and advancement in knowledge and ICT for development views drivers of partnership for the third sector include the desire to leverage new resources, faster ways of delivering the strategic objectives of the organisations for environmental protection, social inclusion or poverty reduction (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003). Collaborative partnerships involving corporations within the community service sectors are emerging in Malaysia but little has been published about the success or otherwise of such community partnerships. My study will fill this gap, giving a rich account of this emerging trend.

### **3.3 Definition of collaborative partnership**

There is often confusion over the definitions of the terms “collaboration” and “partnership.” The confusion offered by the definitions may due to the different contexts. As Carnwell and Carson (2008) argue, the terms of collaboration and partnership “*can change across time and place as the context changes*” (p. 6).

In terms of defining collaborative partnership, Gottlieb, Feeley, and Dalton (2005)'s book, *The collaborative partnership approach to care: a delicate balance* can serve as one of the examples of collaborative partnership in human service which is applicable to community service. In their definition, they refer to the relationship as a partnership and the way of working together as collaborative. This account of partnership is similar to how Carnwell and Carson (2008) distinguish between the term “*partnership*” as meaning “*what something is,*” and “*collaborate or to work together in a joined-up way*” as “*what one does.*” Combining the terms together, Carnwell and Carson (2008) describe collaboration as the verb that refers to



*“what we do when we engage successfully in a partnership,”* in which *“partnership being the noun”* (p. 16).

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, USA (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans USA, n.d.) suggests that only people collaborate, not organisations. What is explicit from this is that while the organisations formed a partnership, the work is being carried out by the members of the organisations in partnership. This can be linked to Gottlieb, Feeley et al. (2005) and Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) view of collaboration as a way of working together. In contrast much of the literature (Carroll & Steane, 2000; Frank & Smith, 2006; Gray, 1985; Melaville et al., 1996) uses these terms interchangeably, with people and organisations considered the key actors.

Adapting the definitions to my study, I use both terms partnership and collaboration together to include both a relationship and the way of working together. The term “relationship” in my study refers to the groups of stakeholders including individuals and organisations that come together to form a partnership, while the way of working together involves how they plan and implement the programmes. However, I do not differentiate between partnership and collaboration based on a contract or agreement.

### **3.4 Collaborative partnership: End versus means**

A key discussion in the literature is the question of whether collaboration or partnership is an end in itself or a means to achieving an end (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) findings from their conceptual analysis indicate that although there are many potential barriers to partnership and collaboration, they regard such partnerships as worth pursuing. Carnwell and Carson (2008) suggest that the existing view is *“more that partnerships and collaboration are good in themselves, rather than more effective at solving problems”* (p. 21). In their conceptual analysis framework that analysed and explored key concepts of partnership and collaboration and their distinguishing features, they highlight the key finding that the practices of partnership and the way they appear on paper can often drift apart:

*Sometimes partnership may be nothing more than rhetoric or an end in itself, with little evidence that partners are genuinely working together. Equally, it is possible for different agencies to work collaboratively together without any formal partnerships being in place (Carnwell & Carson, 2008, p. 4).*

Because of the perception of partnership as an end state, the practices of partnership are often being overlooked. This explains the rather idealistic accounts of collaborations that seem to be common.

Carnwell and Carson (2008), on the other hand, do not deny the fact that problems to be solved collaboratively are becoming more complex. Consequently, they may need to be worked out differently. The scarcity of evidence of effectiveness in collaborative partnerships may be due to the fact that the problems require time to be integrated with present provision (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). The other reason may lie in the conflict between policy and practice as Carnwell and Carson (2008) claim:

*The problem with new innovative ways of working may be that they are working within the old context, where professions were discrete entities with their own body of knowledge. So while the policy context is changing to encourage collaboration and partnerships, professional regulation has been slow to catch up. In addition, many clients and potential clients still prefer the old ways of working and may be reluctant to become too involved in their care. (p. 21)*

Here, Carnwell and Carson (2008) recognise the potential of a collaborative partnership approach to growth, but there is a paucity of academic work about their effectiveness. This reflects the current state where the practice of partnership in social care or community settings is strongly driven by policy. The policy is known to change quickly, making it difficult for the professionals working in the field to catch up with the changes. The work highlights two contradicting views on collaborative partnership. One may view the situation as represented as a “*paternalistic state with its grand narratives of fairness and equality*” (Carnwell & Carson, 2008, p. 20). Whereas, others may want to include the client (or community) at the centre of the efforts (Carnwell & Carson, 2008).

Specific to the collaborative partnership practice in multi-stakeholder partnership, Seán Ó Siochrú from CRIS Campaign, Ireland (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003) in his review on the ‘Multi-stakeholder Partnerships Issue Paper’ also has a similar view where he positively believes that multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) is a good model, especially in developing communities. However, he argues that if MSP practitioners view it as an end in itself, MSP’s will also risk becoming part of the problem rather than the solution. This idea of the current partnership movement as fast becoming an ‘end in itself’ rather than a ‘means to an end’ is also viewed as a challenge by some ICT partnership experts like Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP). This is because in practice multi-stakeholder ICT partnerships are regarded as an enabler to achieve sustainable development<sup>5</sup>, and not an end in themselves (Accenture, 2001; Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003). The next section explains the reasons for forming partnerships.

### **3.5 Reasons for forming a partnership determine the types of partnership**

This section overviews drivers prompting the formation of partnerships, as discussed in the literature. According to key writers in the field, partnerships can be project/programme driven on the one hand or strategic driven on the other (McQuaid, 2000). Partnerships are considered to be project or programme driven when they involve one project only (McQuaid, 2000), and are time limited to the duration of that specific project (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). In contrast, partnerships are considered as strategically driven when they deal with the broad plans and major long-term issues of the organisations such as seeking a development strategy for a geographic area. This is comparable to ‘problem oriented partnership’ which is formed to face publicly identified problems and remain as long as the problem persists (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). This problem can also change and develop (Carnwell & Carson, 2008).

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<sup>5</sup>“Unlike contractual relationships or public-private partnerships, partnerships for sustainable development between business, government and civil society seek not to shift responsibility and risk from one party to another, but to share risks and pool resources and talents” (Warner, 2003, p. 3)

Carnwell and Carson (2008) add another two types of partnerships, ideological and ethical partnerships. The ideological partnerships arise out of a shared viewpoint. The ethical partnerships have a substantive ethical content in their mission and practice compared to other partnerships which only have ethical procedures. These two types of partnership may also overlap with the types of partnership mentioned above, but are less relevant to my research.

The next section will draw on the literature of collaborative advantage to provide the basis for the discussion of the findings on the challenges and issues of collaborative partnerships.

### **3.6 Collaborative advantage**

People and organisations enter into collaborative partnerships because of the perceived advantages or assumed benefits of the outcomes. Many authors anticipate that the collaborative work in partnerships will have positive consequences (Carroll & Steane, 2000; Frank & Smith, 2006; McQuaid, 2000). Carroll and Steane (2000) and Frank and Smith (2006) expect a partnership to benefit all involved with more emphasis put by Carroll and Steane (2000) on achieving specific goals, whether it is an economic or social goal or just the potential for synergy.

Whether these goals are achieved by the partners or principles involved, these expectations show that collaborative partnerships anticipate positive outcomes rather than considering potential challenges. However, the involvement of various stakeholders in collaboration often presents challenges and creates dilemmas for those involved in the practice. This has come to be termed “*collaborative inertia*” (Huxham, 1996, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2000c 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, 2011, 2014). Vangen and Huxham (2003b) described these two counter-posed concepts:

*Collaborative advantage relates to the desired synergistic outcome of collaborative activity suggesting that advantage is gained through collaboration when something is achieved that could not have been achieved by any organisation acting alone. Collaborative inertia relates to the often-pertaining actual outcome, in which the collaboration makes only hard fought or negligible progress (p. S62).*

This explains that even partners anticipated collaborative advantages in joining the collaborative settings; most often the anticipated advantages do not ensue. This is what leads to collaborative inertia. The particular theme-based theory of collaborative advantage coined by Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen and discussed in several of their writings (Huxham, 1996, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2005, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003b, 2014; Vangen & Winchester, 2014) conceptualised the paradoxical nature of collaboration to explain such occurrence in practice. The theme-based theory focuses on the impact of themes on the practice of collaboration (Vangen & Huxham, 2014) and can be adapted to discuss some of the findings of this research.

Adapting the theme-based theory of collaborative advantage, this section discusses the concept of collaborative advantages identified in the literature, and counterposes them with the research describing collaborative inertia or other similar issues concerning risks, barriers, obstacles, and challenges of collaborative partnerships. All of the collaborative advantage themes that will be mentioned are interrelated. For the purpose of the studies, only the themes that are relevant to these are unpacked and highlighted here, and slight modifications to the categorisation of themes are made based on the supplementary literature from other authors. The following subsections will discuss nine key related themes of collaboration.

### **3.6.1 Reaching common aims and agreement**

The first theme concerns the aims of joint working in executing any strategy, policy or initiative. Various examples in the literature emphasise the importance of reaching agreement on common aims prior to the set-up of partnership and collaboration. For example, Frank and Smith (2006), and Carroll and Steane (2000) require the partners to have agreement between actors to do something. Wildavsky (1986) also presumes the partners “*to have agreed on the project, a rough outline, and division of labour*” as well as motive (p. 242) prior to collaborating. Melaville et al. (1996) assert the need to establish common goals and mutual agreement to share power and resources to achieve the goals prior to collaboration.

What kind of agreement is necessary? Frank and Smith (2006) clarify their view that partnerships require some official or formal agreement. They assert that the agreement does not have to satisfy legal requirements, but that it is enough to ensure that all parties involved know what the partnership is all about: who is doing what, and what outcomes are expected (Frank & Smith, 2006). In contrast, Carroll and Steane (2000) are more rigid in their expectations of agreement. They believe that agreement is very important as the basic terms of agreement are one of the essential forces influencing the partners' beliefs about what should constitute a partnership. They argue that the agreement also determines the norms of behaviour that influence how the partners should behave within the process.

However, in practice, the varying values and interests held by different people or/and organisations may create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Many partnerships have reached agreement on the broad aims but due to the lack of details the partners may not have the same understanding of the meaning of the goals. This lack of clarity may raise the perception of other partners having a “hidden” agenda (McQuaid, 2000). Huxham and Vangen (2008) categorised the aims as collaborative, organisational, and individual. The advantage of collaboration is assumed when the organisations come together, and it may seem that the stakeholders only need to be concerned with the collaborative joint aims. In fact, organisations also bring with them different reasons for involvement as well as the aims of individuals within the organisations. These varying aims can prevent agreement as they may cause confusion, misunderstanding, and conflicts of interest. Carroll and Steane (2000) do not exclude the possibility that when the agreement is practically no longer adequate, the terms of agreement can be modified or the agreement terminated with a new one coming into effect.

Huxham and Vangen (2008, p. 30) summarise this conflict in practice: “*We must have common aims but we cannot agree on them.*” This notion is parallel to that of Wood and Gray (1991) who suggest that both common and differing interests between stakeholders may exist at the start of a collaborative venture, but as the collaboration proceeds, the interests may change or be redefined. Wildavsky (1986) claims that “*the feasibility of the collaborative*

*effort need not be evident from the start but may emerge over time*” (p. 240), and Thomson and Perry (2006, p. 27) suggest that *“forging commonalities out of differences can yield highly satisfying results”*. Wildavsky (1986) explains that collaboration may start with one initial interest in something communicated to others, which later leads to collaborative work. Thomson and Perry (2006) suggest that collaboration starts with differences and progresses through a negotiation process, and the ability of collaborators to reconcile their self-interest and collective interests can contribute to better collaboration. However, it may challenge some debates that required collaborators to agree on common aims prior to partnership or collaboration. The scholars show disagreement over the need to have a clear joint aim from the initial stage of the collaborative partnership or to let it develop along the way. They also offered a different stance on what the details and influence of agreement have on the partnership relationships.

My research explores what has initially driven the stakeholders into partnership and how different stakeholders regard their aims in participating in this collaborative partnership. This study also seeks to understand the stakeholders’ perspectives on agreement, and whether it needs to be forged from the start or it can be done along the way.

### **3.6.2 Joint resources and working solutions to solve problems in the community**

The second theme concerns joint resources which involved the anticipation of positive outcomes from joining resources and working together in solving problems. Almost all authors are in agreement in viewing that people and organisations that join partnerships actually have something (resources) to offer to each other. Collaborations are expected to generate more resources or benefits in line with their goals. Partnerships or collaborations between stakeholders or key actors are widely viewed as significant in tackling problems that are hard for individuals or organisations to address alone (e.g. Frank & Smith, 2006; McQuaid, 2000; Osborne, 2000; Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Working together is viewed as allowing the ultimate use of the stakeholder’s talents (Wildavsky, 1986), and enabling partners to explore their differences and seek new solutions (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood,

1991). It is frequently argued that partnerships can create shared solutions which take holistic approaches to community or organisational issues (Frank & Smith, 2006).

It is widely believed that a pool of resources in a collaborative partnership allows larger projects to be carried out, and more aspects can be tackled by a partnership than by a standalone organisation (Gray, 1989; McQuaid, 2000). Various partners will bring together different types of resources including information and expertise (McQuaid, 2000) which allow creative solutions to emerge from the differing perspectives which partnerships offer (Frank & Smith, 2006). From an economic perspective, partnership may enable partners to gain the benefits of the economies of scale of the big organisations with the advantages of the smaller scale organisations, avoiding some economic disadvantages (McQuaid, 2000). It is argued that sometimes partnership can be a good response to funding and programme requirements when partners make effective use of limited resources (Frank & Smith, 2006).

However, partnerships also involve sizeable resource costs. The decision can be distorted if a partner claims the full success of partnership but only thinks about its own costs. McQuaid (2000, p. 23) suggests that to evaluate the benefits offered by a partnership “*the full social costs of the partnership need to be aggregated and compared with the full social benefits, rather than each partner focusing upon its own costs and benefits.*” In some circumstances, the budget will be decreased when they are being shared (Frank & Smith, 2006) because the cost, for example of a project will be divided between the stakeholders involved. At the same time, there is also the risk of financial losses (Frank & Smith, 2006). Walsh and Meldon (2004) view partnerships as fragile mechanisms that are hard to sustain when stakeholders come together in partnership largely to gain additional funding.

The diversity of views from the literature in discussing the advantages and challenges of combining resources and working together in collaborative partnerships came from different types of collaborative context. This provides an interesting foundation for me to discover in my study what is the stakeholders’ expectation and experience of joining resources and working together, and how they deal with the related challenges. This discussion of joint resources is closely related to the next discussion of synergy and power sharing.



### 3.6.3 Creating synergy and power sharing

The third theme is around the aspiration to create synergy and power sharing. The literature suggests that partnership increases an organisation's effectiveness and efficiency through improved coordination between organisations that is able to create synergies and reduce wasteful duplication, leading to achieving greater output and cost savings (McQuaid, 2000). This, it is proposed, will also increase profit or profit margins, create jobs or training opportunities, and generate wealth (Frank & Smith, 2006). When the partnership organisations are synergised, it is suggested, they can achieve more in acting together than individually through mutual learning and sharing (Walsh & Meldon, 2004).

Collaboration also involves the process of power sharing. Gray (1985) includes it within the pooling of resources mentioned in the joint resources section above, which includes the sharing of information, money, labour, and other resources. Similarly, Perrault et al. (2011) also emphasise the pooled resources that are contributed by each organisation. While Perrault et al. (2011) only mention shared products or services, Austin and Baldwin (1991) who study faculty collaborations as in university faculties, add the sharing of responsibility and credit based on coordinated effort and outcomes which seems appropriate to the nature of academic works. Many authors (Gottlieb et al., 2005; Gray, 1985; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c 2008; Melaville et al., 1996; Perrault et al., 2011; Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005; Wildavsky, 1986) view sharing power as important. Yet, "*people behave as if it is all in the purse strings*" (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008 : 32). If people view power as being in the 'purse strings', those without control of financial resources are automatically at a disadvantage.

Differences of power and status may exist between partners (Frank & Smith, 2006). Although there are different types of power, most commentators generally agree that the greatest power usually rests with those controlling resources. For example the state is likely to dominate the local organisations which have more understanding of what is best for their area (McQuaid, 2000). Such domination by powerful interests may create conflict and hinder the development of a common approach (Walsh & Meldon, 2004) as to enable a common approach is

predicated on force. Various organizations in a partnership may have different approval processes (Frank & Smith, 2006) which may delay the decision making and the running of the project.

In reality, most stakeholders at least have the “*power of exit*” (Huxham, 2003 : 407; Huxham & Vangen, 2008 : 32) or “*threat of exit*” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000c : 298), which means that they can decide to withdraw from collaboration if the situation requires them to. Nonetheless, according to Huxham and Vangen (2008 : 32), the practice demonstrates that “*people act as though their perceptions are real and often display defensiveness and aggression.*” As Huxham and Vangen (2000c ) believe:

*So long as some members of some partner organisations perceive themselves to be vulnerable, and members of others perceive themselves to be powerful, they will act as though this is a reality, which is unlikely to foster a cooperative or trusting attitude (p. 298)*

The excerpt shows that the power relations between stakeholders were likely to be shaped by each stakeholder’s assumption of each other. This is also suggesting that the power struggles among the stakeholders may also produce negative impacts on the efforts of trust building in the collaborative relationship, to be discussed in the next section. However, it is unclear from the previous research if such relationships and power struggles are the main concern for collaborative partnerships that have existed over the long-term. This research will fill the gap by examining collaborative activities in a longstanding community service from various stakeholders’ perspectives.

#### **3.6.4 Trust as a precondition for successful collaborative partnership**

The fourth theme concerns the precondition of trust for successful collaboration (Huxham, 2003 : 408; Huxham & Vangen, 2008 : 34). The term trust is always viewed as an important requirement for collaboration to succeed (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a).

However, practitioners' accounts often describe a lack of trust in the collaborative practices which often incorporates "*hostility, fighting, and mistrust*" (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, p. 13). In practice, collaboration often starts with suspicion rather than trust, as organisations may not have many choices of partner before the collaboration (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008). Such situations may occur if the partners need to enter into the collaboration because of forces like government requirements. This supports Wood and Gray's (1991) view that the stakeholders involved in collaboration may have both common and differing interests at the beginning of a collaborative arrangement. However, through the process they may discuss their common or different interests, and these interests may change or be redefined as the collaboration proceeds

Huxham and Vangen (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, 2014) recommend that collaborators give attention to trust building between partners as illustrated in Figure 3.6.4.

Based on this trust building loop (Figure 3.6.4), Huxham and Vangen (2005, 2008) argue that there are two essential factors in initiating a trusting relationship: the formation of expectations about the future of collaboration, and willingness to take risks. The first is formed based on reputation or past behaviour, or formally via contracts and agreements. The second means partners have to trust each other enough to take the risk of initiating the collaboration. If the parties involved have enough trust to initiate the collaboration, they will also be able to form expectations pertaining to the outcomes (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a), in which it can mean that "*trust can be built through starting with some modest but realistic aims which are likely to achieve success*" (Huxham & Vangen, 2008 : 35) and "*virtuous cycle*" to sustain (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a : 12) the collaborative partnership. It is believed that "*the more modest the outcomes expected and the lower the level of risk, the greater the chance that expectations will be met*" (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a : 12). This view supports Bryson's (1988, 2011) concept of big wins and small wins in strategic management. He suggests that organising a series of small wins strategy is often the simplest and most effective way to achieve a big win. The view is also similar to Provan, Veazie et al. (2005) who suggest that the collaborators may start collaborating on nonthreatening issues first and

move to the threatening issues later when trust is better established. By this means, reinforcing trusting attitudes will underpin more ambitious collaboration.

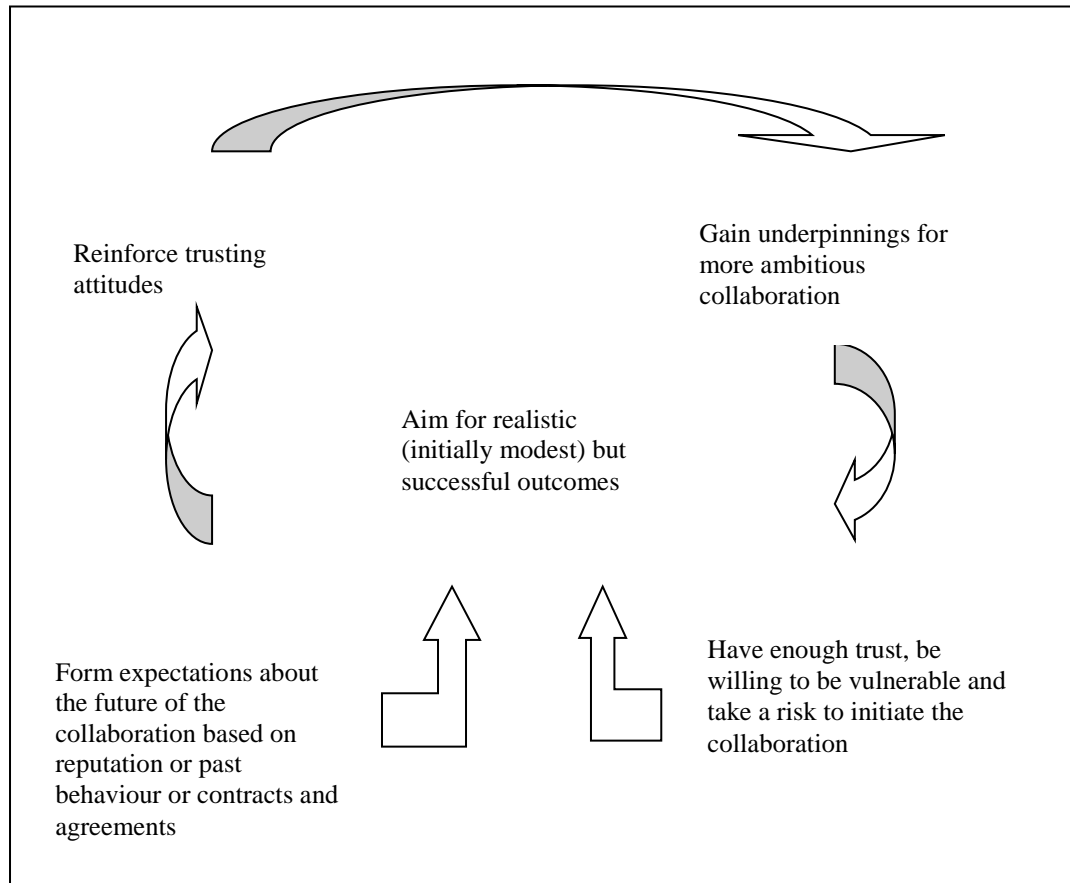


Figure 3.6.4  
*The trust building loop*  
 Source: Huxham and Vangen (2005, 2008)

The processes of trust building in practice may be represented by Adam Peake, Executive Research Fellow, Center for Global Communications, Japan (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003) when he shares his experience in building trust between partners in the Digital Opportunity Task (DOT) Force:

*The lesson may be that the results cannot be expected immediately. Trust increased the feeling of equality in the process, partners were recognised for what they brought to the table, not their name badge. Feelings of commonality of purpose (and as people in our personal goals) increased as we got to know each other. In a more normal*

*partnership, achieving such 'buy-in' might be aided by ensuring that efforts are made to emphasise that all partners are equal in the process, that design and planning of the partnership is transparent to all (p. 52).*

This shows that building trust is time consuming, involving a great deal of effort. It is not easily achieved at the initial stage of collaborative partnership. Similar to the pragmatic solution for managing aims, the authors (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a) also suggest the interested parties get started with some action without dealing with all other aspects of trust building fully but allowing it to take place incrementally over time.

Provan, Veazie et al. (2005) contest this idea of incremental increases in trust in their study using network analysis tools to study the network of collaborating public and non-profit organisations to strengthen community partnerships in two sites along the USA–Mexico border. They argue that:

*As community organisations strive to build new network relationships, some of these links will prove successful and others will not. Even those that are ultimately successful are likely to go through a period of testing and even turmoil before trust is firmly established. Thus, although trust scores among members should increase as the network matures—especially if community capacity is to be enhanced—short-term declines in trust are a natural outcome of network growth and evolution. The sustainability of relationships and of the network in general, may be enhanced as partnership members recognize that fluctuations in trust levels do not predict the demise of the network, but are characteristic of the growth and maturation process (Provan et al., 2005 : 610)*

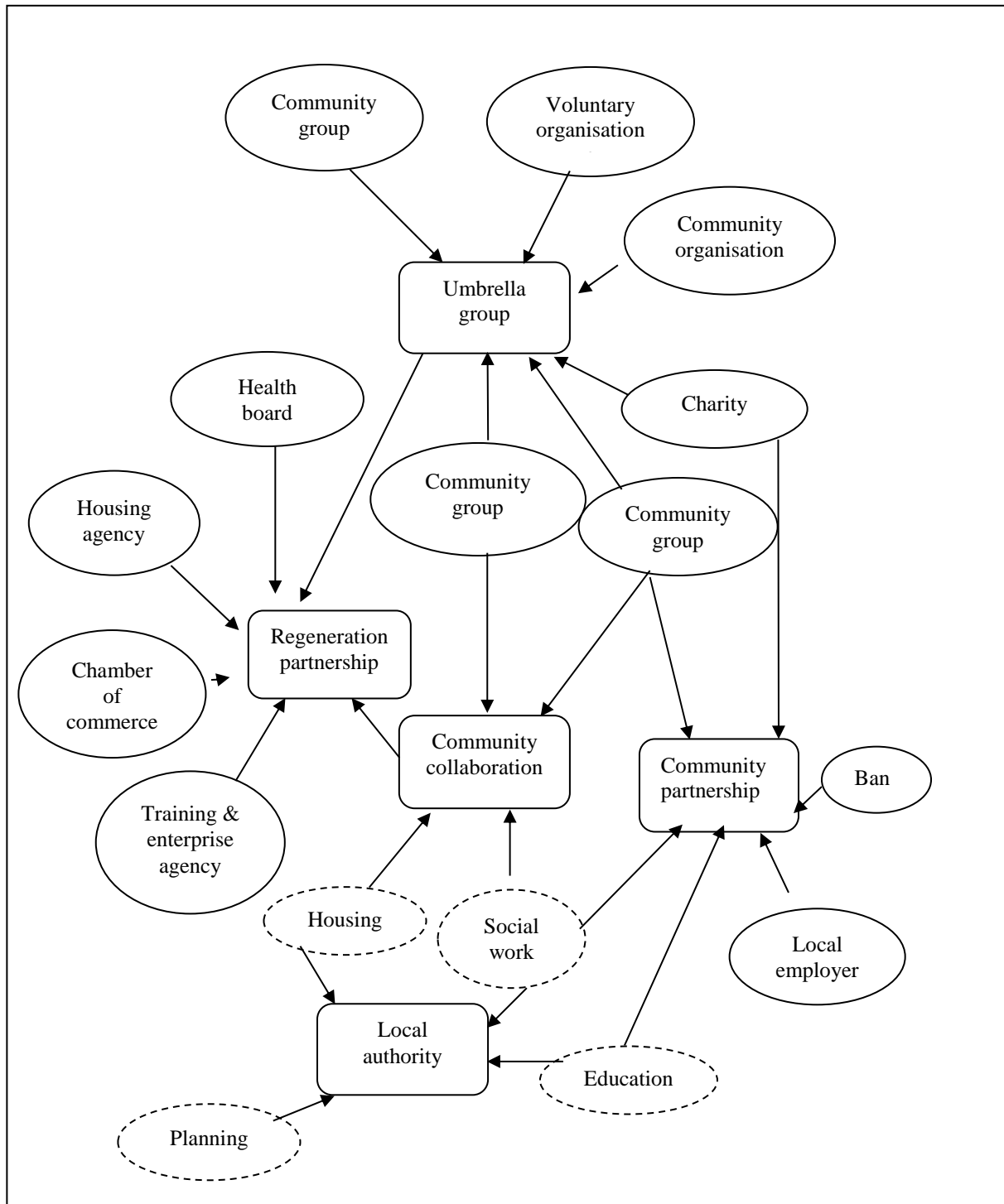
In their article, they refer to community partnerships as the networks of collaboration between public and non-profit organisations. Thus network relationships refer to the relationships of the community partnerships. Instead of viewing trust as continuously increasing as the collaboration develops over time, here, they view trust as going through fluctuations as the relationship progresses, in which it symbolises growth and maturation rather than inertia. Further exploring this issue, this study will unveil the relationship between trust and the ability of the collaborative partnership to be sustained over the long term.

### 3.6.5 Multifaceted membership structures

The fifth theme deals with the multifaceted membership structures in collaborative partnership. The structure of collaboration is conceptualised as ambiguous, complex, and dynamic (Huxham, 2003). An assumption may be made by one partner but may not be recognised by other partners, while many concerns or motives are intentionally hidden (Huxham & Vangen, 2008).

Huxham and Vangen (2003; 2008) illustrate this ambiguity when they claim that there is frequently little clarity about which collaborators are involved in partnerships. For instance, *“different members often list different partners from each other, and staff who are very centrally involved in managing collaborations often cannot name partners without referring to formal documentation”* (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c ; 2008 : 35). This situation happens, according to them, because individuals or organisations involved consider themselves to have different statuses, levels of commitment, or representativeness in the collaboration. This lack of clarity is often related to the complexity of the collaborative arrangement in practice, and also the complexity in the networks of relationships between organisations as a number of organisations are actually involved in multiple alliances with other organisations (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c 2008).

Figure 3.6.5 presents such complexity and how it can be practically described by using the diagramming technique. This technique is used to help in mapping out the structure of partnerships. However, Huxham and Vangen (2008) note that this technique cannot ensure the complete removal of ambiguity and uncertainty but usually, it can provide explanation at the initial phase and be helpful as a reminder over a long-term period.



Note: (  $\rightarrow$  membership relation,  $\bigcirc$  an organisation,  $\square$  a collaboration of organisation,  $\text{---}\bigcirc\text{---}$  department).

Figure 3.6.5

*Example of diagramming methods for mapping the complexity of collaborative structures*

*Source: Huxham and Vangen (2008; 2000b)*

It has been argued that partners experience membership structures directly and emotionally (Huxham & Vangen, 2008). The stakeholders who have successful experiences with collaborative working might express their satisfaction or give positive comments. Whereas, the stakeholders who were involved in the collaborative settings that were not really working well may express dissatisfaction or give negative comments. An example from practice of the difficulties raised by complex membership structures is shared by Prins (2010a). She regards an initial collaborative effort as a minimal structure which contains the tensions of an open process and ambiguous outcome. She highlights the challenge that may involve finding a workable balance between structure (e.g., workgroups, phases, definitions of roles), and flexibility (e.g., inviting new stakeholders to participate). In her study on the challenges of multiparty collaborations within foster care, Prins (2010a) found that the openness to change and uncertain outcomes provoked anxiety among the stakeholders. Individuals within these organisations anticipated many losses: losing contact with the ‘essence’ of their work; having to give up their expertise; and surrendering the professional relationships they have developed over the years.

My study will endeavour to discover if the experience of the stakeholders in my case study involved the issue of multifaceted structure in collaboration, and what emotional reactions the ambiguity, complexity, and dynamics of this might evoke in their practice. This membership structure is further related to dynamic structure in the following subsection.

### **3.6.6 Creating environmental stability versus a dynamic structure**

The sixth theme identified by Huxham and Vangen concerns the issue of collaborative dynamic/and environmental stability. In the long run, partnership may improve effectiveness through creating stability (McQuaid, 2000; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The stability is also created through building local confidence and minimising risk for partners and potential investors (McQuaid, 2000). The literature suggests that stakeholders come together to form organisations they believe will be complex, flexible, and capable of adapting quickly (Walsh & Meldon, 2004), and partnerships can be a powerful vehicle to support change and transition



(Frank & Smith, 2006). These all sum up as stakeholders' anticipation of the collaborative advantages of coming into partnership.

Despite the potential for creating stability, in practice collaborative structures are highly dynamic and continuously transforming (Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2014). For instance, a change of policy might change the purpose of collaboration, or the change in members or individuals' employment might induce change to the collaboration as presented in Figure 3.6.6.

Partnerships can also increase environmental complexity and instability. Partnerships are created under various strategies, for example different local development strategies, contributing to a perplexing mix of interlinking and overlapping partnerships and deliberate alliances (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The merging of differing institutional cultures may also increase the complexity (Frank & Smith, 2006), and partnerships may find it difficult to develop a common approach (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Advancing technology can increase efficiency, but may also add to the complexity when there is incompatible usage between groups (Frank & Smith, 2006).

The literature on collaboration notes that even setting aside external factors, collaborations are always dynamic. For instance, the accomplishment of one purpose will lead to the creation of the new plan which will likely involve a change in membership (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c 2008). Collaborations are also sensitive to change as Huxham and Vangen argue (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008):

*All organisations are dynamic to the extent that they will gradually transform. However, collaborations are sensitive to the transformations in each of the partner organisations and therefore may change very quickly (p. 412; p. 38)*

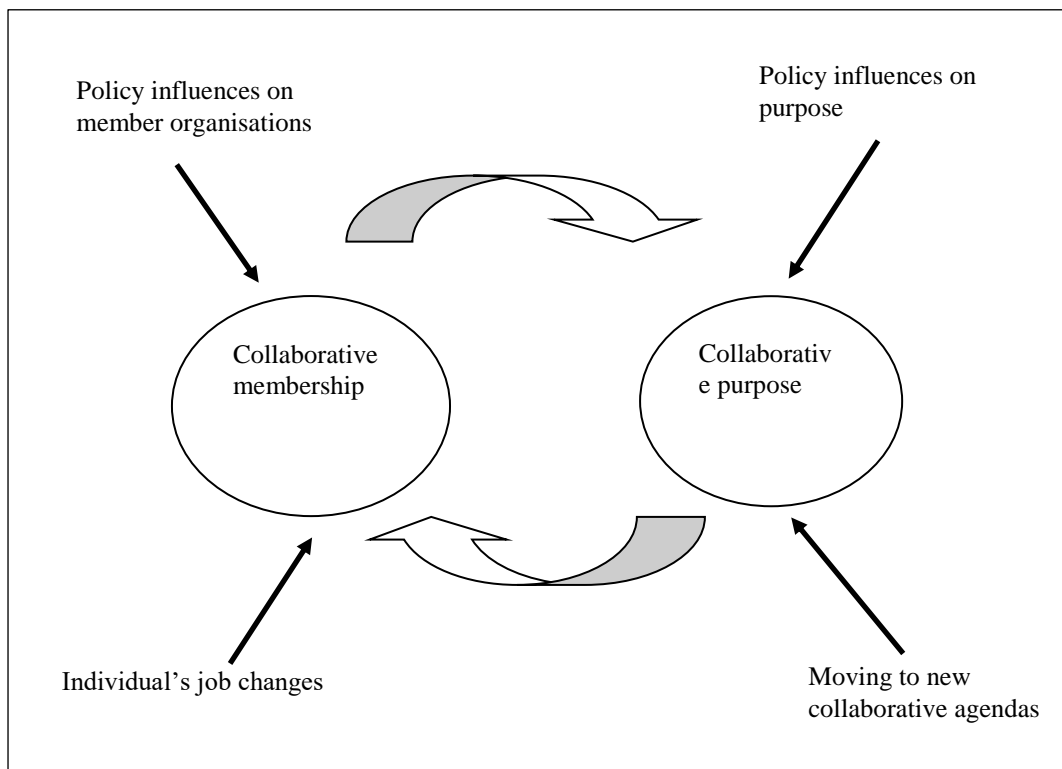


Figure 3.6.6  
*Dynamics in the membership structures of collaborations*  
 Source: Huxham and Vangen (in Huxham 2003)

With this dynamic nature of collaboration, the effort of maintaining stability and managing collaborative dynamics is not an easy task. The authors (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000c 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2014) conclude that this dynamic nature of collaboration may influence the fragile trust building loop mentioned earlier (Figure 3.6.4). While the stakeholders anticipate effective partnership from environmental stability, the existing literature suggests that the instability lies in the partnership structure itself. Most of the findings from practice relate the dynamic structure to a negative impact on collaborative partnership progress. This thesis will explore the possibility of other relationships between change and sustainability including the possibility that dynamism may enhance a collaborative partnership's longevity.

### 3.6.7 Members lead the collaboration

The seventh theme that Huxham and Vangen identify around collaborative advantage is leadership. In the collaborative arrangement, it is an expectation that leadership is in the hands

of the collaborative members. Huxham and Vangen (2008) and Vangen and Huxham (2014) suggest that traditional hierarchies do not exist within collaborations. They consider leadership as the “*mechanisms that lead to the actual outcomes of a collaboration*” which refers to “*what makes things happen,*” or specifically concern leadership’s role in the formation and implementation of collaborative agendas (Huxham and Vangen (2005, p. 39). In this concept, Huxham and Vangen (2005, 2008) and Vangen and Huxham (2014) look at the leadership as not only enacted by people but also through the media of structures, processes, and participants. They explained the connection of these three media:

*Structures influence process designs and what participants can do. Processes influence the structures that emerge and who can influence the agenda. Participants influence the design of both structure and process...These media may therefore be thought of as providing contextual leadership (Huxham & Vangen, 2005: p. 208).*

One of the examples given by Huxham and Vangen (2008) may help us to further understand such relationships. They differentiate between a collaboration which mainly based their communication on open meetings, and a collaboration which mainly used technical assistance like email and/or telephone calls. According to the authors, these different strategies for communication, in essence, lead to different structures. Hence, Huxham and Vangen (2008, p. 39) argue that, “*agendas may be led by the type of structure that is in place and the type of processes used.*” Participants are emergent informal leaders rather than hierarchical leaders.

In collaborative situations, structures, processes, and participants can be considered as different media for the leadership to be performed (Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2014). All three media are beyond the total control of individual collaborative members. The leadership practice is related to many other factors and issues involved in collaborative partnership. Huxham and Vangen (2008) claim that, sometimes structures and processes are imposed by outside parties like government, corporation, or funders, and they may also be shaped by preceding action rather than clearly designed by members. This shows that leadership roles may not be exclusive to members of the collaboration only. In my study, I will discover what kind of leadership is evident in the partnership, and how it is shaped by the structures of the partnership.

In community collaborative partnership, the arrangement often means to encourage community involvement and ownership. Partnerships and collaborations often envision improving relationships between various groups, and extending ownership to draw in more partners (Frank & Smith, 2006). McQuaid (2000) takes this view of partnership as an important mechanism for building local capacity and ownership by local communities. Involving stakeholders in partnerships is also believed to create empowerment and ownership, and to establish sustainable programmes (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Empowerment at the local level, it is believed, will improve local democracy as traditionally excluded groups may be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (Frank & Smith, 2006; McQuaid, 2000). Peckham and Exworthy (2003) also believe that the multifaceted problems like social exclusion can be tackled more effectively through multidisciplinary action in a collaborative partnership setting. At the local level, public, private, and NGOs are prompted to form partnerships because of expectations that such partnership will enable genuine participation by local communities in urban redevelopment (McQuaid, 2000). As a result, it is anticipated that communities will grow stronger with the participation and inclusion of many, and partnerships can serve as a good way to enhance existing strengths and activities (Frank & Smith, 2006).

Huxham and Vangen's (2005, 2008) studies on collaborative practices found that leaders in such partnerships face ongoing dilemmas and difficulties. In carrying out the advantageous activities to move the collaboration forward, leaders were frequently confronted with difficulties in which the outcomes produced differ from expectations (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, 2008). An example of local community participation can be found in the work of Kumar (2004) who has done a study on the partnerships for urban infrastructure development in India. The research focused on the Urban Basic Services programme which was launched in India to provide services to the urban poor (Kumar, 2004). This programme largely adopted a community participation and community resources approach. The findings reveal that in spite of the fact that the partnership was theoretically sound, it could not achieve its chief objectives of creating sustainable community structures and convergence of basic service providers due to exclusion of local communities during important stages of the formation of the partnership. Kumar (2004) claimed that the most apparent cause for the failure to reach

the objective was due to local communities not participating in the programme as equal partners because more powerful partners designed the programme and influenced its implementation. The researcher argued that such projects should be handled by the local communities (Kumar, 2004). This view is similar to Martin, Tett and Kay (1999) who draw upon research into schools and community education across Scotland from 1997 to 1998 to explore the issue of collaborative partnerships. According to them, involving local people in decision making in creating structures and processes which encourage inclusivity where local people are involved in making and shaping partnerships relevant to their lives leads to the most effective partnerships.

There is also a danger within participatory approaches to collaborative partnerships. Some issues that may arise include undemocratic practice that may increase the power of self-appointed members of partnership boards vis-a-vis local politicians, weakening local accountability as the members no longer seem to represent organisations (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Members of community/voluntary sector organisations may be unrepresentative of their organisations (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). This situation will impact decision making and the operations (McQuaid, 2000) of the collaborative partnership. McQuaid (2000) also asserts that issues may arise in the decision making process when the groups make illogical decisions that may not be favoured by the collaborating individuals. In operations, the partnership may face the issue of lacking impetus where each partner depends on others to move the activity forward but in the end, nobody does so.

### **Summary of collaborative advantage**

Overall, although existing research looks at the advantages and challenges of collaborative partnerships from various sectors, most of the research (e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2000a; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Vangen & Huxham, 2003b, 2014) tends to see the issues from the managerial perspective and offers help to managers rather than to the full range of stakeholders involved. My research, which considers all stakeholders' viewpoints based on their specific roles in the collaborative setting, will address this gap. To achieve this, data has been gathered from the perspective of the stakeholders, focusing on their experiences,

assumptions and expectations across collaborative partnership in a community service organisation, particularly on their views of the sustainable issues and challenges from participating in this collaborative partnership. The next section briefly reviews the academic literature on collaborative partnership maintenance and sustainability. This is one of the concerns of the theme-based theory of collaborative advantage. I separate this theme from others discussed earlier because it has greater impact on the collaborative practice of my case study, and has a close relationship with my main research focus.

### **3.7 Collaborative partnership maintenance and sustainability**

How can collaborative partnership be sustained? Successful collaborative partnerships often are assumed to flow from the sustainability of the arrangement. However, the diverse issues of ambiguity, complexity, dynamism, and stability discussed earlier present challenges to sustaining partnerships. As I will discuss in more detail here, the sustainability of collaborative partnership has been connected by a number of authors to transparent communication and members continuously nurturing the relationship (e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003; Roy & Watts, 2001; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a; Wood & Gray, 1991). Therefore, the subsequent subsections will discuss previous research findings on the subjects of communication and nurturing, and sustainability in collaborative partnership settings.

#### **3.7.1 Communication and nurturing**

The importance of constant communication and nurturing in maintaining and sustaining collaborative partnership has been discussed extensively in the literature. This is especially obvious in that in which the scholars emphasise collaboration as an interactive process (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991) and as emerging processes (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood, 1991; Wildavsky, 1986). These writers argue that collaboration evolves as participants interact throughout the course of collaboration. They also emphasise the importance of collaborators being involved in constant communication and nurturing.

Huxham (2003) describes the nurturing in collaborative partnership in terms of a gardening metaphor. In this context, fragile plants need gentle care, and an overgrown garden needs more decisive tactics like chopping down excess growth, pulling up weeds, and caring for the plants that have been overpowered by others to nurture the plants and garden back to health (Huxham, 2003).

The reasons why so many writers stress the need for constant communication is clarified by Wildavsky (1986). He argues that when collaborators come from different fields or bring widely varying perspectives and backgrounds, there is often a gap between expectations and understandings. He claims that the only way to bridge the gap is through communication over time among all of the participants. In another study, Perrault et al. (2011) suggest that established informal relationships and communication links are one of the factors in the success of community collaborations. In their study, the community collaboration used both formal and informal communication which gave the mixture of formal and informal ways of building and sustaining collaborative relationships. The study showed that the members of the collaboration were able to balance the informal nature of communication with their capability to communicate about formal and professional issues in an open and effective way. Consequently, the personal connections the members had to each other made them more willing to make efforts to resolve any arising issues together because they shared personal relationships.

The significant role of communication in sustaining a successful partnership is further discussed in reports by the multi-stakeholder partnership group, Global Knowledge Partnership (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003). This work claims that it is important for the partners to maintain regular contact with each other, thereby preventing differences from becoming conflicts. Rather, through regular communication, issues can be jointly solved. Global Knowledge Partnership (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003) suggests:

*If the original set of agreements governing the partnership has been properly structured, ensuring on-going communication and transparency should be no more than a question of implementing the agreed procedures” (p 25).*

In this claim, GKP also strongly relates constant communication with collaborative partnership agreement where it is believed that a well-structured agreement will help in the smooth running of the implementation process through communication and transparency. However, as has been discussed, it is a very difficult task because the process of reaching agreement itself is time-consuming, and partners come with different perspectives and expectations.

One reason for the need to nurture collaborative arrangements is the role of renegotiation in maintaining multi-stakeholder partnerships. GKP (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003) suggests that it is necessary for the multi-stakeholder partnerships to be renegotiated from time to time, and adapted to the configuration of the partnership. The need may be due to many reasons such as:

*unanticipated behaviour between different partners; design parameters lacking the strategic complexity to deliver the intended sustainable development outcome; insufficient capacity within a partner organisation to implement its resource commitments or roles; changes in the external business or political environment; and completion of agreed 'milestones' in the workplan (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003: p. 25).*

Huxham and Vangen (2005, 2008), and Vangen and Huxham (2003a, 2014) emphasise the need for nurturing to address the various challenges identified in the previous section. They specifically stress the importance of constant nurturing in coping with the challenges of a multiplicity of aims, power imbalances, sustaining trust, multifaceted membership structures, the dynamic of collaborative structures, and supporting leadership activities and encouraging community involvement in collaborative partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a). In terms of managing the barriers of time and energy, Wildavsky (1986) also suggests careful nurturing as a route to renewing enthusiasm as the partnership goes along.

It has been argued that continuous nurturing of the relationship is essential to address these challenges even in situations where collaboration is working well with a good degree of trust (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a). This continuous effort is needed to ensure that a sufficient level



of trust can be maintained (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, 2014). Despite the importance of nurturing, undertaking it is not easy in practice. Huxham and Vangen (2008) claim that the main challenge in managing membership structures and dynamism is “*learning how to identify, live with and progress despite ambiguity and complexity*” (Huxham & Vangen, 2008 : 37) with constant nurturing (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008) like through constant communication via email and social media networks. Many other authors also agree with the need to nurture the collaborative or partnership process and the challenges in practice. For example, Prins (2010b) who shares her experience as a process consultant or facilitator for multiparty collaboration in the context of foster care admits that there is a tension between the great need to take time to nurture the process and the need to produce results as expected by the collaborative managers of the collaborative project. The findings from the literature show that communication and nurturing are critical concerns in sustaining collaborative partnership. Therefore, it is important for the study of collaborative partnership in a longstanding community project to investigate the significance of nurturing in the case study, and whether or not there are any difficulties around communication and nurturing arising from this study. The overall idea of constant communication and nurturing is to sustain the collaborative partnership which is discussed in the following section.

### **3.7.2 Sustainability**

Sustainability is an important aspect to be considered in developing a collaborative partnership in a community. This concern is not just about the outcome of the relationship but is implicated in the whole process of establishing and maintaining partnerships. It is commonly known that a collaborative process requires “*intense long-term efforts and sustained commitment*” (Kerka, 1997). For example, the long-term nature of collaboration is portrayed in Melaville et al.’s (1996) study on inter-agency collaboration which aims to provide services to address child and family needs. That collaboration took on a series of interrelated activities that were designed to solve the interagency shared problems and create a new system of services for children and families in the USA. They emphasise collaborative partnership producing change in the system, that is:

*a revision of the ways that people and institutions think, behave and use their resources to affect fundamentally the types, quality, and degree of service delivery, as their research focus, “to children and family” (Melaville et al., 1996: p. 1).*

This involves the changes such as integrating and restructuring services.

The process of collaborative partnership can also be considered in terms of enduringness or durability which is not just long-term but able to survive many challenges. For instance, Perrault et al. (2011) describe collaborations as durable relationships because of the “*setup costs*.” They claim implementing collaboration is not easy, requiring a high cost of participation, and commitment of time and resources that must be outweighed by the benefits of collaboration. In inter-organisational community collaboration, the process of collaboration is done through research, service delivery or policy development (Perrault et al., 2011), in which it will involve difficulties and risks, and careful details. All of those are time consuming, and demand a high commitment level.

It has been widely argued that in many collaborative relationships, the length of the collaborative relationship is usually associated with positive performance (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008). Comparing both aspects, time length and performance, Cropper (1996) argues that the behavioural outcome of longevity is distinguishable from the behavioural quality of sustainability of collaborative working as “*longevity indicates past success*,” whereas, “*sustainability is inherently future-oriented*” (p. 83). He further notes:

*An initial proposition, then, is that sustainability should be conceived not as a measure of performance, in itself, but, rather, as an expression of the value which collaborative working commands and of the processes by which collaborative efforts construct their value (Cropper, 1996, p. 83).*

This view is supported by Alexander et al. (2003, p. 157S) as they claim that “*sustainability may at times have little to do with performance*.” Rather, Alexander et al. (2003) emphasise the importance of identifying community value, and that partnerships have to decide what

they want to aim for and how best to position the partnership in the long term in order to achieve value in pursuing their aims (Alexander et al., 2003).

If sustainability has little to do with performance, what factors contribute to successful collaborative initiatives? In the view of Perrault et al. (2011), although there are many human service organisations which take on collaborative approaches in providing services, many organisations enter community collaborations without knowing what makes collaboration successful. Their case study research of one regional interorganisational community research consortium was successful in creating a sustainable community development programme for seniors. This research suggests factors for creating successful interorganisational community collaboration practices, and implications for forging an effective longstanding collaborative initiative. Their findings support those of previous research that established informal relationships and communication links, mutual respect, understanding, and trust as important factors for successful community collaborations. Their research also identified two new factors, shared leadership and learning purpose, associated with sustained partnerships. Perrault et al. (2011, p. 283) view determining the overall requirement to build and sustain successful initiatives as challenging because, *“each collaboration requires unique considerations and elements to achieve a successful endeavour.”* This does not make sustaining collaboration an easy task. However, they propose that further research is needed to determine the unique factors involved in the community collaboration and to assess to what degree community collaborations are perceived to be successful.

Regardless of the partnership types and focus of the community organisations, as the partners start to work together, there is always risk in maintaining the collaboration. This is evident in much research related to sustainability in collaborative partnership. The link between risk and ongoing collaboration is emphasised in Takahashi and Smutny's (2002) case study research exploring the formation and demise of the social service partnerships of three small community-based organisations partnering to provide social services for persons living with

HIV and AIDS<sup>6</sup>. Takahashi and Smutny (2002) provide some important lessons about the significant issues of sustainable collaborative partnerships. For example, they discovered that there is an insignificant relationship between the ability of collaborative entrepreneurs<sup>7</sup> to form partnerships with their ability to sustain collaboration due to their lack of knowledge, skills, or interest in long-term partnership governance and management. Besides their findings being limited to small community-based organisations in social service contexts that have different characteristics with bigger organisations in other contexts, their focus on small organisations is similar to my study.

Various characteristics should be considered in determining sustainable collaborative partnership, and these characteristics may emerge differently in different settings. Many previous studies of collaborative partnerships tended to draw out the characteristics of the collaborations within disciplines such as education, public policy, business, health and social care, and so on. This study provides a different way of discovering the rich elements in collaborative partnership practice by framing it around the diverse perspectives of the stakeholders involved in the arrangement. These stakeholders have a diversity of expertise,

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<sup>6</sup> This research was based on the concept of policy and collaborative windows. Takahashi and Smutny (2002, p. 168) look at both collaborative windows as the temporal opportunity for collaboration, and also consider the “spatial dimension that constrains and defines characteristics of collaborative windows”. They argue that a collaborative window must open, and collaborative entrepreneurs must act by recognising the window and bringing together appropriate partners. For the reason that collaborations form in response to certain collaborative windows, they argue that the initial governance structures developed will correspond to the conditions which characterised the windows. They also argue that initial governance structures are difficult to change and when the window closes, the conditions that characterised the collaborative window shift, in which social service partnerships have built into them the seed for their short-term demise. These research findings can be linked to the notion of collaborative advantage and collaborative barriers discussed in the preceding section.

<sup>7</sup> Takashi and Smutny (2002, p. 180-181) differentiate between the *collaborative entrepreneurs* and *collaborative managers*. According to them, collaborative entrepreneurs are those who bring the parties to collaborate together, and collaborative managers are those who are responsible to “adjudicate conflict, manage the varying obligations of staff in the partnership and individual agencies, and respond to the unforeseen challenges faced by the partnership that may be less significant for individual agencies” to sustain the collaborative partnerships. Both require very different skills and may in fact, “need to be different people within the partnership life cycle. A skilled collaborative manager with experience in multi-organizational” collaboration may be “able to shift the initial governance structure to adapt to changes when the collaborative windows” or opportunity for collaboration closed.

and hold different roles and positions inside and outside of the collaborative setting. Additionally, children's voices are also taken into account to gain understanding of the matter that affected them. Scrutinising multi-stakeholders' accounts, this study examines the practice of collaboration in an ICT-based community service organisation which mainly explores how do the collaborative partnerships arrangement develop and survive over time?

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This literature review overviews the main contributions from the experts in the related areas of collaboration, partnership, community service, and social care based on their conceptual and empirical studies.

This review of discussions of collaboration and partnership, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and collaborative advantage has identified a number of research questions that will be explored through my case study. The review of the background to the concept of collaborative partnership shows that most of the research on collaboration or partnership has been conducted in the developed countries like the UK, and USA, indicating the value of the present case study of a Malaysian multi-stakeholder collaboration. Most previous research emphasised practice by managers, and focused on large scale partnerships. There is a lack of research which considers the challenges faced by all stakeholders involved, particularly in the context of small-community based collaborative partnerships. This research will address this gap by discovering the challenges and issue in collaborative partnership from multiple-stakeholder perspectives.

In this chapter various interpretations of sustainability are highlighted. It appeared that some scholars view sustainability in relation to long-term relationships, performance, and success, while others see it differently. Despite various debates of sustainable collaborative partnerships in the literature, a majority of scholars (Perrault et al., 2011; Takahashi & Smutny, 2002) are in consensus in viewing that sustaining collaborative partnerships requires taking risks. The findings of what constitute sustainable collaborative partnerships may differ according to different settings. In this study, I will explore the different stakeholders'

perspectives regarding their views on key questions around sustainable collaborative partnership including what has driven partners to continue collaborating, and whether long-term partnerships are necessarily more effective.

This review of the literature shows that many researchers address the process, outcome, advantages and challenges of collaborative partnership, yet, as Gray and Wood (1991, p. 19) claim from their selected articles analysis, not a single article addressed the interesting question: “*Did survival occur through transformation?*” Although this question was raised more than two decades ago, it is still relevant to the current situation. Much more recent research has suggested that there is a lack of empirical research on the collaborative process through which partnerships evolved and are sustained (Valentijn et al., 2015). Rather than looking at change or transformation as a threat to the collaborative arrangement as suggested by some studies, this thesis will explore the question of whether transformations contributed to the survival of collaboration of multiple-stakeholders partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation. This research is trying to address a gap in theoretical understandings of the role of change in collaborative partnership by studying the community service organisation that has adopted the collaborative partnership approach in carrying out their work with children since 1998.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodological choice, research design and the utilisation of multiple sources of data collection, and how the data have been treated through the process of analysing, synthesising, and triangulating. This chapter also highlights the efforts that have been made to maximise the quality of this research. Throughout the discussion, the researcher also highlights the limitation and reflection of the research journey.

#### **4.2 Aim**

The central research aim stemmed from the need to understand the nature of the collaborative partnership in a community service organisation that has been established since 1998 and sustains until today. The fact that it has been established and worked collaboratively with various partners for more than a decade provides an appropriate case to study its sustainable aspects. Concurrently, this study sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders involved in the collaborative programmes or efforts with the ICT-based community service organisation that aims to empower children in orphanages. The focus of data gathering process was on discovering and examining the drivers of change and transformation, and identifying the challenges of maintaining collaborative partnership in a longstanding ICT-based community service organisation to empower the children.

#### **4.3 Research Questions**

As Stake (2005) suggests, pursuing the case study with scholarly research questions in mind can help optimise understanding. This means that the case study researcher emphasises what can be learned from a single case study, in particular, with detailed attention to its activities (Stake, 2005). The central research question was: How do collaborative partnerships in an

ICT-based community service organisation develop and survive over time? This is further extended into two subsidiary research questions:

1. What are the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation, from the perspective of multiple stakeholders?
  - a. How do collaborative partnerships come to be forged and sustained?
  - b. To what extent do different partners in a longstanding community service project have similar aims?
  - c. Are long-term partnerships necessarily more effective partnerships?
  - d. What are the drivers of change and transformation in the collaborative partnerships?
2. What are the challenges of collaborative partnerships facing a sustainable ICT-based community project?

#### **4.4 Methodological approach**

This thesis applies a qualitative research design which allows the researchers to study things in their natural settings, and attempt to interpret or make sense of the phenomena based on the meanings brought by the people to the settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a). I have used a qualitative case study design which employs a social constructivist approach in seeking understanding of the collaborative partnership practice from the views of the stakeholders involved in empowering the community. This allows me to draw from the wisdom and insight of those who have experienced and understand the myriad facets of collaborative partnership practice in developing a community. This design allowed me to learn from the history of the establishment of the service organisation and its activities and programmes, to listen to the stories and experiences of those stakeholders involved in the collaborative partnerships, and to get wider information from the often unheard voices of “underprivileged children.” It has also provided a range of trails for others to follow in the pursuit of excellence in implementing collaborative partnership in conducting a community project, especially the ones dealing with ICTs and children involvement.



I have designed the study to optimise an understanding of the case as suggested by Stake (2005), rather than to generalise beyond it. The findings of this research specifically reflect the local context of the community collaborative partnership of Malaysia. However, this does not mean that the findings are confined to this specific area. The findings of this study can be transferable to other settings, as Flyvbjerg (2011) has argued: “*knowledge may be transferable even when it is not formally generalisable*” (p. 306). Hence, I have attempted to gather data as much as possible ranging from the nature of the case itself including the relationship among stakeholders, and programmes involved; the case context historically, and at present; and its surrounding influence, for example the government policies.

The goal of social constructivism is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) refer to this as constructivism or interpretivism which is aiming to “*gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions*” (p.102). From a social constructivist perspective, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences which are varied and multiple, and this multiplicity of meanings will lead the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than limit meanings to a few categories (Creswell, 2007). The multiple- stakeholders involved in this study will contribute to the varied and multiple perceptions of findings.

#### **4.5 Why a case study?**

This study utilises the case study, a valuable qualitative method. The case study is a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). In this study, the case study approach will guide me in selecting suitable methods.

The case has a boundary and working parts, and in social sciences and human services, the case is explained as an integrated system (Stake, 1995). CyberCare, a Malaysian ICT-based community organisation, is a bounded system consisting of many working parts that when formed together constitute a collaborative partnership.

My research is likely to fall into the category of an instrumental case study. Based on Stake (1995), this is undertaken because the researcher is interested in a particular trait or problem of a case. It seeks to generate an understanding of an issue and to advance understanding of other interests. Additionally, an in-depth study on the contexts and activities involved helped the researcher in pursuing the external interest. CyberCare as a single instrumental case study was used to investigate the issue of collaborative partnership of multiple-stakeholders in the context of a community service organisation. While the background of this particular organisation is considered in detail, the main interest of this research is to discover the sustaining practice of collaborative partnership between multiple-stakeholders.

In selecting a case to be studied, an atypical case is preferred over a typical one. Flyvbjerg (2011) claims atypical or extreme cases provide more information as “*they activate more actors and basic mechanisms in the situation studied*” (p. 306). The study of CyberCare is an atypical case in the context of Malaysia as it involves the collaborative partnership of multiple-stakeholders in a community service organisation initiated by the community. This represents the trend within community services in Malaysia that have moved, in their mode of establishment, from government initiated projects to community initiated projects involving partnership with various sectors. What is also atypical of this case is the collaborative partnership structure and practice of the organisation itself. Further, this collaboration is distinctive because of the continuous changes of the programmes for children in orphanages, in which in the earlier years, the focus was very much on the utilisation of ICTs, which later moved to focus more on empowering children through personal development. The method of empowering children was documented in a curriculum which was collaboratively developed and implemented to provide programme continuity. Therefore, these aspects made CyberCare an interesting case study.

Case study is also characterised by its heuristic approach. Stake (1995) argues that, “*previously unknown relationships and variables can emerge from case studies leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied*” (p. 47). Patton (2002) emphasises heuristics as being concerned with meanings, essence, quality, and experience rather than measurement, appearance, quantity, and behaviour. Therefore, the goal is to allow people to gain new

interpretations, perspectives, meaning, and insights through the case study. The findings of this research were intended to enhance the understanding of collaborative partnerships between multiple-stakeholders, through research into the way an ICT-based community service organisation develops and survives over twelve years. The views of multiple-stakeholders will be compared with the existing notions of collaborative partnership in the literature or previous studies.

Inductive reasoning is an important feature seen as characteristic of many case studies. Case studies utilise inductive reasoning since new understandings, concepts, and relationships arise from studying the data (Merriam, 1998). In the context of this study, the research questions mentioned seeks to understand the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders involved in the collaborative programmes or efforts with the ICT-based community service organisation aiming to empower the children in orphanages. Answers to the questions will provide a rich, thick and detailed description within my case study, which Merriam (1998) sees as typical of case study approaches (Merriam, 1998).

#### **4.6 Positioning the researcher**

One issue which is commonly discussed in qualitative research is the researcher's membership of the group being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Regardless of the researcher being an insider, having shared the characteristics, role, or experience under study with the participants, or being an outsider to all those commonalities, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that the identity of the researcher remains as an essential part of the inquiry. I consider myself to be both an insider and an outsider to the community. As Mullings (1999) claims, no individual researcher can constantly remain an insider, and a few still remain absolute outsiders.

As suggested by various scholars (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a; Lincoln et al., 2011) regarding the constructivist researchers, I recognise that the backgrounds and experiences of my participants shape their understandings, and I acknowledge that their interpretations flow from their own personal, cultural, and religious experiences. I also

recognise that these individuals' interpretations are able to form a collective interpretation of a group. At the same time, I am aware that I am the one who is doing the study and gathering and analysing the data, and that the meaning I am generating is also shaped by my own personal background, and experiences that I have gone through in life. Bearing this in mind, I have attempted to approach the study setting and participants to be interviewed with an open mind, and focused on getting as much data as I can, attempting to be reflexive, that is to be aware of my own perspectives and concerns. During the process, I have allowed flexibility in many aspects of data gathering. Sands, Bourjolly, and Roer-Strier (2007) suggest that cross-cultural interviewing barriers may be overcome by the interviewer's efforts to develop rapport, be transparent about the interview's purpose, incorporate the interviewee's choices and respect the interviewee's feelings on what is personal. For instance, I gave the participants the freedom to choose their preferred place, date, and time of the interview, giving them the choice to meet in settings with which they will be familiar.

The issue of insider-outsider status does not merely concern the relationship between the researcher and the participants but as Dwyer and Buckle (2009) note in their study, it also involves the researcher's identification with the participant population. Putting this notion into perspective, I may be regarded as an insider for the participants, since I share Malaysian nationality with them. However, Rubin and Rubin (2012) mention that sometimes there is no clear border between insiders and outsiders, as you might be treated as an outsider despite belonging to the same cultural group. Here, a shared or similar nationality with my research participants does not simply make me an insider. The majority of the participants in my case study were from Chinese and Indian ethnicities - different from my Malay ethnic background. For example, the first time I went to a Christian orphanage to volunteer in the CyberCare programme, an orphanage staff member was surprised to see me when she opened the gate. She commented "*Oh, there's no Muslims (been here) before.*" This brief comment struck me because prior to my arrival, I had not considered cultural differences. I did not know who I would meet, and I did not have any expectations other than to get to know the people, and find out about CyberCare programmes and voluntary activities. This made me feel awkward, cautious, and reserved in the beginning but through our interactions, CyberCare members made me feel welcome. I shared this experience with the director of CyberCare during my

first interview. He clarified that I was the first Muslim to come with CyberCare to that particular orphanage, but a few Muslims had been to other orphanages under CyberCare's protection before, and they had not faced any problems. The Director praised the multicultural tolerance of the Malaysian society. As this example illustrates, researchers as well as participants have to deal with their own emotions, and participants may be able to help the researcher to cope with such issues.

Pelias (2011) suggests that the status of the researcher as insider or outsider is not static, but as Rabe (2003) mentions, it is a fluid status. Interaction or contact over a long period with the participants especially in using the participant observation method (Rabe, 2003) may turn the outsider researcher into an insider. In getting access to my case study, I volunteered for the organisation that enabled me to follow their programmes with children during my fieldwork. The time spent with CyberCare's board of directors, volunteers, and children enabled me to build a close relationship and gain their trust. I gained an insider status through this process. This is in agreement with Guba's (1981) suggestion that increasing trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is attained through persistent observation which he views as important to identify which activities or relationships have "*pervasive qualities*" and which have "*atypical characteristics*" (p. 85).

These experiences and multiple roles have made me both an outsider and insider researcher. In getting access to the participants of this study to be interviewed, my volunteering work with CyberCare might have suggested to some participants that I was part of CyberCare, or my attachment to a university might have suggested that I was a government officer or teacher. On each interview, I had to explain my role as a student researcher clearly to the participants. The participants were informed that the identifiable information would not be revealed to the other party, including CyberCare, and that any information they provided would be treated confidentially. Sometimes during interviews, I had to keep reminding the participants of my position as a researcher, rather than as a teacher, coach or mentor.

Despite the constraints of having multiple roles, this position had also provided me with easier acceptance by the participants. For example, being a government employee myself

made the government officials accept me more easily. Fulltime staff and volunteers readily accepted me as their peer. My involvement with the children during the programmes with CyberCare made the children feel closer to me, which made it easier for them to express their views when I interviewed them.

#### **4.7 Research Design**

This qualitative case study is designed to gather data through a naturalistic set of processes for collecting empirical materials – a characteristic method of social constructivist research (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a; Lincoln et al., 2011). The data collection for this study was done over a twelve-month period. It involved the exploration of the case by collecting relevant documents to be reviewed, rapport establishment and interviewees' identification through participant observation, and in-depth interviews with the selected multiple-stakeholders to obtain varied perspective on collaborative partnership from their knowledge and experiences. The interconnected process is illustrated in Figure 4.7.

#### **4.8 Definitions of key concepts**

Explicating key concepts in the study was an important initial step in developing the research design, along with locating the materials and site, and developing sampling and recruitment strategies. It is important to note that these are the preliminary definitions developed by the researcher, while different definitions might be given by the participants in this study.

##### *Change and transformation*

Change in this context refers to community change. Community change is defined as (Parada, Barnoff, Moffatt, & Homan, 2011, p. 8):

*the process of producing modification or innovation in attitudes, policies, or practices in the community to reduce (or eliminate) problems, provide for general improvements in the manner in which needs are met, or develop resources for the benefit of its members.*

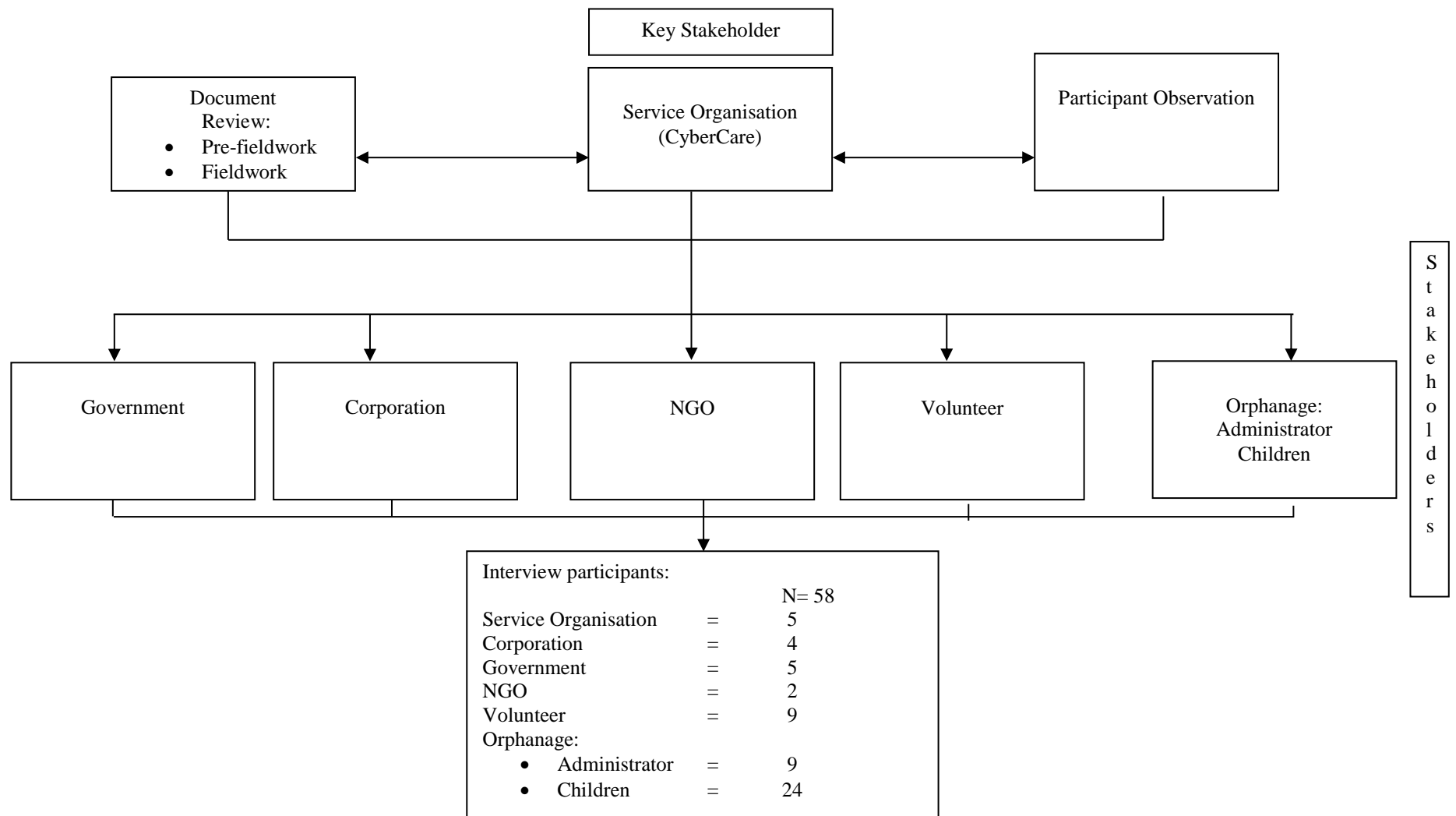


Figure 4.7  
Research design and processes

As applied to this study, change will possibly result in transformation of something or someone like transforming the programme.

#### *Sustainability (sustaining collaboration)*

As has been discussed in section 3.7 of this thesis, the sustainability of collaborative partnership has been connected by many authors to transparent communication and members continuously nurturing the relationship (e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003; Roy & Watts, 2001; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a; Wood & Gray, 1991). Freeth (2001) who studied interprofessional collaboration suggests that sustained interprofessional collaboration will eventually become routine interprofessional collaboration. Here, sustaining collaboration refers to the ability to maintain or support a programme/activity or collaborative process through constant communication and nurturing to the extent that collaboration will become routine. The term longstanding is also used concurrently throughout the thesis to refer to the ability to sustain relationships.

#### *Long-term*

Long-term refers to the time frame of continuous involvement or connection a stakeholder has with CyberCare. CyberCare has been in existence for more than a decade. As most of the time “long-term” discussed throughout the thesis referred to the relationship of CyberCare with its partners, it seems appropriate to consider ten years as a preliminary definition of a long-term relationship. However, the perception of the particular members in the collaborative partnership arrangement in considering the longevity of their collaborative relationship may differ.

#### *Collaborative partnership*

More details on the definition of this term have been discussed in section 3.3. In particular for my study, collaborative partnership refers to both the way of working together and to a



relationship. The term “relationship” in my study refers to the groups of stakeholders including individuals and organisations that come together to form a partnership, while “the way of working together” involves how they plan and implement the programmes.

### *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders may include all individuals, groups, or organisations that can influence or be influenced by the achievement of either organisational or partnership objectives (Freeman, 2010). In this study, stakeholders refer to partners or the groups of individuals and organisations that come to collaborate with CyberCare or upon whom the CyberCare programmes/ activities have impact. The stakeholders in this study are categorised into the groups of service organisation; corporation; government; NGO; volunteer; and orphanage. Stakeholders with orphanages include both administrator and child participants. The terms multiple-stakeholder and multi-stakeholder are also used interchangeably in this thesis to signify the stakeholders involved in this collaborative partnership setting.

### *Empowerment*

Page and Czuba (1999) define empowerment as *a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives* (p. 3). In general, they regard it as a process of nurturing power in people to react on issues that seem important for their lives. Page and Czuba (1999) specifically explain the three important components of the definition. Firstly, empowerment is multi-dimensional as empowerment takes place within many dimensions such as the social, psychological, and economic domains. Secondly, empowerment occurs at different social levels including individual, group, and community contexts. Thirdly, empowerment is a social process as it involves relationship building and maintenance of the people involved. This definition of empowerment is closely related to the collaborative advantage literature discussed in 3.6.7. This literature suggests that leadership should be viewed as in the hands of members of the collaborative partnership, where participants are considered as emergent informal leaders rather than hierarchical ones (Huxham & Vangen, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2014).

### *ICT-based community service organisation*

I used the term ICT-based community service organisation to refer to CyberCare. Chapter Two has provided more insight on this term. Specifically, CyberCare, it is a non-governmental organisation which has been set up by the community members to serve the children in orphanages throughout Malaysia by connecting the orphanages, government, corporations, and other NGOs in a collaborative partnership structure. This role also makes CyberCare a key stakeholder. It focuses on the use of ICT as an enabler in carrying out the programmes with children. ICT as enabler refers to the usage of technology as a means to achieve an end, which means it is not about technology, but about people using the technology to meet some basic need (Hameed, 2007). This term is used interchangeably with the term “community service project” or “just community project”. Some documents and participants interviewed use the term “electronic community” or “e-Community” to refer to CyberCare, because of its early focus on equipping the orphanages with ICT tools. Other documents refer to CyberCare as a community project based on a community development model. While the concerns of this thesis do not focus on ICT, these terms are used where they emerge from document review or interviews.

### *Underprivileged children*

“Underprivileged children” refers to the children that have been placed in orphanages. In particular to this study, they are from CyberCare linked orphanages and have been involved with CyberCare programmes. The children at the orphanages are orphans who lost their parents, or children from a single parent and/or children who have been ordered by the law to be placed in the orphanages. They are wards of state under the Malaysian Law where:

- a. A child is defined as the one who is under 18 years of age.
- b. Section 19(1), temporary admission for the purpose of investigation by Protecting Officer
- c. Section 30(1)(d), rigid order to put a child in a secure place for three years from the order period or until the child reaches 18 years, or whichever shorter

- d. Section 30(1) (e), to put a child until he/she is transferred to the adopted parents.

In accordance with the Law, the children in this study range from age 10 to 18. Three participants age 19, 23 and 27 are also included in this category as they provide their perspectives on when they were living in orphanages and involved with CyberCare programmes/ activities at child-age. The Law also gives provision for the administrator of each orphanage to be a legal guardian who is responsible for looking after, protecting and rehabilitating the children under his/her care. Thus, the administrator would be able to give consent on behalf of children under his/her responsibility.

### *Activity*

Activity refers to something that is done to achieve the aim of the programme. For example, activities incorporated in the Care4U programme included activities of fostering personal development, imparting ICT skills and undertaking a community service project.

### *Programme*

Programme refers to a plan of activities to be done. For example Care4U is a programme.

## **4.9 Site of study**

Regarding a case study, Creswell (2007) mentions that a researcher can include the site(s) which is a bounded system, “*such as programmes, events, processes, activities, individual or several individuals*” (p. 122). For my study, I chose an organisation which is an NGO, focusing on community service aiming to improve the life of the children in orphanages through the mechanism of collaborative partnership to achieve their goal. This Malaysian based community service organisation was initiated and run by the community, and the key player that is responsible for inviting corporate and government sectors to collaborate to serve the orphanage community. The collaborative efforts have been carried out based on outside

funds from the corporations and government. Programmes and activities are in place to connect the orphanages to their aim. This site is selected based on its ability to sustain for over twelve years which made it significant to study the sustainability aspects of the collaborative partnership. Stakeholders, programmes and activities are taken into account to be studied as they make up the whole of this site.

#### **4.10 Gaining access and gatekeeper approval**

Approval and ethical clearance for the research was acquired from the Human Research Ethics Review Committee of Macquarie University, which conforms to the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (Appendix 8).

In gaining access to the site, the researcher negotiated with the director of CyberCare as a gatekeeper via email communications. The proposal to conduct research was sent to the gatekeeper prior to departure from Sydney. The proposal consisted of the basic information like title and researcher's particular details. The proposal briefly explained the aim of the study, the reason for choosing the site, the time frame of the study, data collection methods and procedures, and the findings' contributions to the chosen site, society, and scholarly endeavour. The gatekeeper forwarded the proposal to the board of directors for feedback. The board of directors gave positive feedback, and welcomed me to do the proposed study.

On arrival in Malaysia to undertake fieldwork, I contacted the gatekeeper to have a face-to-face discussion and arrange to enter the site. The process of gaining access to the site took less than a week.

#### **4.11 Methods of data collection and management**

Among the characteristics of the case study approach is its ability to draw multiple realities from a range of sources of information to explain the phenomena being studied. This can help provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. In an attempt to secure an

in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, these multiple sources of information gathered through several methods or data sources of inquiry are triangulated. In studying collaborative partnership practice of CyberCare, three methods of data collection - document review, participant-observation, and semi-structured interview - have been used.

#### **4.11.1 Document review**

Like other methods, using documents for collecting data has advantages and disadvantages. Merriam (1998) highlights some limitations, such as the possibility that such documents are fragmentary, and there are difficulties in determining their authenticity. Nevertheless, for the same reason Merriam (1998) regards documents which are nonreactive, unchanged by the research process, and produced within the context which is grounded in the real world as good sources for qualitative case studies, as they provide contextual richness and can be used alongside data collected from the observations or interviews. Stake (1995) also views the method of document review as an important source of data. He notes that “*we try not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case, not to test, not even to interview if we can get the information we want to by discreet observation or examination of records*” (p. 12). A key part of the research process involved collecting the available documents to help me select and explore a case.

#### ***Locating the materials and identifying a case study***

The documents collected can be divided into pre-fieldwork documents and fieldwork documents.

#### ***Pre-fieldwork***

At the pre-fieldwork stage, the main purpose of data collection was to identify a case study. The data collection began informally in 2006, when I was thinking of furthering my doctorate study. The formal data collection which was more focused began prior to the development of the research proposal from March 2008 and the application to the Ethics Review Committee-

Human Research of Macquarie University in September 2008. After the process of clarification and refinement, I received the approval letter dated 8 January 2009 to conduct the study. At this stage, most documents were collected online, and the sources were mainly from CyberCare, National Information Technology Council (NITC), Ministry of Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), Economic Planning Unit (EPU) under the Prime Minister's Department, and other related government and international organisation websites. These offices and organisations, apart from the Unit under the Prime Minister's Department and international organisations, have been involved with CyberCare whether in the planning and implementation, management and administration, or programmes and activities.

The documents collected from CyberCare provided me with basic knowledge that was available to the public, mainly the background and aspirations of the organisation, people and organisations involved, programmes and activities conducted, and the contact details of CyberCare. This information also led me to identify other stakeholders. The documents from government offices and departments mainly supplied information on the related developments within Malaysia, including policies, national plans, and supports provided for the marginalised and vulnerable segments of society.

The review of the available documents at this time gave me an understanding of the approaches used in existing ICT-based community organisations and projects in Malaysia. CyberCare provides a new trend of community practice in the country from merely a government initiated community project to a community collaborative partnership initiated project. Initially, CyberCare's objective was to form an electronic community by connecting the orphanages, public sector, private sector and NGOs to an e-Community System. The project aims to serve the underprivileged children from the orphanages in Malaysia and the community. All of these aspects made CyberCare an atypical case for my research, as discussed earlier in Section 4.5. Other important facts that support my research selection criteria include (Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme, 2002; Cybercare, 2010; 2009-2011b; National Information Technology Council, 2002):

- The strong support that CyberCare received from the international sponsors participating in its programme such as Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, and Lions Clubs International.
- The project implementation covering both East and West Malaysia that has expanded from its initial 25 orphanages in 1999 under Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme programme to ninety orphanages in 2005 and connected 5000 children throughout Malaysia.
- The project ability to equip all ninety orphanages with the necessary computer equipment and most with Internet access and carry out the on-going programmes for the children, and also on-going efforts to maintain and bring the most up-to-date technology to the children by upgrading their computers and installing the latest software available.
- The project ability to be recognised as a national initiative that can be replicated globally with the potential to revolutionise the future of community care by transforming social welfare hand-outs to hands-on community care.
- The recipient of various awards and recognitions including the Best Practice in community care in the Global Knowledge II summit in March 2000, highlighted by UNDP as one of the organizations around the world that has bridged the divide between information-rich and information-poor through the use of ICT during the commemoration of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2001; recognised as one of four community projects selected from across the world to be the showcased of Microsoft community affairs and partnerships; and received the recognition of Excellence from two District Governors of Lions Club over their terms of service.

Once the pre-fieldwork documents had been reviewed, and the data that I had collected and analysed confirmed the value of the selected case study, I finalised my research proposal, and went through the procedures prior to the fieldwork stage.

### ***Locating the materials and obtaining permission to use them***

#### ***Fieldwork***

The documents collected at this period included the constitution of the organisation (the Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur); official letters and emails; posters/brochures/leaflets; press releases and media matters; newspaper articles; and other related documents. One extensive collection of documents consisted of newspaper articles (dated from 1999-2006), and press releases and media matters (dated from 1998-2005). These articles comprised all reports or news mentioning CyberCare. They mainly consisted of discussions of programmes with children, and fund-raising. Almost all of the above documents were collected from the CyberCare archive itself. Some of the posters/brochures/ leaflets, books and other materials were collected from other stakeholders within the partnership. Other documents included a curriculum and completed internship assessments forms of previous interns from CyberCare, and powerpoint presentations from both CyberCare and its stakeholders. I also collected a few books published by DAGS, Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (MIMOS), and the Ministry of Women, Family, and Society Development (KPWKM). My interactions with CyberCare and its allied stakeholders via emails and short messaging systems (sms) were also considered to be documents that helped me to analyse the data.

A list of collected documents relevant to the study is recorded in Appendix 1.

#### **4.11.2 Field Observation**

Entering the social location and looking is one of the ways that is important to gather materials regarding the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b). Similar to all qualitative methods, the widely used field observation is concerned more with description and explanation rather than measurement and quantification.



### *Selecting a site for participant observation and developing rapport*

Wimmer and Dominick's (1994) dimensions of field observation, as depicted in Figure 4.11.2 (a) allow a clear description of my approach to field observation. Field observation is classified along two major dimensions, which concern "*the degree to which the researcher participates in the behaviour under observation; and the degree to which the observation is concealed*" (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, p. 124).

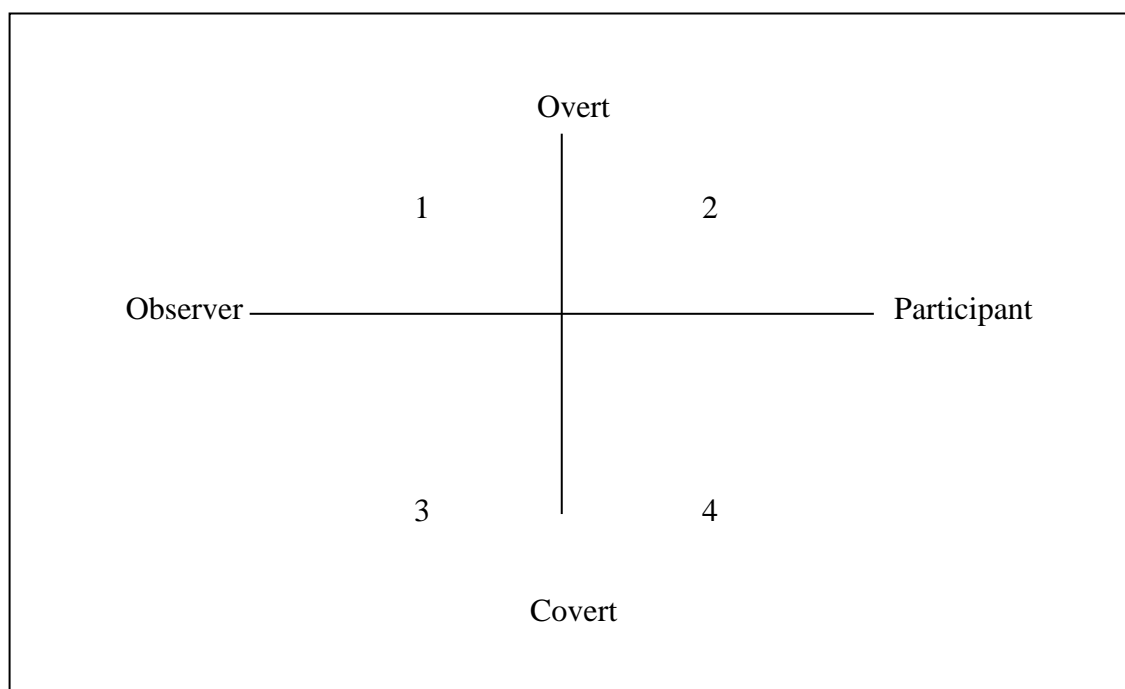


Figure 4.11.2 (a)  
*Dimension of field observation*  
Source: (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994: p. 124)

Based on this figure, the field observation of this study falls under Quadrant 2, as my identity was known to the people I was studying and I also participated actively for five months in the programmes and activities of CyberCare. I was able to observe and participate in two programmes of CyberCare that involved the children in orphanages. The programmes involved were Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM), and an internship programme called Care4U. The observation for both programmes was intended to allow me to get to know the

case and the people involved, and to immerse myself as an insider. The participation enabled me to find out how the programmes and activities were carried out, and how programmes relate to the collaborative partnership approach of the organisation. Besides getting closer to the participants involved, and building trust, joining these programmes also gave me the opportunity to discover more about CyberCare. Through this, participation enabled questions to be generated for the interviews, as well as identifying and gaining the trust of the most useful interview subjects.

#### *Participant-observation in Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM) Programme*

Youth Leadership Mentoring is a character building programme to develop leadership skills in the children of the selected orphanages, as described in Chapter Two. It contains various sessions that were carried out every Sunday night from 7.30pm to 9.00pm involving the volunteer coaches of CyberCare with the children at an orphanage. The director of CyberCare suggested I join YLM when I began my fieldwork, as it had just begun the programme with a new group of students at one of the orphanages in Petaling Jaya from 3 May 2009 until 11 October 2009. At the same time, I had to reschedule my data collection plan, as my initial schedule was to begin observation after I had finished collecting the documents.

The sessions were conducted in a small group sitting in a study circle arrangement as in Figure 4.11.2 (b) (the same with Care4U sessions). It was not compulsory for the participants to attend every session. At the time when all members in the group including me attended the session, numbers averaged twenty people in the group (two coaches, seven trainer coaches/volunteers, ten children, and myself as a volunteer researcher).

However, not everybody attended the session every week. Sometimes, only one of the two main coaches, YW-SO or SN-Corp attended. Most of the time, only three volunteers were there, and the children showed full attendance in the middle of the programme, and started to decrease [attend less frequently] towards the end when the lowest attendance consisted of five children. Throughout the session, almost everybody was given a chance to speak.

The first two sessions I attended were ice breaking sessions allowing me to introduce myself. The coach-cum-director of CyberCare briefly introduced me to the group, and he gave me the chance to further explain my research including questions of consent. I gave participants the chance to ask me questions. Participating gave me a chance to get to know the coaches and volunteers of the programme, and child participants who joined the programme at the orphanage.



Figure 4.11.2 (b)  
*Sample of seating arrangement*

I was able to get closer to the director of CyberCare as he normally fetched me from and took me to the train station to attend the programme at the beginning of my fieldwork. Later I drove myself, and like a father, he made sure I arrived home safely by checking with me on the phone. Sometimes after the YLM session, we had coffee together with other coaches or/and fulltime staff. During this time we got to know more about each other, and I gained more knowledge about the case. I slowly developed a rapport with the other main coach, SN-Corp, who was a life coach herself. Towards the end of the internship I attended her weekly

programmes a couple of times with other communities, and sometimes I visited her other project, a community kitchen.

I did not get the chance to get very close to all of the volunteers, as not all of them consistently attended the sessions. Some of them I saw just once or twice. However, the three to four who normally attended the sessions fully understood what I was doing because some of them were also university students doing masters degrees and planning to do doctorate degrees. We established friendly relations, though I did not become a very close friend of any of the volunteers. Equally, I started to build trust by staying a bit longer after some of the sessions to talk to them.

### ***Participant observation in Care4U Programme***

The other programme I observed was called Care4U. Care4U is a structured coaching programme that involved CyberCare and intern students from a private university in Petaling Jaya. Based on a specific curriculum (Make A Difference – MAD), the programme involved weekly coaching sessions that were carried out by CyberCare volunteer coaches with university interns every Monday. Based on the curriculum and the coaching they had received, the interns then coached the children at their selected orphanage home. At the end of the programme, the children who had been coached by the volunteer interns devised a community project which invited the participation of public and private sectors as well as individual volunteers.

CyberCare started this programme in 2007 with a few batches of university students from one of the private universities in Petaling Jaya. The one I was involved with was the Care4U programme with batch five. My observation and participation started on 8 June 2009 and finished on 1 September 2009.

I divided my observations from this programme into three parts, namely: coaching sessions (8 June – 24 August 2009), community service project event (29 August 2009), and on-site supervisor industrial training assessment (1 September 2009). The coaching sessions that I

observed were the sessions with university interns, and CyberCare coaches were normally scheduled every Monday night from 6.00 to 7.30pm at their operation room at the university. However some sessions went on longer than scheduled, or were rescheduled. All participants including three coaches (YW-SO, SN-Corp, MS-SO) and eight interns regularly attended the sessions. The community service project event was the final event, organised by both the interns and the children from the selected orphanage. It was a one-day bamboo planting event which called on the involvement of stakeholders and community. Finally, the on-site supervisor industrial training assessment was a one-day session after the interns had completed their project. Each of the interns was assessed face-to-face by a panel of supervisors, who were coaches on the programme. The written report was sent to the University for grading purposes.

My participation in the programmes has allowed me to understand and experience how the programmes described in the documents, especially the MAD curriculum, were carried out, and I saw the pattern of adult-child participation. However, my participation in both programmes did not provide me with sufficient data to fully understand the practice of collaborative partnership. To supplement observation, therefore, extensive interviews were conducted.

### ***Recording procedures***

I used an audio and visual recording application, as well as note taking, to record my observations for both programmes. For the first two sessions of YLM, I did not use my video recorder, even though I had their consent to record the sessions. Once I felt confident that I had gained their trust and that they were comfortable with me, I began to record, in the third mentoring session. Ten sessions were observed, with eight sessions recorded, as the first two sessions were recorded through written notes. As the sessions were conducted in an old classroom with open windows and a noisy fan within the orphanage building, environmental noise sometimes interrupted the conversation. There were a number of last minute cancellations of sessions by the children, mostly because of their involvement with the other orphanage activities, or they had to prepare for examinations in school, or just because they

had not prepared for the session. For the Care4U programme, I observed nine coaching sessions and a community service project.

My main purpose in using audio-visual tools was to record their verbal conversation rather than to capture their faces, so I did not always make sure that the tools were placed at the right angle to capture visual images of everybody in the room but ensured that all voices were clearly recorded. The use of the video recorder ensured continuity of observation, even when I needed to leave the room at prayer or breaking fast time during *Ramadhan*. At other times, I only used the audio recording, but recorded my observation in writing as well.

#### **4.11.3 Interview**

Interviews were the main method of my research data collection. The objective of these was to get varied perspectives from multiple-stakeholders on sustaining collaborative partnership from their knowledge and experiences working with CyberCare. The focus was in discovering and examining the drivers of change and transformation, and the challenges of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation. Most interviews were one-on-one with the selected participants, although joint interviews were conducted at times.

##### ***Sampling and recruitment of participants***

Purposive sampling was the primary technique for recruiting participants to obtain “*the most relevant and plentiful data*” (Yin, 2011, p. 88). This technique was also chosen to include the participants that might offer different perspectives on similar issues. In relation to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was also applied in some cases where the participants were identified through those who know others that have CyberCare related information and/ or are involved with CyberCare programmes/ activities. In a small number of cases, convenience sampling was also applicable. However, convenience sampling was not merely used because of the ready availability of the participants without considering the purpose of recruiting them in relation to the interview objectives and data quest.

Fifty eight participants were selected to represent the service organisation, government, corporation, NGO, and orphanage in this study. As I had to resort to interviewing all stakeholders who expressed an interest in participating in the research, I ended up having more participants in some of the stakeholder categories than others. Overall, the participants selected for interviews included five CyberCare, five government, four corporate, two other NGO, nine volunteer, and thirty three orphanage (nine administrators and twenty four children) representatives. Negotiating and arranging the interviews with the participants was carried out via emails, telephone calls and face to face communication during the programmes' meetings. Appendix 2 summarises the number of stakeholders who could and could not be included in the study.

The first stakeholder category is the service organisation, the key stakeholder, which is represented by its board of directors and a fulltime staff member. The participants who were members of the board of directors of CyberCare were identified based on their positions and roles in the organisation, and their availability. Even though the fulltime staff member did not hold any specific position on the board, I have included her in this category as well, because she worked closely with the board of directors, attended the board meetings, and was aware of any new decisions from the board of directors. Two interviews with the Director of CyberCare, YW-SO, were conducted. One took place at the beginning of my fieldwork, when I needed more information after analysing some of the documents. The other was conducted during an intensive interview (many in-depth interviews with selected participants) period which took place towards the end of my fieldwork. One of the participants, JN-SO, was not actively involved with CyberCare at the time of the interview but she was a Vice President when CyberCare was first established, thus providing perspectives on the early establishment of the organisation. Only two members from the board of directors could not be interviewed because they were not in Malaysia at that time.

The second stakeholder category is the government. The government perspective is important as the government was actively involved during the early years of CyberCare's establishment. This category is represented by three government officials who used to be involved with facilitating and monitoring the project when it was funded by the government, and two new

government officials who could only provide perspectives about the current initiatives and plans. Most of the government participants were selected via purposive and snowball samplings. In the beginning, I identified the people I wanted to interview based on their significant involvement with NITC and DAGS as portrayed in the collected documents. Then I consulted the director of CyberCare, who helped me to retrieve contact details and suggested a few other people as well. Of the ten people I contacted, only five government officials agreed to participate: two representatives were from the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI), two were from the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC), and one participant represented the NITC. The interview with MOSTI representatives gave me more information about the current development and projects of DAGS, rather than DAGS past projects. This is because previously, projects like CyberCare had been administered under MIMOS. The other three representatives were the people who were previously with MIMOS, and involved with the CyberCare project at that time. At the time of the interview, two of them were serving at MDeC, and the other one had already retired as a government officer, and become an academic staff at a private college and a newspaper columnist. Identifying the participants from the government sector, and getting them to be interviewed was the most challenging process for me, as most of them were involved ten or more years ago, and have changed positions and offices. But with the help of many individuals, I managed to locate and interview five government representatives.

Corporation and NGO made up the third and fourth categories of stakeholders. Four participants from the corporation category and two other NGOs were purposely chosen because of their active involvement with CyberCare. For the corporate sector, the National ICT Association of Malaysia (PIKOM) and LifeWorks involved the development and implementation of the MAD curriculum for Care4U programme. Accenture supported the past programmes, and used to send their employees to volunteer for CyberCare programmes and activities. The interview with PIKOM was done in a group of two participants. The President was the main participant initially recruited for this study and the Project MAIN PC executive was brought along on the day of the interview, to assist the President.



The two NGOs involved were the participants from the Lions Club Kuala Lumpur North, and Kota Damansara Friends. As CyberCare had previously been affiliated with the Lions Club, it has worked together with the other Lions Club of Kuala Lumpur North members. Kota Damansara Friends were involved with the recent bamboo planting event under Care4U programme. Interviewing both NGOs added the perspectives of old and new stakeholders. Despite many attempts to get participants to represent the big corporations that had previously sponsored CyberCare, I was unable to get in touch with the persons in charge because of their outdated contact details, and changes of workplace. Another NGO representative was contacted, but he declined to participate because he viewed himself as lacking in information about the subject matter.

The fifth stakeholder group was the volunteer group, which was mostly represented by the volunteers who used to be involved with CyberCare's internship programme (Care4U) with the local university. The volunteers were selected because of my observation of their involvement in the programmes and on the basis of their active involvement in the previous programmes. Initially, eleven volunteers who used to be the intern students with CyberCare under Care4U programme agreed to be interviewed. Seven were the intern students of the Care4U programme that I have observed (batch 5), four were from the previous batches (3 and 4) of Care4U programme who have now graduated from the university, have their own careers or were furthering studies to higher degrees. All four participants from previous batches of Care4U were still actively volunteering with CyberCare's programmes. I interviewed seven out of eight intern volunteers from Care4U programme batch 5, but two could not be included, because of technical errors. I planned to include the representatives of the ex-interns from all batches, but I was not able to contact interns from batch 1 and 2.

The final category of orphanage consists of CyberCare linked orphanages represented by the administrators and children from the selected orphanages involved with the programmes. The children were regarded as indirect stakeholders by the service organisation. The orphanage administrators were selected from the orphanages that were involved with CyberCare's programmes at the time of my fieldwork, and also from the list of orphanages linked with CyberCare. I reviewed the collected documents to identify the orphanages that were involved

with CyberCare's programmes and activities in the past. After this, I consulted the director of CyberCare and the fulltime staff to confirm the extent of particular orphanages' involvement, and the programmes in which they participated. Based on the review of the collected documents, consultation from CyberCare representatives, active involvement of the children in those orphanages, and reachable distance, I initially chose twelve orphanages in the Klang Valley area. After contacting and negotiating with the administrators to ask for their willingness to be interviewed, the number of interview subjects was reduced to nine. All but one allowed the conversations to be recorded. The unrecorded interview had to be done in two sessions in two days.

Twenty four child participants from six orphanages were selected based on their current and past involvement with CyberCare programmes and activities. Child participants included both children still in the orphanages, and children who used to stay there but are now living independently as they have finished school and have careers of their own. The child participants in the orphanages were selected based on their current involvement in the programmes I observed (fifteen from Care4U, and three from YLM), and their past involvement with any CyberCare programme (three children were still living in orphanages) and three have reached adulthood - age 19, 23 and 27). While a few children interviewed had left orphanages, all eighteen children in the programmes I have observed are still in one. One participant, aged 19, at the time of the interview is a college student and staying at a hostel. However, during semester break, she came back to the orphanage. This particular participant joined an e-Workshop programme when she was a child. The two boys have moved out of the orphanages, and live independently. One, aged 23, was a final year Bachelor Degree of Civil Engineering student in a private university college. He had received a scholarship under the Education Excellence Programme when he did his Diploma of Civil Engineering. The other participant, a male aged 27, was also a scholarship recipient under the same programme while he was studying the Bachelor Degree of Mechanical Engineering in a public university. At the time of the interview, he was working and training as a game and movie art designer. Interviewing the participants involved was important in gaining the perspectives of the group that the collaborative partners sought to empower. Most interviews were conducted with a single child, but a number were conducted with two or three children together.

The inclusion of multiple-stakeholders in this study provides a rich understanding of the investigated phenomena which will provide a multiplicity of meanings of sustainable collaborative partnership in practice, and the challenges to survival.

### ***Determining time and place for interview***

In order to allow flexibility, all of the interviews were conducted at the time chosen by the participants, and took place in locations preferred by them. The locations which were convenient for the participants included offices or work places, university area, homes, hospital ward and eating places like cafes and restaurants. The interviews were arranged during the day or night time, according to the participants' convenience.

For the children who were still in the orphanages, I requested consent from the orphanage administrators, and arranged a time and place suitable for the interview with the orphanage administrators. For the rest, they decided and gave consent on their own, as they were over eighteen. The interviews with fifteen children who were currently involved with the Care4U programme also evolved through experimentation during the fieldwork before I was able to set up appropriate arrangements to get clear responses from the children. Initially, I planned to interview them all together in one group, so that it would look like a small group discussion and be more comfortable for the children. However, this did not work well because it was hard for me to document their conversations. In the end, I had to request personal interviews with the children from the orphanage administrators. As the children had to attend schools on weekdays, appointments were set up for two days at weekends. I was given a computer room to conduct these interviews. Interviews with the remaining child participants from other programmes were undertaken in the administrators' offices, lobby, or available space at the orphanages.

### ***Interview guide***

This study utilised a semi-standardised interview technique, allowing for diversion from the interview guide where appropriate (Robson, 2011). The same major questions were asked by

the interviewer each time, but the interviewer had more freedom to alter the sequence of the questions and to probe for more information (Gilbert, 2001). In this case, the interviewer can adapt the research instrument to the level of comprehension of the participant, and handle the facts in responding to the question (Gilbert, 2001). The interview protocol was drafted before the interview (see Appendix 3) with questions adapted to the level of maturity of the participants, and their assumed roles in the collaborative structure. There were different sets of questions for adult and child participants. For the stakeholders who were involved and knowledgeable about the process of collaborative partnership, the questions specifically focused on their organisations' roles and their own involvement in the process. Questions in these cases were more intensive, so as to discover the interviewees' perspectives on sustaining collaborative partnership and the related issues. There was also a separate set of questions for government participants because the main purpose of selecting them was to get their perspectives on grants and policies.

For the children, the questions were designed to discover their view about the programmes they joined, and their feelings about joining the programmes. The purpose was to discover how the children were included in the process. I generated questions which were as simple as possible, and I did not direct them to follow my questions in sequence but followed their flow of ideas at their pace. I would normally begin with a question like, "Are you happy joining the programme?" Some of them just answered, "Yes, I am happy," and then I would have to ask more prompting questions such as why they felt happy, and so on.

At the end of each interview session, all participants, adults and children were given enough time to make final comments or add information that had not been specifically requested by the interviewer.

### ***Recording procedures***

The process of recording the interviews is detailed as follows:

1. Informed consent for the interview to be recorded (video/ audio/ writing) was obtained via email or phone call before I went to the interview setting. This is important in helping me to get ready with the appropriate recorded device. For children under 18 years, the consent was obtained from the orphanage administrators.
2. At the interview setting, I asked them to confirm their consent to be recorded again. No participants changed their decision after their initial decision to consent.
3. The device was set up. I made sure the location of the device would allow maximum quality of recorded interview and at the same time be comfortable for the interviewee before I began the interview. This means that it was set up close to the interviewee to allow for a sharp audio record, rather than to get a visual record, especially for those who were quite shy about being recorded visually. Some of the interviewees helped me to set up the device, and suggested the appropriate location. For the child participants, I also allowed them to play around with the device before starting the interview to put them at ease.
4. Field notes were also used to jot down the main points discussed by the interviewee and keep track of my interview. This helped me in organising and generating questions to be asked along the process.
5. Each of the recorded interviews was transferred to the password protected computer and backup external drive at the end of the day, to prevent data overload in the Camcorder memory and to secure the privacy and confidentiality of the data. These data were later transcribed in full.

All but one participant allowed the conversations to be recorded. For this case, I took the notes myself, and the interview had to be done in two sessions within two days. Although the conversations were recorded manually, the interviewee's cooperation to converse at a slow pace allowed me to produce an excellent record.

Some child participants put words together slowly in answering the questions, while others were very talkative and active and wanted to dominate the conversation. I allowed them to converse in English or *Bahasa Melayu*, but one participant could not speak well in either language, as he was from a Tamil speaking background. He spoke in Malay throughout the

interview but mixed up with Tamil words a couple of times. In this case, I asked the child's friend to come and help us communicate. This provided a limitation for this study as I did not anticipate facing such a situation, but as this child was an isolated case, it did not interfere with the rest of the findings.

#### **4.11.4 Overview of participant characteristics**

The objective of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the knowledge and experiences of multiple stakeholders in sustaining collaborative partnership, based on naturalistic enquiry; and so there are limited statistical data. Table 4.11.4 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the 58 participants interviewed according to the stakeholder category.

The table shows an obvious disproportion in the demographic characteristic of interviewees. There is a notable gap between number of men and women ratio (36:22) who participated in the interviews. The main reason for the gender imbalance of interview subjects was the gender of the children interviewed. Fifteen children were recruited from the observed Care4U programme which was undertaken with a Hindu orphanage that only looks after male children. Given the limited information provided by child interviewees, the gender imbalance of these participants had less impact on findings that similar imbalance amongst adults might have had.

In contrast, there were 18 adult male and 16 adult female interviewees. Volunteers interviewed were current and past university interns with CyberCare. Female students are over-represented in most social science courses in Malaysian universities, leading to the larger number of female volunteers indicated in Table 4.11.4. Some orphanages are run by couples. However, when interview subjects among orphanages were sought, male partners disproportionately volunteered. These gendered samples are a limitation of the research that should be addressed in future research.

People of Malay origin make up the majority of citizens of the country and Islam is the most professed religion. The smaller number of participants from these groups in the research was due to the nature of the orphanages (that is, Hindu and Christian based orphanages) that had programmes with CyberCare at the time of my fieldwork. A majority of child participants were recruited from the Care4U programme with a Hindu orphanage that I observed. This contributed to a disproportionate number of child participants from Hindu background as evident in table 4.11.4.

Similarly, CyberCare's relationship with UTAR, a private university established by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) favoured by Malaysia's Chinese community, meant that all volunteers interviewed were from Chinese ethnic background. The ethnicity of my interview subjects, then, reflected the ethnicity of CyberCare's participants more broadly. While the ethnicity of my interviewees does not reflect the population of Malaysia more broadly, this disproportionate distribution does not significantly impact on the study. The main aim of the study is to understand the nature of collaborative partnership from various perspectives based on the purposive sampling method rather than to generalise results based on quantifiable data.

Table 4.11.4  
Summary of demographic characteristics of stakeholders interviewed

Stakeholder Category	Gender		Age (Years old)								Chinese	Ethnic Indian	Malay	Hindu	Chris- -tian	Islam	Religion			Free Thin -ker	Un- assigned
	M	F	7 - 12	13 - 19	20 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	61 - 70	71 - 80							Bud- dhist	Bahai			
Characteristic																					
Service organisation (5 participants)	2	3	-	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	
Government (5 participants)	3	2	-	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	1	4	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	
Corporation (4 participants)	2	2	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	2	2	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	
NGO (2 participants)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Volunteer (9 participants)	3	6	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	-	3	-	-	6	-	-	-	
Orphanage (Administrator) (9 participants)	6	3	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	2	3	5	1	1	6	1	1	-	-	-	
Orphanage (Children) (24 participants)	18	6	5	17	2	-	-	-	-	-	5	16	3	14	6	3	1	-	-	-	
	36	22	5	17	12	7	5	8	2	2	22	27	9	19	16	9	8	1	2	3	
Total N=58	58		58								58			58			58				



## **4.12 Data analysis and synthesis**

Patton (2002) recommends that constructivist researchers share their perspectives and give preference to a comparison between perspectives rather than seeking singular truth and linear prediction. Therefore, the presentation of the case studies, findings, and reports of social constructivist researchers are informed by their attention to praxis and reflexivity which means *“understanding how one’s own experiences and background affect what one understands and how one acts in the world, including acts of inquiry”* (Patton, 2002, p. 564). For analysis, three methods were utilised: document review, observation, and interview with the stakeholders. Each method of analysis is explained in the subsection below.

### **4.12.1 Document review**

The main documents collected were hard copies of media sources such as newspaper articles and press releases, as shown in Appendix 1. Two types of file were established based on the understanding that qualitative research is the collection and interpretation of episodes that have activities, sequences, places, people, and context (Stake, 2010); CyberCare and a more general file. The hardcopy documents were stacked according to the softcopy lists for easier access. After the data had been chronologically organised, I analysed each of the documents separately, and identified the essence of the document and coded it into a set of themes or issues essential to the study. Table 4.12.1 presents a sample of an excerpt from the codebook that showed the themes of the findings.

Coding is a common feature of qualitative analysis and synthesis, part of the process of classifying and sorting the data sets according to topics, themes, and issues related to the study (Stake, 2010). Stake (2010) suggests that coding functions more for interpretation and storage than for organising the final report. Incrementally, similar themes or issues were synthesised under a cluster of certain heading. For example, if one of the emerging themes in Article “N” was about “tripartite partnership,” I might record this point and classify it under “tripartite partnership.” Similar ideas were also abstracted from Article “O” and “P.” These similar ideas were then grouped under the same theme. However, the ideas did not have to be

in agreement with each other, as Stake (2010) suggests that they can contain both sides which support and go against the research question, or just be somewhere in between. Using this strategy of analysis and synthesis to treat the data, I developed major themes that are mostly related to the historical background and development of the organisation, such as “CyberCare background,” “Programmes and activities,” and “Stakeholders” as presented in Table 4.12.1.

Table 4.12.1  
*Sample of a codebook for document analysis*

SOURCE	DOCUMENT EXCERPT/ EVIDENCE	SUB-THEME	THEME
Chandra Devi, New Straits Times, Computimes 14, Business news, Monday, 20/9/1999 “Lions Club in alliance for e-community project”	The Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur, together with its partners Hiechniaga Sdn Bhd & Microsoft Sdn Bhd plan to build a New Millennium eCity which will link 25 orphanages across the country under the cc electronic community (e-community) project.	-Partners -CyberCare, Hitechniaga, Microsoft & 25 orphanages	Stakeholders/ Partnerships
Yeang Soo Ching, New Straits Times, Sunday Style 10, Sunday, 31/10/1999 “Global link-up for our children”	Cybercare eCommunity, in essence, it is all about smart partnerships. The Cybercare eCommunity comprises children, administrators, corporations, government sector and the community-at-large, all interacting online, crossing traditional barriers to communication and learning.	Smart partnerships Cybercare, children, administrators, corporations, government sector & community	

Throughout my fieldwork, I collected and analysed documents which provided me with information on the historical development of the organisation, and the programmes and activities that have been conducted. I also discovered the structure and practice of collaborative partnership in CyberCare. The analysis also provided me with the findings about the stakeholders involved and the general roles and support of each stakeholder group, which guided me in selecting participants for the interview and refining the interview questions.

#### 4.12.2 Participant observation

The data for participant observation was analysed based on my participation and observation of ten sessions of the YLM programme, for about five months, and nine coaching sessions and one community service project of Care4U programme across nearly three months.

At the beginning of each session, I noted the time the session began, and who attended. Throughout the session, if I recorded it, I noted any occurrences that were relevant to my research question. After each session of observation for each programme, I played back the recording, and briefly documented the main points in writing without attempting to transcribe the whole conversation in detail. At the time I was uncertain of what I wanted to find other than to get access to the case and develop rapport with the participants. A similar process continued until the programmes finished. I started to transcribe the conversation in all sessions of those two programmes in December 2009 and January 2010. Table 4.12.2 show the sample of cross reference analysis of observation transcription and field notes for Care4U programme from batch five. A similar template was used for YLM programme.

In terms of getting access to the case study, developing rapport with the participants, immersing myself as an insider, and identifying the potential participants to interview, this method served the purpose well. I managed to interview all the main coaches, three of the regular trainer coaches for the YLM programme, one fulltime staff who was also the coach for Care4U programme, seven of eight interns of Care4U programme, all children from Care4U programme, and three children from the YLM programme. These observations provided very rich data. Data have been triangulated with the findings of documents and/or interviews.

Participant observation was beneficial in terms of gaining understanding of the MAD curriculum implementation for the Care4U programme. For example, when I interviewed the children, they mentioned their excitement at joining the Community Service Project which would have been hard for me to imagine if I had not been involved in the event.

Table 4.12.2

*Sample of transcription excerpts and field notes of observation for Care4U Batch 5 (8 June – 29 August 2009)*

Session/ Attendees	Recording verbatim	Field notes	Subthemes	Theme
Session 6 Attendees: 10	SN: What do you want them to get? Intern A: For them to understand in a language they understand SH: what is the language? YW: Did you see them from the best in them? What stop them from understanding is in their believes Believe (they can do) – trust context – give tools (communication) It's not what you say but how you say it. You can set the context	They discuss about “How to create learning opportunities?”  Issue was raised by interns/ trainer coaches: The interns consulted SN and YW on the issue they were facing in coaching children in an orphanage they have selected for their project. It was a language/ communication issue. Children cannot understand English.	Learning opportunities  Language barrier  Believe in yourselves  See the best in them	Coaching method for personal development

### 4.12.3 Interviews

Interviews were the main method of getting various perspectives from the stakeholders involved. I have conducted four rounds of interviews with sixty participants, though only fifty-eight were counted for analysis due to technical errors. The first interview was conducted on 28 June 2009 with the director of CyberCare to verify the data found and not found in the documents to guide me in continuing my fieldwork. In the second and third rounds, the interviews were conducted with the recent volunteer interns (2-3 September 2009), and orphanage children (5-6 September 2009). Intensive interviews were carried out from 14 March 2010 to 14 April 2010. As the data for the interviews were collected in stages, the data analyses were also carried out in stages. However, the way the data were treated was the same.

### *Transcription and translation processes*

Six of the interviews were conducted in the Malay Language, and some of the other interviews, especially with the children, contained a mix of Malay and English languages. To preserve meaning, I transcribed all interviews according to the language used by the interviewees during the interviews word-for-word. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, I gave pseudonyms to the transcripts that indicated the category of stakeholders and order of the interview. I also gave pseudonyms to the orphanage names. To assist me in the transcription, I used Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and VLC Player, depending on where and which computer I used to playback and listen to the recorded interviews because I worked at various places throughout the process. I also had help in verifying the translations from three Malaysian students from the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programme who are skilful in translating and transcribing in both languages. In developing codes and analysing the data, I used English transcriptions. The Microsoft Office Word template, as shown in Appendix 4, was used to document the transcription.

The full details of the processes are as follows:

1. For the interviews that used Malay Language and mix languages, I fully transcribed the transcriptions into English after the first transcription;
2. For the rest of the interviews that were conducted in English, I used the original transcriptions for the following process;
3. Initially, I listened and typed what was audible from the video clip. I marked “xxx” or wrote down all possibilities (like “tree/three”) for words or phrases that were unclear, or I was uncertain of. I also jotted down the time interval of the clip;
4. I played each recorded interview again and again to make sure I had the most accurate interpretation possible;
5. At the same time, my assistants followed a similar process (1 to 4);
6. Then, I compared with the transcriptions done by the third parties. We double checked the transcriptions together, and referred to the specific time interval of the video clip

again, in case of any dispute. Overall, we produced similar transcriptions, with little adjustment.

7. The final transcriptions were emailed to the participants group by group for member checking (refer to Appendix 5 for member-checking letter).
8. The transcriptions were revised after the participants' feedback. These were the ones used for coding and analysing processes.

It was time consuming to transcribe and translate this way but it can minimise errors and the more accurate interpretation can be produced as the checking and rechecking, making thorough analysis, and acknowledging unwanted researcher's bias of the data continually are important to maintain rigor in qualitative research (Yin, 2011).

### ***Coding and data analysis***

This study mainly analysed the spoken words and phrases without always trying to relate them to any specific behaviour, as what people say is valuable in and of itself (Yin, 2011). In analysing, synthesising and categorising the data, I used both manual (paper transcripts) and computer assisted software for qualitative research (NVivo) to discover the themes and issues emerging from the interviews. NVivo was used more to compile and categorise the data than to synthesise them. The paper transcripts were used for initial coding to make it easier for me to discuss the findings and analysis with the supervisor, and to assign themes to them in a draft codebook. Each transcript was printed after I had highlighted the specific themes or issues with annotation using the track change application in Microsoft Word. This was done prior to the coding process in NVivo. The coding process served as a foundation for thematic analysis and answering the research questions.

To organise the data systematically, I uploaded the transcriptions (without track changes) that had been compiled on my computer into internal data sources in NVivo software, and clustered the transcriptions according to the group of stakeholders they belong to as in Figure 4.12.3(a). This serves as a database to the coding process.

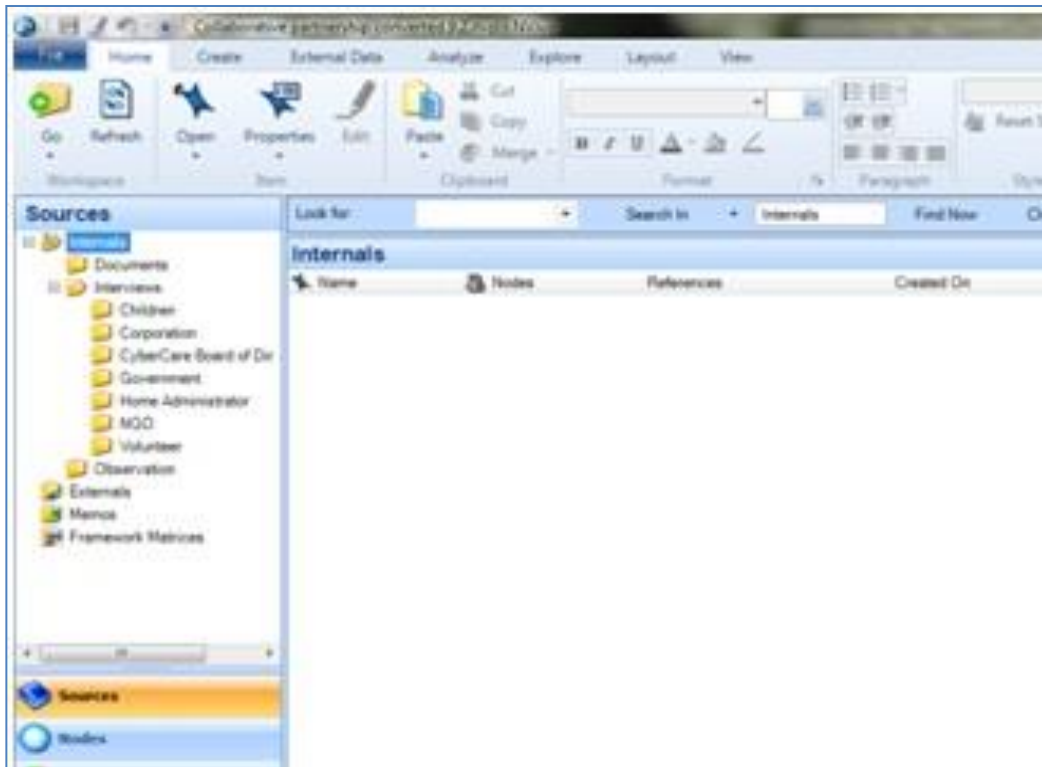


Figure 4.12.3(a)  
*Compiling and categorising transcriptions of stakeholders in internal data source*

From the internal data sources, I coded the data using the nodes functions in NVivo. The process of discovering and developing themes was based on a paper-based codebook, discussion during the supervision meetings, interview protocol, summary of themes and subthemes. I began by creating a source classification to record the details of the sources as they appeared in the interviews (see Figure 4.12.3(b)). This classification helped me in generating the summary of demographic characteristics of stakeholders interviewed in Table 4.11.4 earlier.

There were many steps involved in analysing and synthesising the data. Participants' responses were coded into nodes (Bazeley, 2009). Further analysis was then done on the existing nodes, to determine whether some nodes are actually interrelated or could be further broken down into other nodes. This process was continued until the whole transcriptions were coded, and addressed my constructed research questions.

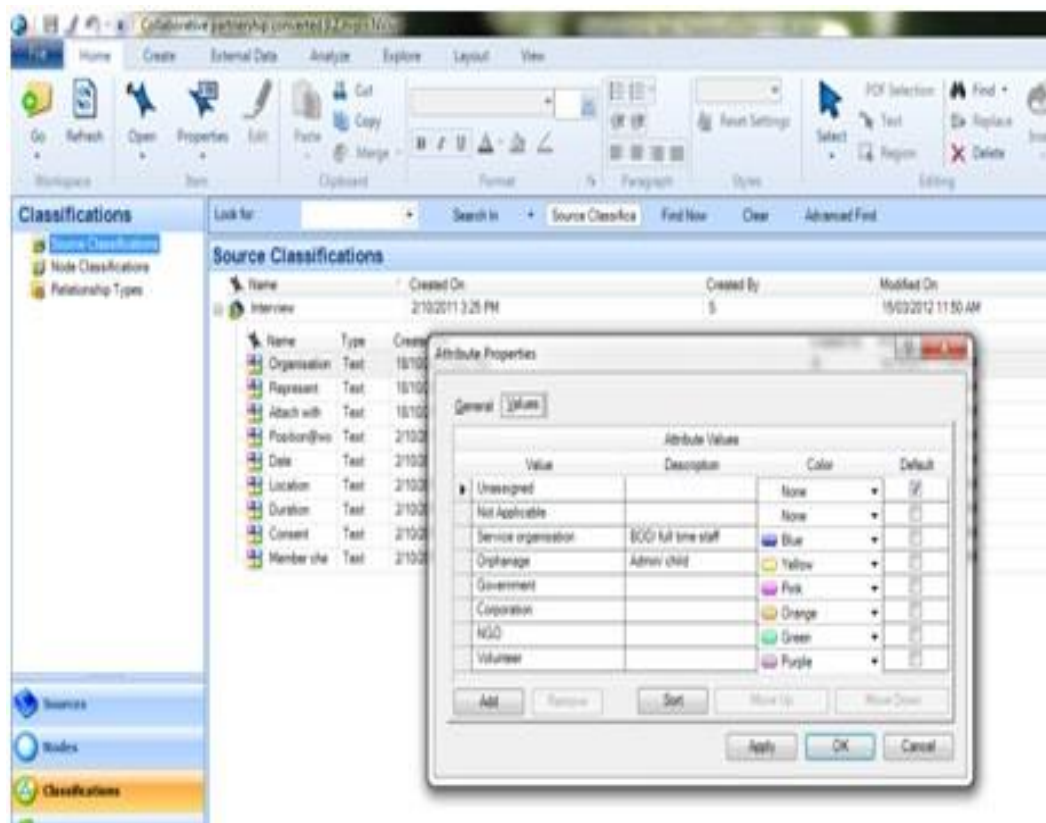


Figure 4.12.3 (b)  
*Attributes of the stakeholders*

In addressing the research questions, I attempted several ways of coding the data throughout the process. This required me to refine my research questions and refer back to literature review, and enabled me to plan for the outline of findings and discussions chapters. Based on the second set of codes, I narrowed down the codes according to the research questions. This final coding (Figure 4.12.3(c)) was used for my final analysis and synthesis with further revision and refinement done in writing.

In coding and developing themes, I had to familiarise myself with the data. This was done by reading the interview transcripts many times and listening to the recorded interviews repeatedly, mostly via earphones connected to an iPod, while jogging or exercising. This helped me to understand the underlying meaning throughout the transcription. I kept memos to note any emerging theme or subtheme, new findings, change to the existing ones or any



value added idea to the findings. Annotations and memos were used to indicate the themes, or some points that would be interesting to consider later.

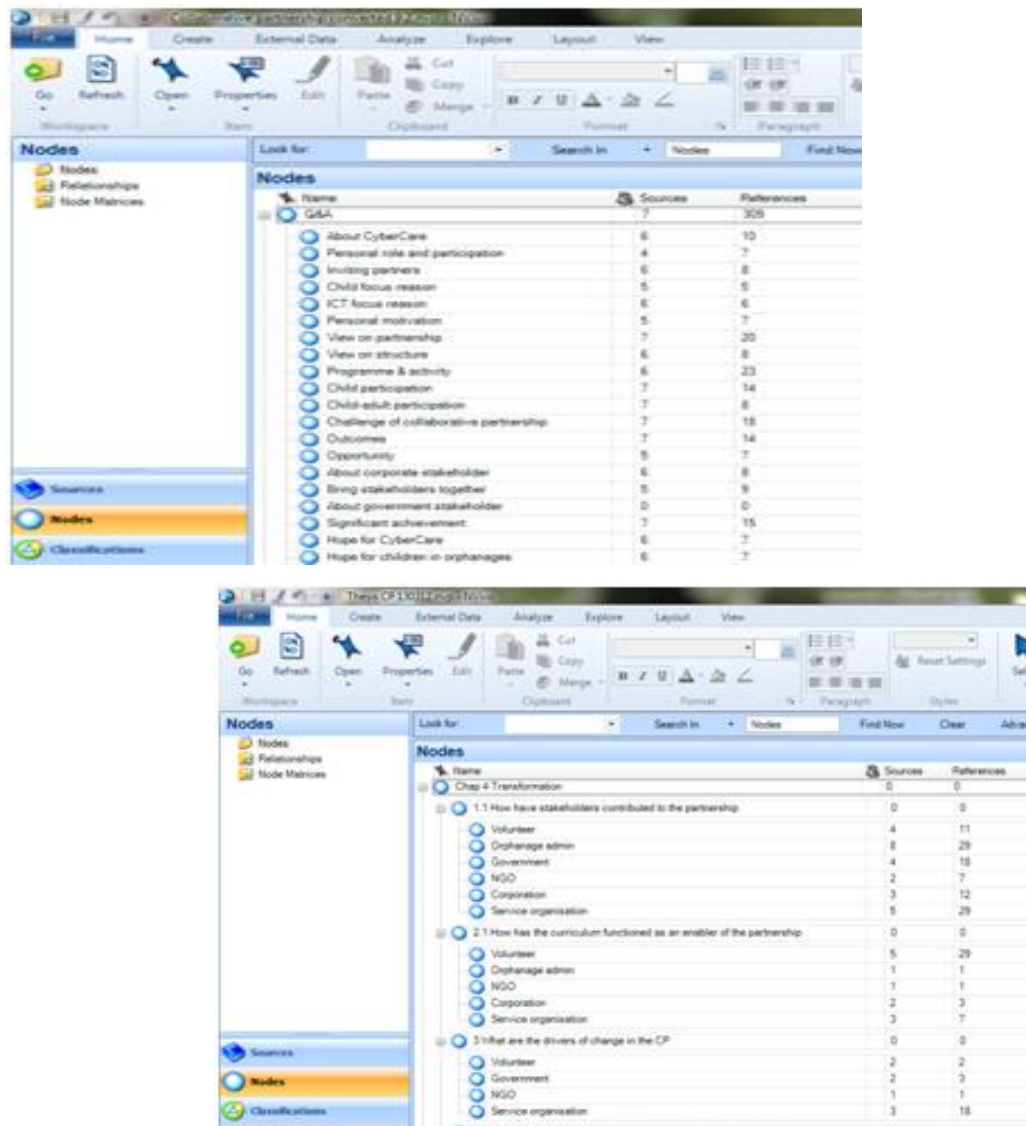


Figure 4.12.3(c)  
*Initial and final themes developed for discussion*

While coding, I noted some similarities and differences between stakeholders' perspectives that can be seen from the coded data in the codebook. Then, from each of the coded themes or categories, I compared the perspectives among individuals in the same group of stakeholders, and also between the different stakeholders, and what makes them similar or different. Findings from the interviews were compared to the findings from documents reviewed and

participant observations, and later placed alongside the findings of the previous studies from the literature review in the discussions.

#### **4.13 Quality and credibility of the research**

In any study, the need to make the findings of a study convincing to the readers or to maximise the quality of the research requires the researchers to test and demonstrate that their studies are credible (Golafshani, 2003). In quantitative research, the credibility depends on careful instrument construction; however, in qualitative research, “*the researcher is the instrument*” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). This means that, credibility in qualitative research depends on the capability and effort of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003). The strategies that I applied to maximise the quality and credibility of this research included triangulation, member checking, and ethical considerations.

##### **4.13.1 Triangulation**

Triangulation is regarded by Stake (2010) as “*the grand strategy for testing the quality of the evidence*” (p. 132). Stake (2010) simply regards triangulation as various ways developed “*to get the meanings straight,*” and become more convinced of the quality of the evidence (p. 123). Researchers “*look again and again, several times*” (Stake, 2010, p. 123), mainly by using multiple methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) agree that multi-method approaches are the key feature of qualitative research. They suggest that the utilisation of multiple methods in triangulation is a way for the qualitative researcher to seek to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. However, they remind the researchers that objective reality can never be captured, as we can only be acquainted with a thing through its representation. Therefore, Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) regard triangulation as an alternative to validation, rather than a tool or strategy of validation, because the combination of numerous methodologies, empirical materials (data sources), perspectives (theories), and observers (investigators) in a particular study is implicitly understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry rather than capturing an

objective reality. The following subsection will further discuss the types of triangulation applicable to my study.

### ***Data sources triangulation***

This study mainly applied data sources triangulation from the interviews with multiple stakeholders. Triangulation of empirical materials or data sources means to check out the consistency of different data sources within the same method (Patton, 2002). Denzin (1989) points out that data can be collected from different participants, at different times, and/or different places. Triangulation of data sources also involves an analysis stage, in which Denzin (1989) identifies three levels at which data can be analysed, which are : 1) aggregate; when the focus of analysis involves the data collected from different separated unrelated individuals; 2) interactive; when the focus of analysis involves interaction between people or groups; and 3) collectivity; when the unit to be observed involves a group, community or society. For example, the interviews in this study provide multiple perspectives from different stakeholders as in Table 4.13.1.

Three stakeholders discussed their involvement with CyberCare's programmes and how they value it in their verbatim discussion and I highlighted their keywords. I grouped this into two subthemes of "long-term" and "short-term" which I developed into a theme concerning a length of time of collaborative partnership.

In the process of triangulating data sources, Patton (2002) admits that it is common for disagreement between diverse stakeholders to occur, which is in fact what I am looking for in this study. This view is further strengthened by Stake (2010, p. 125), who argues that triangulated evidence is more credible:

*When knowledge is being constructed, no two observers construct it exactly the same. Complete confirmation is not possible, but views are partly agreed upon, partly not. When what is not agreed upon is unimportant, both triangulation outcomes are reported. What is agreed upon is reported upon as substantiated. When the "not agreed upon" is important, the different views should be looked at closely.*

Table 4.13.1  
*Sample of data source triangulations*

Stakeholder	Excerpt	Keyword	Subtheme	Theme
Service organisation (YW-SO)	Unfortunately in Malaysia, the long-term is until the next year comes up. That's the sad part.	More than a year	Long-term	Length of time
Orphanage administrator (ER-OA)	CyberCare involvement was very short. Short in the sense, I think for about two years	2 years	Short-term	
Corporation (ML-Corp)	I think our partnership with CyberCare was like once a year of an event.	Once a year	Short term	

This is applicable to my study, as the triangulated data analysis revealed that there are differences between what was found in documents and what was said by the interview participants. There were also differences from individual to individual, and from group to group on the same issue. In some senses, disagreement is more important than agreement for my research, as disagreements emerge as a way of mapping the overarching findings.

#### 4.13.2 Member checking

The next strategy of validity in qualitative research is member checking. Stake (2010) who regards member checking as a triangulation effort, describes it as a process whereby the researcher presents a recording or draft copy of an observation or interview to the informants, and requests that they provide correction and comment.

For my research, member checking was used with all interview participants except children. This was because the questions designed for children were less complex than those constructed for adults. The time allocated to interview the children was also longer compared to the time allocated for adults because I gave meticulous attention to children, so that they would be physically and emotionally ready to keep the interview going. I listened attentively,

and verified any uncertain pronunciation or information on the site of the interview, since some of them seemed to have difficulties in constructing words and speaking up. The care that was taken to clarify meanings and ensure understanding meant that interviews with children were undertaken at a slow pace. This strategy for member checking was used so the children could remember their experiences when they were still fresh in their minds, but they might not retain similar information after a longer period of time (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, it was not easy for me to send interview transcripts straight to the children without going through the orphanage administrators, especially after returning from my fieldwork in Malaysia to my base in Australia. The children in the orphanages selected for this study also had difficulties in accessing the internet without supervision from the administrators. This made direct and effective communication between me and the children hard to establish from afar. For these reasons, I believed it would be better to not impose member checking on them, to protect the confidentiality of the children's views.

Member checking is a slow process (Stake, 2010), and participants often fail to respond because of limitations of time, or a different view from the researcher regarding the importance of the process. This was what I experienced. Of thirty four emails sent, five participants replied with minor corrections, and three approved the transcriptions without changes. Two replied and promised to review the transcriptions and email me the corrected versions, but I did not receive the revised versions even after I reminded them several times. Consequently, I used the original transcriptions for analysis. The rest did not reply, which I interpreted as acceptance of the transcriptions as I clearly explained in writing that if I did not receive their feedback within two weeks that meant they accepted the transcription without amendment (refer Appendix 5). None of the participants changed their consent. Four emails could not be delivered, so I used the original transcriptions.

#### **4.13.3 Ethical Considerations**

In carrying out any form of research, formal consideration must be given to ethical issues that will, or may potentially arise throughout the research. This is to ensure that the individuals and organisations that participate in the research are protected from harm or adverse

consequence that may result from research activities (Patton, 2002). Ethical considerations that apply to adult research subjects should apply to children as well, and the researcher is responsible for ensuring that laws are followed and ethical standards for the conduct of the activity are met (Schenk & Williamson, 2005). The standard ethical practices included in this research include informed consent, privacy and confidentiality.

Before the start of the fieldwork for this research, the formal ethical evaluation process was initiated through Macquarie University's Human Research Ethics Committee to conform to the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). As the human subjects in this research included children in Malaysia, this research had also to conform to the Child Act 2001 under Malaysian Law. The preamble of Act 611 provides that every child is entitled to protection and assistance in all circumstances without regard to distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, social origin or physical, mental or emotional disabilities or any status. The provisions of Act 611 are based on the core principles of the Child Right Convention which includes non-discrimination towards the child, best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

The multilingual and multicultural context of Malaysia presented ethical concerns around informed consent. Christians (2011) relates informed consent to a "*proper respect for human freedom*" which commonly gives conditions for the subjects to agree to participate voluntarily without any physical or psychological force, and "*must be based on full and open information*" (p. 65). In the context of my study, informed consent is included for adult and child participants. Informed consent was obtained from participants by using the form in Appendix 6 for adult participants and Appendix 7 for child participants. For adult participants, interviewees were given a copy of the written consent form before the interview was conducted, together with the confirmation letter providing details about the interview. As *Bahasa Melayu* is the country's national language, and English is widely spoken, I also prepared all the related documents, namely brief research proposal, consent forms, interview questions and official letters in both languages (English, and *Bahasa Melayu*), so I could

easily provide it to the participants according to their preferred language for their better understanding of my research.

Before each interview was conducted, I again briefed the participant about the consent form verbally in the language he/she preferred, and his/her freedom to withdraw from participating in the research, and then let him or her sign the form. I also asked the participant's consent to record the conversation, as included in the consent form. In the case where consent was not given for the recording, I took notes myself. I again asked the participants to verify their given consent when I sent the transcriptions for member checking, and none of them withdrew their consent.

The key ethical issue for this project concerns its inclusion of interviews with vulnerable young people under the age of eighteen. The key issues identified in the literature around research with children (including vulnerable children) are centred on the preoccupations of informed consent, and the protection of research participants. The debates around informed consent usually focus on the appropriate age for child informed consent. It is common practice for researchers to seek informed consent from the children's parents or caretakers to get children's participation, yet some researchers argue over the competence of the children over a certain age to agree to participate by themselves without adults' consent (Morrow & Richards, 1996). In the context of my study, the child participants were housed in orphanages. They are orphans who had lost both their parents, children from single-parent families, and/or children who had been ordered by the law to be placed in the orphanages. They are wards of state under the Malaysian Law where, among other things, the Act stresses the responsibility of the orphanage administrator as a legal guardian to look after, protect, and rehabilitate the children under his/her care to ensure that the child lives the happy and peaceful life they deserve. For the children to participate legally, informed consent was requested from the orphanage administrators. Nevertheless, before each interview, I briefed the child or children to let them understand their rights to participate and withdraw from the study, and for them to feel free to express themselves.

Privacy and confidentiality is another ethical standard that insists on safeguarding people's identities and those of the research locations (Christians, 2011, p. 66). Confidentiality must be guaranteed to the subjects as the "*primary safeguard against unwanted exposure,*" and all personal data have to be "*concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity*" (Christians, 2011, p. 66). This ethical aspect of safeguarding privacy and confidentiality was applied to my study by giving the participants the option for them or their organisations to be identified or remain anonymous. The majority of adult participants gave full consent, and were quite flexible in allowing themselves/ their organisations to be identified. However ultimately I used their initials throughout the discussion. In order to protect the child participants, I explained to the children, and to the home administrators, that I would not reveal their children's names in any report or disseminated information to ensure their anonymity, and as a precaution, for any conflict of interest in the future.

On each approach to both adult and child participants, I explained clearly my role as a researcher, and the fact that I was independent of any stakeholder involved. I further explained the restrictions placed on access to any information divulged, and how the information would be disseminated in a language that was understandable for the participants.

#### **4.14 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the methodological choice, research design and the utilisation of multiple sources of data collection. My experience in collecting the data through document review, observation, and interview was an exhausting process. The rich findings of different perspectives were messy, and the triangulation process difficult. Yet, it was a fascinating journey when the complex data were organised, and the findings unfolded. By the end of the process, I had felt and experienced what it means for a researcher to be an instrument in qualitative research. The next chapter will proceed with the findings of the drivers of change and the transformation of this collaborative partnership from diverse perspectives of multiple-stakeholders.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP IN A LONGSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the research question: What are the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation from the perspectives of multiple-stakeholders? In particular to this study, various factors have gradually transformed the collaborative partnership activities in the quest for sustaining the collaborative efforts to empower children in orphanages.

Based on multiple sources of evidence from different stakeholder perspectives, this chapter draws out the evolving perspectives on collaborative partnership. The interviews with the selected stakeholders explain how the stakeholders' perceived aims, roles and functions shaped the structure of the partnership. The participants draw on their experiences of collaboration and lessons learnt during the process of carrying out their roles in achieving their aims in the partnership process. In a few instances, the findings are analysed from available documents.

To provide a clear view of the change and transformation that occurred in this collaborative partnership setting, this chapter begins with the discussion of the drivers which forged and sustained the collaborative partnership, followed by the stakeholders' views of the aims and focus of their collaborative work. The chapter also considers the significant discussion among the stakeholders regarding their perspectives on whether long-term partnership is valuable and the chapter ends with the discussion on the drivers of change and transformation in the collaborative partnerships. Not all stakeholders offered views on each of these issues, as the discussion was based on the information provided by the stakeholders based on their role,

involvement and experience of this collaborative partnership. Table 5.1 provides summary of the characteristic of participants interviewed.

Table 5.1  
*Summary of the characteristic of participants interviewed*

Category	Participant	Represent	Involvement
Service Organisation	JN-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MC-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MS-SO	Fulltime staff	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	SY-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	YW-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Government	KJ-Gov	NITC	Grant & policies
Government	*PF-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	*CA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	RA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	SJ-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Corporation	*CJ-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	*TH-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	ML-Corp	Accenture	Various programmes/ activities
Corporation	SN-Corp	LifeWorks	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
NGO	JF-NGO	Kota Damansara Friends	Community Service Project
NGO	SL-NGO	Lions Club	CyberCare patron
Volunteer	*YY-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YYi-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	KS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 4
Volunteer	MG-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	PQ-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	RN-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	DP-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	J-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5
Orphanage (administrator)	JS-OA	Orphanage1	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	P-OA	Orphanage2	YLM Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	RAI-OA	Orphanage3	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	SLO-OA	Orphanage4	Camp Vision Singapore
Orphanage (administrator)	ER-OA	Orphanage5	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	AK-OA	Orphanage6	Care4U Programme

Orphanage (administrator)	DZ-OA	Orphanage7	Care4U & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	AT-OA	Orphanage8	YLM & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	TT-OA	Orphanage9	Camp Vision Singapore
Orphanage (child)	UG-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*S-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*K-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*V-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	N-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	T1-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	P-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	T2-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	CSK-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	SV-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	D-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*PO-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*SR-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*DV-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	U-Kid	**Child participant	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (child)	*RC-Kid	**Child participant	YLM Programme
Orphanage (child)	*JN-Kid	**Child participant	YLM Programme
Orphanage (child)	*VN-Kid	**Child participant	YLM Programme
Orphanage (child)	*ST-Kid	**Child participant	Leadership Camp
Orphanage (child)	*NF-Kid	**Child participant	Leadership Camp
Orphanage (child)	*NH-Kid	**Child participant	Leadership Camp
Orphanage (child)	SH-Kid	**Child participant	e-Workshop
Orphanage (child)	TP-Kid	**Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient
Orphanage (child)	SF-Kid	**Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient

\* Joint interview

\*\* Low level of account in this study

## **5.2 Forging and sustaining collaborative partnership**

How do collaborative partnerships come to be forged and sustained? In this study, the key actors in the initiation of the collaborative partnership were mostly from the service organisation. The participants discussed various factors that have driven them to continue the collaboration. Various stakeholders placed different emphases on the importance of individual and organisational involvement in realising the collaborative agenda. This section discusses six themes that the stakeholders consistently relate to the process of forging and sustaining collaborative partnerships.

### **5.2.1 Key initiators of the collaborative partnership**

Participants from the service organisation interviewed for this research emphasise the importance of individual actors in the initiation of collaborative partnerships. Three participants who pioneered CyberCare, YW-SO (current Director), JN-SO (Ex-Vice President), and MC-SO (current Secretary) mentioned that they initially set up CyberCare with *“a group of about fifty people who attended a leadership programme.”* The group attended the programme because of their own interest, and the programme required them to organise a community project involving child participants from orphanages. After the programme finished, they decided to continue doing the job they were doing with the children, and formed the Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (LCCKL) in 1998. They formed an organisation based on the difficulties they had experienced in volunteering as a non-recognised group. Similar information was confirmed by the Lions Club representative, SL-NGO who was closely involved with the process of forming LCCKL.

The findings also reveal that the earliest collaborators basically came from *“a group of business people”* who realised the opportunities for them to *“transfer their skills and experiences to improve the lives of others,”* and eager *“to apply their business theory and skills to manage non-profit organisation.”* YW-SO was the key person in mobilising the set-up of the partnership, and responsible for negotiating with the potential stakeholders. He had a close relationship with the key corporate partner, Microsoft, at the time.

What was also interesting here was the multiple roles and positions (see Figure 5.2.1) played by the members of the organisation, especially YW-SO. He was always considered by other partners as being the initial driver of this collaborative partnership as discussed in the following subsection.

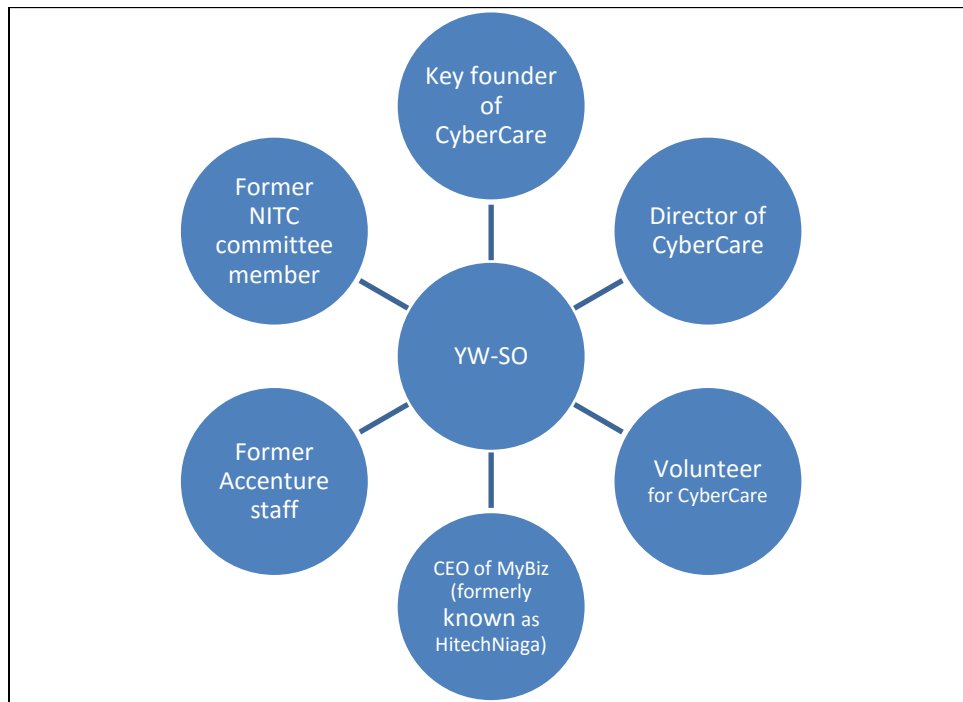


Figure 5.2.1  
*Example of multiple roles and positions of a key founder of CyberCare*

As the top manager of a corporation, former staff of a well-known corporation, and former NITC committee member, YW-SO seemed to have a large number of contacts through his wide network, which may have also helped him to gain respect and credibility from various parties. YW-SO acted formally as a key founder, and worked informally as the sponsor and volunteer for CyberCare. While still active in all these roles, he is also a current director of CyberCare. He considered himself as responsible for sustaining the collaborative partnerships over the years. Informally, his company also sponsored CyberCare. In fact, his company was CyberCare's corporate promoter when the government awarded a grant for CyberCare's establishment. However, he preferred to keep the involvement of the company to a minimum

*“to avoid conflict of interest with other co-owners, or force the employees to join.”* He preferred to consider his involvement as individual rather than representing the company.

### **5.2.2 Personal relationships and individual personality**

In this study, personal relationships are visible in the *“direct approach”* and *“trusted referral”* to invite potential partners to collaborate, and continue the collaborative efforts further. This thesis uses the term *“direct approach”* to describe the way a person from CyberCare would approach the potential partner without intermediaries. This type of approach is different from an approach through *“trusted referrals,”* as discussed in this section. Some participants referred to it as a *“straight forward approach,”* but I use both terms interchangeably. Related to this, potential partners may be influenced by the personality of the person making the approach to join the collaborative work, and keep collaborating. Four stakeholder groups<sup>8</sup> agreed that *“direct approach”* and/or the *“personality of the founder”* was what drove them to join the collaborative work or set up the partnership in the beginning, and two participants from corporation and NGO groups also continue to consider the individual attributes to be what have driven them to continue their collaborative efforts.

The partnership with the Lions Club, and Accenture began with a direct approach from the founder of CyberCare. In the case of a corporate stakeholder, Accenture, the partnership was formed through a direct approach from the director of CyberCare himself who used to work at Accenture. This involved the relationship that the corporate representatives had with the CyberCare representative.

ML-Corp, head of marketing and communications at Accenture at the time of the interview mentioned:

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<sup>8</sup> corporation, orphanage administrator, government, and NGO stakeholders

*Basically with CyberCare we spoke to the Executive Director, YW-SO. And we also used to work with YW-SO in the past before. In fact, he was a former Accenture employee.*

In this case, the expectation was related to the individual personality in CyberCare, who was the founder of CyberCare during his previous employment with Accenture (between individual and organisation). The existing relationship between individual and organisation can be detected from ML-Corp's usage of the word "we" in the conversation, which obviously showed that she represented her organisation.

Orphanage administrators also viewed the partnership with CyberCare to have been initiated through a "*direct approach*." Eight out of nine orphanage administrators<sup>9</sup> mentioned that they started their collaboration via "*direct approach*" from CyberCare. Then, the decision about whether to let the children join the programmes was left to the orphanage administrators. In contrast to the Accenture's case above, this situation showed that the orphanage administrators were willing to be vulnerable and take risks in accepting to partner with CyberCare without knowing any CyberCare members in person.

What initially drove the government to partner with CyberCare was only clearly mentioned by KJ-Gov, one of the five government officials interviewed. This may be due to his important position at that time<sup>10</sup>. He related the initial driver of the government relationship with CyberCare to many aspects which involved himself as a key government player at the time. As he knew the founder of CyberCare through the referral, it could be argued that YW-SO approached MIMOS directly. Similar to other stakeholders mentioned above, KJ-Gov

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<sup>9</sup> TT-OA, RAI-OA, ER-OA, AK-OA, AT-OA, SLO-OA, DZ-OA, and JS-OA

<sup>10</sup> He was a vice-president of IT Policy Development of the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (MIMOS) under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), and headed the National Information Technology Council (NITC) directorate. At the time of the interview, KJ-Gov was a retired government officer and the dean at one of the private universities in Malaysia.



considered one of the four initial drivers of the collaborative partnership with CyberCare to include the respect and influence of the founder of CyberCare:

*.. YW-SO [had] done some work with other Vice Presidents in MIMOS. So, people knew him in MIMOS...*

As mentioned by other stakeholders above, NGO participants also regarded the direct approach from other individuals involved with CyberCare's programme as being what motivated them to join the partnership. The collaborative partnership was also driven by the personal relationship between lecturer and student in a learning institution as with JF-NGO<sup>11</sup> who regarded a direct approach from intern students to facilitate their programme as what initially drove him to work collaboratively with CyberCare. He got the resources needed by the students, in which he established a partnerships network for CyberCare to leverage.

The importance of individual players in the collaborative arrangement was also agreed by both NGO participants as the drivers of a sustained collaborative partnership. However, they did not refer to just a single individual personality, as mentioned by many corporate participants. JF-NGO regarded the ability of the collaborative partnership to be sustained as being driven by mutual respect and trust between individuals rather than simply between organisations alone. He stated:

*... at the end of the day it is not about organisations, it is about individuals.  
It's about mutual respect from the individuals, at the same time you inherit  
trust in them that they can deliver.*

This view centred on the importance of continuity in relationships between individuals, such as CyberCare pioneers and interns. This was also in line with SL-NGO, who observed the

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<sup>11</sup> JF-NGO was an assistant professor at one of the faculties in UTAR cum head of the Friends of Kota Damansara (FOKD), an environmental-based society.

founder of CyberCare and his team as the “*driving force*” for sustaining this collaborative partnership.

Besides the direct approach, personal relationships were also apparent in trusted referral, where CyberCare was introduced to individuals or organisations through people who know about CyberCare’s work. Trusted referral was considered by the government, corporate, and service organisation stakeholders as one of the initial drivers of the partnership in this study. Similar to the perspective of the government official, the corporate participants, PIKOM and LifeWorks initially formed partnerships with CyberCare via referral from others who knew the work of the organisation. CJ-Corp, president of the National ICT Association of Malaysia (PIKOM), commented:

*I got introduced by Lions first. And then it was Lions that said, “Hey, we have the IT arm that does this kind of project” and that’s how CyberCare came into the picture.*

At the time, the Lions Club still served as a sponsor for CyberCare. SN-Corp, CEO of LifeWorks had been referred by her client, SY-SO, who happened to be in the board of directors in CyberCare. SY-SO, the treasurer in the board, on the other hand, was first referred to volunteer for CyberCare by her cousin, who was also a volunteer in CyberCare at the time.

The findings showed that it is not necessary for the initial trust to be directly related to the specific organisation or individuals who want to form a partnership. Trust was built through the recommendation of other trusted organisations or individuals.

### **5.2.3 Outstanding project proposal**

The initial drivers of an individual in the service organisation, the government and NGO stakeholders also included an outstanding project proposal. This proposal was the mechanism YW-SO used in the negotiating process to invite potential partners to collaborate with CyberCare. The participants regarded the proposal as an “*ambitious project plan.*”

The initial driver of government involvement included the unique proposal which was in line with the government agenda, as KJ-Gov said, *“When he (YW-SO) came with the proposal, it fits with our agenda especially for this, what I called the voluntary sector, which is different than the other model.”*

SL-NGO regarded the ambitious nature of the project proposed by the founder of CyberCare and his team as the key initial driver in this collaborative partnership set up.

Based on these findings, the participants who based their interest on the project proposal were mostly from the government group who were used to a more structured organisation. Some individuals involved were leaders of their organisations and familiar with a negotiation process through proposal presentation. Perhaps, it would be much easier for them to understand and use the documented proposals to present and convince other members of their organisations to collaborate.

#### **5.2.4 Project and programme features forging and sustaining collaboration**

As CyberCare is an ICT-based community service project consisting of many programmes that were carried out through many activities, the findings reveal that factors related to project or programmes such as the focus, approach, and outcomes were important drivers in collaboration. The findings show that the government and service organisation regarded the initial focus of the project on children as what initially drove them to join and continue the collaboration. In contrast, the corporate, orphanage administrator and volunteer stakeholders considered the approach and outcomes of the programmes as the driver of their sustained collaboration. AT-OA from Orphanage8 regarded the increased number of partners from orphanages and big corporations like Microsoft as a part of CyberCare achievement in sustaining the collaborative partnership.

From the government perspective, KJ-Gov mentioned that the focus of the project on children drove the government to partner with CyberCare. He believed that this focus showed that the people involved, especially the initiators of the programme, possessed a deep interest and

understanding of issues facing children. Similar to KJ-Gov, the focus of the programme on children was also one of the factors that led SY-SO to join the service organisation. She commented:

*The children moved (me) definitely, really it is about the children, in fact during YLM programme, sometimes I found myself learning more than the children, so that's what actually motivates me, and (I) see like most children laughing or really getting something out of that session, that's what motivates me...*

Based on the perspectives mentioned above, both stakeholders appeared to be driven by the belief that the collaborative partnership in CyberCare has the potential to produce a positive impact on children in orphanages. Despite the shifting aims of the programme, some stakeholders continued to be involved based on the methods and outcomes of the programmes. Most of the methods the stakeholders spoke about were in relation to the MAD curriculum. This was the latest iteration of the internship programme called Care4U. Most responses regarding the MAD curriculum and Care4U were given by CJ-Corp from PIKOM and SN-Corp from LifeWorks as the key players who were involved since the planning stage of developing the curriculum, as well as some volunteers. CJ-Corp commented:

*... we thought that it is an excellent approach because it brings the person to use ICT, and what he or she learned into a useful part of his/her life and if that part is achieved, it becomes a life-long commitment to ICT rather than just learning how to use it and then going forward aimlessly in terms of using the PC.*

Another corporate partner, SN-Corp, who was also involved in the development and implementation of the curriculum, shared a similar view:

*...I know about the application of ICT when I was a part of the programme, or coaching and training. I think it is really valuable because it gives the children actual skills that they can use later when they grow up and leave the homes....That gives them a greater advantage when they leave the (orphanage) system.*

Besides the method of the programme, what has shown up as a driver sustaining collaborative partnership was the method of devising and delivering the MAD curriculum as a whole. This curriculum involved collaborative partnership throughout the whole process from the devising up to the implementation stage. CJ-Corp was clearly satisfied with the way PIKOM worked collaboratively with other partners in developing the curriculum:

*Our involvement was quite specific in the sense of producing the curriculum. Getting a few core groups of the pilot trainers as well as students to prove that the concept can work.*

CJ-Corp's view above was based on PIKOM's management role in producing the curriculum. As a key partner who was fully involved with the core tasks of devising and implementing the curriculum, SN-Corp regarded the curriculum as the outcome of the collaborative work, constructed from the internship training sessions and regular interaction with the children under the Care4U programme.

The motivation to continue working collaboratively was also linked by the stakeholders to the successful outcomes of the programmes. Besides acknowledging his favourable approach of Care4U programme, CJ-Corp was satisfied with the success of the pilot project of Care4U. CJ-Corp's observation was supported by some volunteers (YY-Vol, YYi-Vol, and YS-Vol) who continue to volunteer in CyberCare and to remain motivated even after the internship programme finished where they successfully carried out two pilot projects.

The importance of having successful outcomes in sustaining collaborative partnership was also stated by other corporate stakeholders, based on corporation involvement with other programmes in CyberCare. For example, the findings from the documents showed that Samsung was driven to continue to collaborate with CyberCare during the early days, based on the evaluated quality of ongoing or planned work. The organisation regarded the ongoing and planned project in CyberCare as effective, based on the ability of the project to enhance children's lives.

Overall, the findings also show that all orphanage administrators related their motivation to continue their children's involvement in the programmes, based on the recognition given by CyberCare to children's achievement in terms of academic scholarships and awards.

#### **5.2.5 Available opportunities and shared resources to sustain collaborative partnership**

The responses from the service organisation, corporate, and NGO stakeholders suggested that available opportunities and shared resources sustained the collaborative partnership. The service organisation's participants viewed opportunities in terms of what CyberCare can provide and what has been provided by the partners. Career opportunity at CyberCare after the internship was what fulltime staff viewed as the opportunity provided by the service organisation. The internship programme (Care4U) also opened up opportunities for the participating students to continue their voluntary involvement in collaborative work. For example, MS-SO chose to work as a fulltime staff member with CyberCare after the internship programme finished.

However, MS-SO admitted that she was not as actively involved with the voluntary work as she envisioned after she joined CyberCare as a fulltime staff. The way she looks at the same task also changed:

*Interviewer (Me): Does it mean when you join as a coach (after became a fulltime staff), it is a part of your job responsibilities, or it is just your own voluntary choice?*

*MS-SO: I think it's more of a work responsibility.*

MS-SO's view was also slightly different from what YW-SO expected from the fulltime staff.

*...Originally when they (fulltime staff) came to work, "oh, this is great, I can do charity work, social work and get paid, fantastic." But once they keep doing it often, they see it as a job, then they compare their job with their friends' jobs...*

The study describes the conflicting relationship between staff and employer in interpreting their formal roles in the voluntary organisation. However, these findings were only based on responses from the one and only fulltime staff in CyberCare. There was insufficient data to make a comparison between fulltime staff roles.

The responses from the interns who continued to volunteer after the internship programmes finished reveal that some interns<sup>12</sup> related more with CyberCare and valued their involvement as career related activities during the internship, compared to when they had finished the programme. They portrayed a sense of detachment from CyberCare after the programme finished. However, their perception of being detached from the service organisation did not reduce their participation in voluntary work with CyberCare after the internship.

New partners that provided resources and opened up opportunities for CyberCare to carry out the programmes helped the group to continue with collaborative work especially in the early years. MC-SO claimed that many of the resources they received were in terms of financial support that was used to hire and train many people, and to give ICT equipment and ICT training to many children in orphanages. SY-SO mentioned that some partners provided human resources for the programmes such as which UTAR provided internship students for the Care4U programme. The opportunities provided by the partners to sustain the collaborative efforts were also apparent among the corporate stakeholders. The discussion in the previous sections of this chapter showed that Microsoft came into the partnership to provide resources and skills for ICT programmes which later extended into the Education Excellence Programme. Samsung joined the partnership to support YLM, Accenture to collaborate in the fund-raising programmes and YLM, PIKOM and LifeWorks came to collaborate in the development and implementation of the curriculum via the Care4U programme. With the programmes actively carried out, these findings show that sustaining programmes or efforts are more important than sustaining partners to continue a collaborative partnership.

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<sup>12</sup> YY-Vol, YS-Vol and YYi-Vol

For the specific discussion here, I wish to highlight what is described by one partner as a “win-win” (SN-Corp) situation as a driver of sustaining collaborative partnership:

*...our partnership is so open and very respectful towards each other. It is a win-win partnership for both of us.*

It was the practice of this win-win situation in the collaboration that allowed CyberCare to maintain some of its stakeholders over the long term. This concept can be seen from the reported practice from both document and interview findings. For example, the partnership with Microsoft allowed CyberCare to obtain resources and help link the orphanages. At the same time, it helped to publicise the Microsoft Foundation Campaign and get wider social involvement. In that sense, the partnership served the purposes of both partners. While other partners may not use this phrase directly, there was a sense of win-win in the conversation, as CJ-Corp described their collaborative work in producing the curriculum, where at the end of the conversation, he said, “..I think both sides did gain from the project.” Additionally, both NGOs were concerned about the importance of reciprocal exchange of resources and expertise in continuing their collaborative works. This shows that there is no complete altruism in volunteering, and the capabilities of the partners to complement each other can drive the collaborative partnership forward.

#### **5.2.6 University course requirement for internship, peer influence and personal interest**

From the perspectives of the volunteers, the drivers for forging and sustaining collaboration were closely related to the industrial training or internship programme they joined in CyberCare. Even though volunteers mainly joined CyberCare because of university course requirements, which may present as forced involvement, some of them had an altruistic interest from the beginning of the programme. This subsection will discuss findings about the volunteers’ perspectives on the initial driver for participation. These drivers may be categorised into course driven and personal motives.



Five of the nine participants<sup>13</sup> mentioned that they were initially driven by course requirements as they did not expect to do their internship in CyberCare but had to resort to it because of no other available choice. Before they joined CyberCare, they viewed the organisation as a “*dumping place*” for students who cannot get accepted into other organisations to continue their internship. YY-Vol even blamed himself for being too late to register for the internship. Some of them also gave various reasons for having such perceptions. For example, PQ-Vol heard bad things about CyberCare, YS-Vol preferred business oriented organisations, and KS-Vol had problems with “*miscommunications*” despite an early interest in the organisation as he explained:

*The miscommunication (was) there, no one knew how to apply to the company (CyberCare). When you asked the university, the university said that the university did not assist us in applying to the company. Several lecturers gave very good comments about the company, several lecturers talked very badly about the company, but from all the seniors that I talked to, who were attached to CyberCare they made very good remarks...*

Despite the communication breakdown, the positive remarks by the previous interns of CyberCare had convinced KS-Vol to reconsider applying there for his internship. These responses show that peer evaluations or comments greatly influence the decision-making of students in higher learning institutions in choosing their place of internship.

Peer influence was also considered by some volunteers as the motivation for them to continue volunteering after the completion of their internship programme. The findings noted that YY-Vol encouraged the other two participants who used to be his internship group members, YS-Vol and YYi-Vol, to continue volunteering with CyberCare. YS-Vol mentioned that YY-Vol asked him a few times before he made up his mind to follow him. YYi-Vol mentioned that she concentrated on her study after the internship finished, and did not put any effort towards volunteering again until YY-Vol asked her to visit, see and experience what they were doing

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<sup>13</sup> YY-Vol, YS-Vol, KS-Vol, J-Vol and PQ-Vol

in Orphanage2. The three of them were also involved with related volunteering work under their own banner in another orphanage at the time of the interview.

What is interesting here is that we can see that the participants have changed their perceptions. For example YY-Vol and YS-Vol did not have any interest in joining CyberCare in the beginning but were able to continue with the same work after their placement finished. In fact, the findings showed that YY-Vol himself became the main motivator for other volunteers to continue to collaborate.

The other four volunteer participants were driven by their own interests and willingly chose CyberCare as their internship organisation. YYi-Vol and RN-Vol were driven by their love for children, DP-Vol for her interest in her own personal development, and MG-Vol by her passion for volunteering work since high school. MG-Vol also mentioned that she used to volunteer for her seniors' project with CyberCare, and this made her decide to work with the organisation again, rejecting an offer for internship from another organisation. RN-Vol and DP-Vol were also influenced by the briefing from the founder of CyberCare, and like KS-Vol, they had also been influenced by senior batches of CyberCare interns.

Overall, the factors mentioned underlined the important roles of CyberCare's key initiators; personal relationships and individual personality; an outstanding project proposal; project/programme features; available opportunities and shared resources; and an internship programme in forging and sustaining the collaborative partnerships in this setting.

### **5.3 Convergent aims in longstanding collaborative partnerships**

To what extent do different partners in a longstanding community service project (which is also referred to as collaborative partnership) have similar aims? This study gained an understanding from the participants from each group of stakeholders regarding what they considered as their aim or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with CyberCare. Based on the responses, this section discusses the various perspectives of the stakeholders and similarities and differences between their views. Responses have been organised around

participants' comments on CyberCare's objectives, merging objectives between stakeholders, perceived common aim, organisation focus, and government agenda as perceived collaborative partnership objectives, aims or focus.

### **5.3.1 Service organisation objective as collaborative partnership objective**

The findings showed that the majority of participants from the groups of service organisation, orphanage administrator, and volunteer regarded CyberCare's aims as the aims they wanted to achieve in working together. All five participants from the service organisation interviewed shared the same view of the objective of the collaboration, which was to improve the lives of children in orphanages. They normally referred to the programmes that they participated in. For instance, SY-SO mentioned:

*Actually at the end of the day, for CyberCare, it's voiced (it comes) down to the improvement of the children basically on the practice. Even like Care4U project, for the past two or three times, it's about believing in themselves, or even in EEP (Education Excellence Programme) also believing in themselves, being able to achieve whatever they want in their lives.*

Here, SY-SO referred to the final outcome of the programmes, emphasising the aim of CyberCare to have a positive impact on the self-development of the children through collaborative programmes. In addition, YW-SO looked at the ideal change for children, as embedded in the vision of the organisation, "to let the children dream and to realise their dreams." He justified what he was doing with CyberCare at the moment in relation to the results that he wished to achieve in the long-term:

*Ideally, CyberCare would like to see a future where there are no orphans. That means we would not like to see homes being formed artificially to house displaced children or to house single parented children or to house orphans. I like to see a future where all children will have a home, a real home. This means that if anyone is to be orphaned, he will be adopted into another home. That will be the idea...*

Instead of envisioning a long lasting existence, YW-SO appeared to anticipate the end of their collaborative efforts once this long-term aim had been achieved. This will possibly happen when orphanages no longer exist because in the current structure, CyberCare's main role is to link orphanages with other stakeholders.

Similar to the view of the service organisation, all of the orphanage administrators referred to CyberCare's focus when they discussed the objective of the collaborative partnership. They generally showed an understanding of what the collaborators did to bring awareness and improve the lives of the children in orphanages. An interesting finding emerged from an interview in which SLO-OA, the orphanage administrator from Orphanage4 where she showed her support for the objective of CyberCare programmes. She believed that the orphanage children who were normally viewed as “*underprivileged*” because they were being placed under the care of the institutions could become “*privileged*” children by offering them more opportunities to get involved with “*good programmes*” like CyberCare programmes when she mentioned:

*...The objective is good if children from underprivileged homes can get such (opportunities), (where) some of these children in those normal family homes they don't even get it. We are judging that you are aware, sometimes children in orphanages are more privileged. They keep joining all these courses, and (get) invited to all these programmes.*

This example shows that the orphanages shared similar aims with the service organisation in serving the children in orphanages. As CyberCare envisioned, the orphanages regarded the opportunities provided by programmes with “*good objectives*” as ways to develop the children in orphanages and improve their living condition.

Other orphanage administrators like P-OA from Orphanage2 also shared a similar perspective, but were not as certain as SLO-OA:

*Maybe...CyberCare objective is to raise the living standard of children who are underprivileged...Providing emotional support may be one of their objectives as well, from what I perceived.*

Even though both participants showed different degrees of certainty, both assumed that there was something good in CyberCare's objectives based on the programmes that CyberCare has done with the children at their orphanages. The differences from the service organisation's view can be seen in the way both stakeholders view the functions of orphanages. While CyberCare members portrayed their dissatisfaction with the orphanage structure, the administrators perceived it as providing a better place for child development, better perhaps, because of the opportunities provided by projects like CyberCare, even than some "ordinary" homes.

Similar to the service organisation and orphanage administrators, most of the volunteers interviewed related the objective of the collaborative partnership to the vision and mission of CyberCare. which says "*every child has the right to dream, and every child has the right to fulfil their dreams.*" For example DP-Vol who regarded CyberCare objectives as similar to her internship programme, Care4U, stated the objective as:

*To empower underprivileged children from the homes and their own programme, and also to teach them computer skills, so that they are not left behind in term of internet world or IT world.*

Similar to DP-Vol, a majority of volunteers linked the collaborative objective to CyberCare's vision or programmes' objectives. They thought that the vision or objective of CyberCare was to utilise ICT for the children in orphanages in order for them to be included, such as in the current Care4U programme, where the internship team and orphanage children have finally come out with the community service project (CSP) on environmental events. Here, the volunteers valued the inclusion of children in orphanages through the use of ICT and CSP. However very few volunteers clearly showed their knowledge about partnerships in CyberCare, and those who did were mostly senior volunteers who had gone through the internship programmes earlier.

Despite CyberCare's main intention to equip the children with both self-development and ICT skills, and instil their awareness to contribute to the community, what was more apparent to the orphanage administrators was the objective of changing the children's sense of self-

esteem through the programmes. In contrast, the volunteer group seemed to describe CyberCare's aims holistically, to include all aspects of personal development, ICT skills, and community service as in the Care4U programme. Such differences may be due to the degree of stakeholder involvement of the stakeholders in the children's programmes. Volunteers who have gained both theoretical understanding from the curriculum, and practical understanding from their involvement in the implementation of the programme from beginning to end may be able to provide a wider interpretation of CyberCare's objective compared to the orphanage administrator group who just based their findings on what they had been told, and their distant observations. Nevertheless, all three stakeholders discussed here seemed to value child participation for empowerment by explicitly mentioning "*improving children's personal development*" and "*self-esteem*," "*giving rights to children to achieve their dreams*," and "*encouraging children's participation*" as CyberCare's related objectives. Besides recognising CyberCare's aim as a collaborative partnership objective, some stakeholders were also aware of the differences between various partners, as discussed in the following subsection.

### **5.3.2 Forging commonalities out of differences as a collaborative partnership objective**

Some of the stakeholders discussed differing objectives held by various stakeholders. In dealing with these, CyberCare showed their tolerance of different views by trying to unite all objectives of the partners in collaboration. One of the corporate stakeholders, and a couple of volunteers also seemed to believe that a collaborative partnership objective can be achieved by forging commonalities out of differences. These were shown in the following discussion.

Besides emphasising the aim of CyberCare itself, YW-SO at the same time realised that the partners in the collaboration may have different objectives to CyberCare, "*So, the collaborative partnership in other words will be trying to marry the objectives of the corporate sponsors, right, the partners, and us.*" Here, the objective of the collaborative partnership can be viewed as the objective of both CyberCare and the other stakeholders, which are viewed by YW-SO as being closely linked. This is in contrast to the other two

corporate stakeholder perspectives<sup>14</sup>, which focus on the needs of their own individual organisations, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

SN-Corp from LifeWorks perceived the collaborative partnership objective through a macro lens. She recognised the diverse values and objectives of different stakeholders in the collaborative partnership within CyberCare, but did not believe that this prevented them from continuing their collaborative work under one objective of CyberCare. SN-Corp clarified:

*I guess if you look at the context, they all have got different values and objectives but do they come together to meet the one objective that CyberCare wants to achieve? Yes! They do that, and they work very nicely in that way.*

Here, SN-Corp categorised the objectives as the individual organisation and a collaborative partnership objective they shared in common. However, other corporate stakeholders in my study did not appear to have similar agreement on what leads to satisfactory outcomes.

What is also interesting in SN-Corp's view is that, besides emphasising the commonality they shared, she also valued the sharing of differences. SN-Corp further explained how various partners can work with their differences:

*...It's like, "Okay, let us see what we can do or create, let's see what we can do differently." I bring some new ideas, and we share and figure out what we can create and do differently, this is the most important.*

Similar to SN-Corp, two volunteer participants who have been coached by YW-SO and SN-Corp in the recent Care4U programme, related the focus of the collaborative partnership to what the founder of CyberCare, YW-SO and his partner, SN-Corp from LifeWorks, shared and wanted to do. For instance, RN-Vol looked at how the two can complement their foci:

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<sup>14</sup> CJ-Corp and ML-Corp

*...She's (SN-Corp) from the coaching line and Mr YW-SO is from the technology line. So they have the same mission, they have the same vision to contribute back to the society with the children. So they collaborate and use their expertise to contribute to society.*

This extract showed that despite all of the members in the service organisation and volunteer groups' agreement on the objective of CyberCare as being the objective of their collaborative partnership, they were aware of the potential differences, but those were differences they could deal with. YW-SO simply mentioned that the different objectives will be combined but did not specify how it can be done. However, both SN-Corp and the volunteers provided clearer discussion on how the differences between the two partners can be combined to work for what CyberCare aimed for. While SN-Corp emphasised combining different ways to achieve their aims, the volunteers emphasised combining different types of expertise to achieve the same vision.

### **5.3.3 Corporate focus as being in common with the aim of the service organisation**

This section discusses the corporations' perspectives of what was in common between their own organisations' aims and CyberCare. The analysis of the corporate statements in the media showed that these stakeholders appeared to regard their aims as in common with CyberCare's objective. For example, the newspaper article (Ching, 1999) reports Benedict Lee, the managing director of Microsoft Malaysia as saying, "*CyberCare mission is absolutely in tune with our own thinking and mission and we are proud to be part of it.*"

In contrast to SN-Corp, who emphasised achieving CyberCare's aim out of differences, the analyses of the available documents showed that the partnerships with other corporate partners, as with Microsoft, were being set up with the common objectives and beliefs between the key corporate stakeholders and the service organisation. The findings showed that the corporations were looking for a partner that can fit with the focus of the programme of the corporations. However, this is only based on the statement in public documents.



As the founding corporate sponsor to CyberCare, it was no surprise to find out that Microsoft, through its Microsoft Foundation Campaign, shared common objectives and beliefs with CyberCare. The Microsoft Press Pass website (Microsoft, 2000) reports that the campaign objective was “*to help cultivate and nurture disadvantaged children's interests, experience and skills through the use of information technology that will help them in the new economy.*” This was linked to CyberCare’s objective in the initial stage where in a newspaper article (Devi, 1999), YW-SO is reported as saying, “*CyberCare is about improving the quality of life for underprivileged children and helping them to be part of the information age.*” Both statements from Microsoft and CyberCare portray their concern over the future of orphanage children, and their beliefs that information technology can help prepare the children for a better future.

The shared beliefs within the collaborative partnership between Microsoft and CyberCare were also acknowledged by Bill Gates in his speech during a brief interactive session with children during his visit to the country. He stated as follows:

*CyberCare and Microsoft share a common belief that every individual, regardless of their economic, religious, and cultural background, be empowered with IT skills and knowledge to excel in life by having access to learning tools, such as the Internet. (Microsoft, 2000)*

The emphasis on the word “*excel*” here shows a different set of language to “*dreams*” which may illustrate a more skills-based aspiration. It stressed achievement as opposed to a process base. Besides this, the underlying objective of the Microsoft Foundation Campaign itself was to let people know that protecting intellectual property rights will bring benefits to the community as Microsoft was returning a portion of anti-piracy settlements and damages to the communities in which it operates via charitable organisations (Ching, 1999). Another partner, Samsung, awarded the grant through its DigitAll Hope programme for CyberCare to continue its collaborative work aimed at “*enriching the lives of the underprivileged through technology and technological advancement*” (C. M. Yoon, 2005) . This statement’s use of “*enriching*” is an interesting choice of word, as it literally points towards money as well as figuratively implying other things. It also showed a slightly different emphasis, as Microsoft focused on

providing information access through the usage of technology while Samsung stressed how technological advances can better contribute to children's lives.

The findings, mainly from newspaper articles and press releases, showed that the majority of corporate participants relate their collaborative objective in the partnership with CyberCare with the ways they wanted to pursue their collaborative works. Overall, Microsoft was the only company that really highlighted both firm serving (combating anti-piracy) and public serving (contributing to community) motives. The other corporate partners appeared to place greater emphasis on their public serving motives, demonstrated in the Samsung statement of aim above. However, the findings could not confirm whether that seeming transparency contributed to the Microsoft long-term partnership with CyberCare.

#### **5.3.4 Partner organisation focus as collaborative partnership objective**

While the analysis from the available documents showed that the corporate stakeholders clearly emphasised a common aim between partners, interviews with recent corporate participants provided different views. When asked about the objective of their collaborative partnership with CyberCare, the two corporate partners, PIKOM and Accenture merely linked the partnership with their own programme needs or corporate objectives. For example, CJ-Corp from PIKOM mentioned its MAINPC project objective as their collaborative objective:

*Along the line of the objectives for this project, MAINPC is to bring the ICT credibility to the poor and the underprivileged. So that was why when we needed partners, we found the appropriate partner in CyberCare to work with us on the curriculum.*

Here, rather than CyberCare being seen to bring together different stakeholders to work on its aim, the PIKOM representative suggests that CyberCare was brought into partnership to help PIKOM to achieve its own aim. This shows that CyberCare was important at that time to accommodate the needs of the corporation. In this kind of relationship, it seems likely that the collaboration continues as long as the need continues, with both partners in need of each

other. The change in corporate objective may also lead to a change of partners. For example, ML-Corp from Accenture explained how this change occurred:

*We were only working with them more on our family day programme and platform. So, the following year in 2009, we focused on green initiative. So, at that point, we channelled a lot of our effort towards the green initiative and that hold education on reuse, recycle and it didn't involve CyberCare but it involved working with other non-profit organisation. So, I think the objective changed a little bit.*

These interview extracts with these two corporate participants show that partners came to have different objectives. These extracts reveal different findings from the statements of different corporate stakeholders in the available documents. What is apparent here was that the stakeholders who focused more on achieving their own corporate objectives were in partnership with CyberCare for a shorter duration, compared to the corporate stakeholders who make explicit their common aims with CyberCare.

The partners' emphasis on their own organisations' foci could also be seen from the interviews with NGO participants. When describing the objective of their collaborative partnership, both views of NGOs are relative to the focus area of their organisations' movements. SL-NGO looked at how CyberCare was functioning as a part of the Lions Club and emphasised community inclusion in the process:

*We start a club with zero based, and then we raise our funds from the community. The concept is to create a caring society. A society where a club like the Lions Club of CyberCare provides their members' talents, time and leadership, and organises to do the activities that involves the community. So that the community can contribute, and everyone can contribute something to the service of a meaningful project*

SL-NGO's emphasis on "zero-based" start-up explained that the function of the Lions Club as a sponsor club was to supply not direct monetary assistance but expertise and its available resources. SL-NGO made it clear that the aim of the club's partnership with CyberCare was to work together to raise funds and invite community participation. The connection of the collaborative partnership objective to the organisation's movement can also be seen from JF-

NGO who leads an environmental organisation. He regarded the objective of the specific Community Service Project (Bamboo Planting) as preserving the environment as the collaborative partnership objective. JF-NGO also acknowledged that the uniqueness of the programme which attracted him lay in the element of research during the planning, where both interns and children did some research before they decided to plant bamboo. As he said:

*...And of course, everybody did tree planting, but they (intern volunteers and children in an orphanage) did some research to find that bamboo has faster growth than other trees, and able to exchange more carbon dioxide to oxygen than (other) trees....*

This effort may simply receive his support as an environmental activist, as it is clearly in line with the environmental movement. These findings showed that both corporate and NGO stakeholders emphasised the importance of the collaborative partnership to carry out the aim of the corporations or to match with the organisations' movements. This condition may link to what they can do with their available resources, and expertise. The final subsection will look at the perceptions of the government officials regarding what constitutes the objectives of government partnership with multiple stakeholders.

### **5.3.5 Collaborative partnerships' objectives as set by government**

All government stakeholders insisted that the partners adopt a government agenda in carrying out their collaborative efforts. RA-Gov mentioned that the purpose of the collaborative partnership in which government funded the piloted programme was used to justify future budgets and programme plans based on the piloted project. KJ-Gov emphasised that the grant required the partners to carry out the long-term government agenda which is the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA). He explained that DAGS is used to carry out the agenda by covering 70% of the project cost. In return, the promoter has to show commitment by having good vision and a noble project with good actors. KJ-Gov further stressed that this structure will benefit both promoter and the community.

The government through DAGS was meant to encourage more community participation with the provided fund, and created an avenue for the community to work with the corporation. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the NITA aims for Malaysia, eventually, to develop into a values-based knowledge society where physical development will go alongside spiritual development. This aim supported government officials' emphasis on "*tripartite partnership*" (government, corporation, and community) in the DAGS model as a working structure of this collaborative partnership.

The government adapted the "*tripartite model*" used by an international organisation to carry out its agenda. KJ-Gov, who also used to serve the Technical Advisory Panel for the World Bank InfoDev programme in 2001 commented that the original "*tripartite model from the World Bank*" was adapted to suit the local conditions. This model was adapted to the local model called DAGS, the government funded grant. In implementing this, KJ-Gov who referred to the government through DAGS as the "*second party*" to the agreement emphasised two important criteria of DAGS: the requirement for the presenter of the project as the "*first party*" to be a promoter, and requirement for the partnership to bring the partners as the "*third party*" in the projects during the presentation. In the case of CyberCare, he referred the "*third party*" to the orphanage community. He repeatedly mentioned that the "*government required the partnership to include third party participation from the design stage.*" KJ-Gov considered the "*third party*" to be represented by the managers, orphanage administrators, or the volunteers during the project proposal presentation.

This implementation model was what KJ-Gov considered to be a unique new effective design which he considered different from common government funding practices in Malaysia at the time. He believed this multiparty, participatory structure was a way of promoting transparency and accountability. Participants in the service organisation agreed with KJ-Gov's analysis. MC-SO acknowledged that the transparency in their collaborative structure resulted from the monitoring process required by the government, as also discussed by the government officials.

Government participants in this collaboration seemed to imply control in various situations. For example, KJ-Gov's explanation also showed that, CyberCare was being set up by the community which involved a bottom-up approach and process where the initiation began from the community members. However, the financial management during the award period was controlled by the government which involved a top-down process in which the government allocated the fund under certain terms and conditions and having its officials to monitor the usage.

To summarise, the overarching finding around aims in a sustainable collaborative partnerships is that most stakeholders came into partnership with different objectives but they intersected at some point with CyberCare's objectives. For example, the service organisations' main objective was to empower children in orphanages which were also shared by the volunteers and orphanage administrators. The government's aim was to carry out its national agenda with emphasis on ICT; corporations' aims were to pursue their corporate focus; and NGOs' aims were to carry out their organisations' interests.

On the whole, orphanage administrators provided child participants for CyberCare's programmes and they welcomed volunteers to help their children. The children who were perceived by the service organisation as "*indirect stakeholders*" were the programme participants and the target community.

In the context of my study, what made the partners successfully carry out their collaborative programmes was not mainly their clear understanding of different types of aims but what they can do with what they have, and what they aim for. For example, at the time when the corporations had their corporate responsibility fund allocation that can be used to support CyberCare's programmes, they collaborated, but when their focus changed and was not relevant to CyberCare's cause, they ceased to collaborate. The active relationship in this collaborative partnership setting appears to be based more on a dyadic interaction between CyberCare and one partner rather than all partners coming together to the table.

Despite the findings from the available documents showing that the corporation which is reported to have common aims with CyberCare demonstrated as CyberCare's long-term partner, it is hard to conclude that having common aims contributes to sustainable collaborative partnership. One of the NGO stakeholders (SL-NGO), for example, who regarded his organisation's focus as the aim of joint working also had a long-term relationship with CyberCare.

#### **5.4 Long-term partnerships: not necessarily more effective partnerships**

Are long-term partnerships necessarily more effective partnerships? The findings mainly revealed that partnerships were mostly pragmatic and programme based, while some stakeholders agreed that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder was the only group that viewed the partnership as short-term problem-based, while the other stakeholders considered their relationships as either long-term or short-term programme driven. The following subsections will discuss multiple-stakeholder views and whether partnerships need to be sustained in order to be effective.

##### **5.4.1 Long-term project/programme or strategic driven partnership**

This subsection discusses the responses given by the majority of the participants from CyberCare, and an orphanage administrator from the interviews. The view of the corporate partner is based on the findings from available documents. The perspective of CyberCare was mainly drawn from the views of its Board of Directors. All four agreed that partnerships were based on the programmes that they have run from time to time. However, there were slight differences in how they described the sustainability of the project or programme, and partners.

The first view suggested that the partnership was based on the long-term project/programme with all long-term partners. MC-SO viewed the project/programmes as a long-term permanent one, and MC-SO further related a long-term project to the long-term partners that CyberCare has had such as Microsoft and UTAR. He considered Microsoft as the main fund provider that was involved in a "*long-term permanent project*" with CyberCare. In relation to UTAR, MC-

SO refers to the latest programme (Care4U) that CyberCare has with the university students which utilised a curriculum they developed. MC-SO, who considered all of CyberCare's partners to serve for the long-term, also used the word '*continuous*' to show that it was a sustainable project. He justified his view by selectively highlighting a long-term programme that they have, and comparing it with the projects that he considered as short-term, conducted by others:

*Our projects are continuous; I don't see any reason why a certain project is short-term. It's not like when people do a project and it's a one day or one week programme (one-off programme), or normally people said one day programme (they) go to the zoo, like we said no, no such thing. In fact, we coached for years, and there's no reason to even stop it unless we feel that the project is not working...*

The second view suggested the partnership as long-term based on the continuity of many different programmes, one programme follows another programme. JN-SO, the former Vice-President of CyberCare, viewed CyberCare as the project initially designed to become a "big project" (which developed into an organisation). Similar to MC-SO, she also emphasised continuity when she related the "big project" to many programmes conducted continuously. She also mentioned some programmes that they have had in the early days, such as the "Lantern festival, charity concerts or day camps." Based on these programmes, JN-SO was seen to provide a slightly different idea of what she considered to be long-term programmes from MC-SO and YW-SO (the third view below). While MC-SO and YW-SO referred long-term programme to a particular programme that was designed to be conducted continuously in stages over the years, JN-SO referred to many one-off programmes that were being carried out one after another. This also shows that many programmes in CyberCare in the early stage were shorter term in nature, compared to the current programmes.

The third view suggested that the partnership was based on the long-term project/programme with long-term partners, but not all partners in CyberCare served long-term. YW-SO values long-term partnerships. For instance, he noted that the partnership with Microsoft has been a long one, lasting for about ten years (1998-2008) under two CEOs with many programmes conducted together. However, the partnership ceased when the CEO changed again. It is clear



that YW-SO expected the long-term partners to sustain the relationship for more than a year when he further expressed his disappointment and scepticism about the motives of corporations in general:

*Unfortunately in Malaysia, the long-term is until the next year comes up. That's the sad part. I think you'll find that in a lot of developed countries, companies commit to a cause, they commit to eco-friendly, they stick with eco-friendly, they commit to this, they stick to this. Unfortunately in Malaysia, they'll tend to like publicity, (they) want to be creative,(they) want to be new, so they tend to change. That's the sad part.*

This excerpt shows that the service organisation expected the corporation to stay in the relationship to sustain the project/ programme. The importance of having long-term partners was closely related to the ability of CyberCare to have long-term project/ programme planning which YW-SO considered very important in community service. Based on his experience, he regards short-term planning as “*damaging the community service*” as they cannot plan well ahead of time, and portraying the “*corporations' immature level of understanding their roles in serving the community*” in which for him the corporations tend to keep changing their programme every year just so “*it looks fresh*” because they can publicise their new programme every year. YW-SO's disappointment may be due to his view that the partnership process is almost an end in itself. The behaviour of the corporation itself may also lead to such conclusions being drawn. In this instance, YW-SO argued that corporations merely prioritised publicity over commitment to a cause, and suggested that the corporations are concerned more with their extrinsic motives, which were not favoured by him.

In thinking about future partnerships, YW-SO considered that the current partnership with the private institution, UTAR, will last longer. He did not provide a clear reason for this but the anticipation may be due to the commitment given by UTAR in sending students for internship with CyberCare every year. For the rest of the partners, especially the corporations, YW-SO did not regard them as serving long enough to call them long-term partners. This was different from MC-SO's view, described earlier, that all partners were serving as long-term partnerships.

The fourth perspective was based on the corporate view of the long-term partnership, based on the long-term campaign. Two very different views of the enduring nature of partnership (or otherwise) appeared from the findings from available documents and interviews. In this subsection, only the first view of long-term partnership is highlighted. The analysis of available documents showed that most of the partners were seeking to become involved in long-term collaboration in the first few years after the initial establishment of the service organisation. This was demonstrated in the collaboration with two corporate partners, Microsoft Malaysia as a founding corporate sponsor of CyberCare (Microsoft, 2000), and Hitechniaga as a corporate promoter. As informed by RA-Gov and KJ-Gov, the corporate promoter was required by the government to join CyberCare to qualify for the government grant, DAGS. Like CyberCare, these two main corporate partners (Microsoft Malaysia and Hitechniaga) viewed a long-term commitment as important. This was particularly evident in many reports and newspaper articles about the partnership in which Microsoft emphasised that the corporation's involvement in the collaborative partnership with CyberCare was a “*long-term commitment*.” For instance, Benedict Lee, the managing director of Microsoft Malaysia at the time mentioned, “*Microsoft’s long-term involvement with CyberCare is made viable through the Microsoft Foundation Campaign which is the corporate philanthropy arm of Microsoft Malaysia*” (Ching, 1999).

The fifth view regarding long-term programme driven partnership was provided by one of the orphanage administrators, based on his view of the online linking system where the partnership was viewed as continuing as long as the orphanage was listed in the system. Despite other orphanage administrators viewing the programmes like the one TT-OA’s orphanage was involved with as short-term, TT-OA considered his orphanage to have a long-term partnership with CyberCare. This relationship had been sustained for more than ten years, starting as soon as CyberCare set up the organisation. He identified the partnership as ongoing, because he considered that the partnership continued as long as CyberCare continued to link his orphanage online. Similar to the perspectives of other stakeholders above, TT-OA also valued the continuation aspect in describing a long-term relationship but it was based more on documentation than practice.

The sixth and final perspective referred to long-term strategic driven partnership. Based on the nature of partnership and duration of involvement, the involvement of one of the NGOs interviewed, the Lions Club can be considered as having a long-term partnership with CyberCare. The partnership began when CyberCare approached the Lions Club to join the network, and it was first formed as an organisation under the umbrella of the Lions Club, and they have carried the Lions Club name since then. However, as with the situation of another NGO stakeholder, FOKD, not much detail can be provided to explain the situation, as the Lions Club did not mention clearly if the Club was seeking long-term collaboration in the beginning. This shows that neither of the NGO stakeholders was thinking about the partnership as long-term right from the start.

While all stakeholders who viewed long-term partnerships as being related to a long-term project/ programme, the types of project/ programme differed. For examples, CyberCare referred to the continuity of many different programmes, corporations referred to corporate campaigns, and the orphanage referred to the online linking system.

#### **5.4.2 Short-term programme driven partnership**

A view of partnerships with CyberCare as short-term, and programme driven was the response provided by the majority of orphanage administrators and corporate stakeholders interviewed. These stakeholders normally came to form partnerships with CyberCare because of certain programmes they had with CyberCare, and some of them considered their partnerships discontinued after the programmes finished. The corporate stakeholders, who stressed the time limited nature of their projects, also related the programme to their corporate focus.

The responses from the orphanage administrators showed that they regarded their collaborative partnerships with CyberCare as based on the programmes or activities CyberCare organised for the children. All of the nine administrators regarded the programmes or activities as short-term in nature. All of them, except one participant (TT-OA from orphanage9), related the short-term programmes their children participated in to the short-

term partnerships they had with CyberCare. For examples, ER-OA mentioned, “*CyberCare involvement was very short. Short in the sense, I think for about two years, if I’m not mistaken. That’s why I cannot recall much.*”

Another participant (AK-OA) mentioned the ICT related programmes in which his children participated. He regarded many different one-off programmes as one-time charity work, rather than seeing them as part of a long term partnership:

*...It’s like a certain program, one time program and that’s off and another program came in. First was training for the children – a few times computer training, usually they linked with other institutes. I remember three or four times. After that, creating website with UTAR – that is almost one year. After that, software and hardware for two or three times. These were all one-time charity works.*

AT-OA argued that the orphanage did not have a long-term partnership based on the short-term programmes:

*Actually it’s not a long-term programme. It’s all mostly I see that they take them out for training. The involvement I can see that they came here to visit the children, and take them out. I don’t know if you call this long-term or not.*

Overall, the responses showed that CyberCare’s intermittent programmes and visits provided the orphanage administrators with the view that the partnerships with CyberCare did not last long. All of the orphanage administrators mentioned above defined long-term partnership as involving their children’s continuous involvement with CyberCare’s programmes. They wanted CyberCare to keep including their children in the programmes from time to time as they regarded short-term, or one-off programmes as being unlikely to have much impact on the children. As a result of such views, some of the orphanage administrators did not see CyberCare programmes as being able to have much effect on the children. For instance, SLO-OA asserted, “*I wouldn’t see any solid impact in changing them (the children). No. Just a two-day or two-night thing, it would not change them.*” Overall, programmes were seen as the main linkage between CyberCare and orphanages.

The corporate stakeholders' responses regarding their short-term programme-driven partnerships were mainly based on their corporate social responsibility or corporate focuses. The analysis from the available documents, mainly newspaper articles, also shows that some partners collaborated for a short period only. For example, an ICT company, Samsung, came into partnership based on its corporate focus. At the time, the corporate focus of Samsung was “to encourage the use of technology as a tool to enrich the lives of the disadvantaged,” and was carried out under its DigitAll Hope programme. Based on its corporate review of the effective ongoing or planned project, Samsung selected CyberCare to be awarded with the grant to start its YLM programme for children in orphanages, and the partnership was maintained for the year of the award period.

In contrast to the reported articles that mostly presented corporate sponsors as committed to long-term programmes or partnerships, it became clear through the interviews conducted with the selected corporate stakeholders that none of the corporate stakeholders regarded their partnership with CyberCare as long-term. Their responses appeared to explain that they did not see long-term partnerships as necessarily essential or desirable. Two of the participants clarified that their partnerships with CyberCare were for specific purposes that their organisation/project was looking at the time. The President of PIKOM, CJ-Corp described how they came to collaborate based on the programme:

*When we started project 'MAINPC' we had a group of partners, like I mentioned. We have already designed to make sure that every part of the things that we can think of we already have a partner to contribute to each part. We are not going forward to recruit any fresh partner since then. So, when we put the whole project team under MAINPC altogether, each partner is supposed to contribute and play a role. From CyberCare, I think at the end of the day, we have a pretty good curriculum.*

CJ-Corp explained that the working structure was designed with the role specialisation of each partner with CyberCare focusing on the curriculum development. As he further mentioned:

*Once that is done (curriculum development), let say we want to create a new centre, we get somebody to donate some PCs and we give the*

*curriculum and hopefully they can hire good instructor and they can go on. So the need for CyberCare will be at the minimum. That is why we could stop it at that point in time and then we just continue to give out a few PCs and the curriculum.*

This instance showed that the corporations that value short-term relationships based this on the needs and focuses of common practice, and prioritised practicality. Similar understandings were expressed by ML-Corp, the Marketing and Communications Head of Accenture Malaysia. She viewed Accenture's partnership with CyberCare as more of a partnership for a specific focus as she mentioned, *"I think our partnership with CyberCare was like once a year event but that's just what we were looking to do at that time."*

Both participants emphasised that achieving what their organisations aimed to do was what mattered the most. At the time of the interviews, both corporate organisations had ceased to collaborate with CyberCare. It may be possible that their responses were retrospective justifications of the fact that they were no longer in a relationship.

However, similar values - that long-term partnerships are not particularly important - were strongly shared by the current corporate partner, SN-Corp from LifeWorks, who was still collaborating with CyberCare. SN-Corp did not specifically relate the partnership to the focus of her organisation, but she strongly opposed the idea of sustaining partners over a long period. In one of the instances, SN-Corp argued that sustaining stakeholders demands commitment and loyalty from the partners:

*...I think, it is very unrealistic to have a loyal partnership and I don't think my partnership with CyberCare demands that kind of commitment and loyalty. We are two free enterprises, we are free to grow and learn.*

SN-Corp did not consider having a short-term relationship as unconstructive. In fact, she regarded change as *"natural and organic,"* drawing on the same positively evaluated environmental metaphors as the concept of sustainability. She also repeatedly mentioned having *"no strings attached"* or an unbound relationship as something she highly valued in the partnership of her organisation with CyberCare. For example, she mentioned, *"And there*

*are no strings attached, in which our partnership is so open and very respectful towards each other.”* This shows that the commitment is clearly related to a long-term relationship. LifeWorks regarded the requirement of commitment as a threat in a collaborative partnership as it can result in one partner being bound to the other partner in the long run.

Overall, the findings from the documents seem to present the corporate stakeholder, Microsoft, strongly valuing long-term partnership when in fact the interview findings with other corporations offered a very different view. However, these differences cannot be used to compare the credibility of the sources, because the data were collected from different stakeholders with different ways of collaborating throughout the duration of the partnership.

The other stakeholder group, the orphanage administrators emphasised the need to have long-term programmes for long-term partnerships in order to provide a more lasting impact on children. However, throughout their experiences, these respondents, with one exception, did not consider the partnerships with their orphanages as long-term.

#### **5.4.3 Short-term problem-oriented partnership**

Government stakeholder described the relationship between the government and CyberCare as problem-oriented partnership. RA-Gov, the government official who was responsible for monitoring the DAGS funded projects, noted that there were many available government grants but DAGS was considered unique, and the closest matched with what CyberCare was doing at the time. Because of the restrictions of the DAGS funding regime, the partnership had to be focussed on a problem, and designed to be supported by government for one year.

However, the government appeared to realise the need to sustain partnerships over a longer term, as RA-Gov explained:

*...Any promoter, when they come over to DAGS, they must identify clearly what are the problems, are the problems being solved using ICT, and the tri-sectoral partnership that must be presented with proof: letters, support...because the issue will be sustainability...*

The above response showed that the government shared an explicitly articulated value that the most effective partnerships are longer than the provided grant, and understood that it is difficult to sustain such partnerships. RA-Gov and KJ-Gov further explained how the government attempted to ensure that the project could be sustained by looking at the ability of the project to generate revenue channels and to be sustainable after the grant finished. On the government's part, DAGS provided support by linking partners to other relevant authorities and ministries. RA-Gov gave this example:

*...Some of these ministries for example they wanted the wireless (internet), that something should be done, and ICT can be leveraged, but they do not have budget. So, DAGS actually provide the avenue to pilot. We hope that after twelve months of demonstration, the ministry can use whatever results to justify for future budgets, and programmes. So, that's how things were designed.*

Here, RA-Gov anticipated the evaluation of the piloted projects achievement that can be used by the DAGS committee to justify the request of future budgets from the ministry, and to help in financing future programmes. SJ-Gov also clarified that the government was assisting the community to pilot, and roll out the project, but they should get other partners to fund further developments. These instances showed that DAGS was not designed to support the project for an unlimited time, but it provided a structure to ensure that the project was able to be sustained.

These findings mainly revealed that partnerships were mostly pragmatic and programme based, while some stakeholders agreed that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder was the only group that viewed the partnership as short-term problem-based, while the other stakeholders considered their relationships as either long-term or short-term programme driven. The subsequent subsections will discuss multiple-stakeholder views, and whether partnerships need to be sustained in order to be effective.

The findings of multiple-stakeholder views show there was a difference between sustaining collaborative partnership and sustaining partnership with particular stakeholders. This case study suggests that the same stakeholders need not be maintained in order to sustain



collaborative efforts. However, maintaining the same stakeholders is an advantage, as can be seen from the long-term partnership between CyberCare, Microsoft and the Lions Club. Microsoft was CyberCare's key partner which over a long period helped CyberCare to equip orphanages with ICT infrastructure, and contributed funds for CyberCare to run the programmes. These enabled CyberCare to build trust and credibility, especially among the administrators and children in orphanages.

The way the corporate stakeholders mentioned how they came to connect with, and later disconnect from a collaborative partnership with CyberCare exposed corporate practice, which values short-term commitment based on corporate focus over long-term commitment needed by the collaboration serving the community. It is difficult to obligate corporate partners to stay in the relationship over a long period. Requiring the corporate partners to have a long-term partnership may be at odds with their corporate foci. This reluctance to engage in long-term partnerships may require other partners like the community organisation to adapt to the practice, as has been done in this collaborative setting, where CyberCare seemed to find a way to match its focus with corporate foci.

## **5.5 Drivers of change in collaborative partnerships**

What are the drivers of change and transformation in the collaborative partnerships? This collaborative partnership has gone through a number of significant changes, including changes in the stakeholders and collaborative structure, the programmes, and the way the programmes were carried out. This section discusses the factors that drove such changes, from the perspective of all stakeholders involved except the government. Government officials could not provide much information on this, as they were not involved long enough to assess such change. There was a cascade effect, with some changes in partners forcing other changes in programmes and administrative structure.

### 5.5.1 Change in the collaborative programmes

This subsection discusses responses from CyberCare and NGO regarding what drove changes in the collaborative programmes, and the orphanage administrators' views on what constituted an unsustainable programme. Programme changes included transformations in content and focus. In the early years, the collaborators in CyberCare provided ICT equipment to orphanages, and trained children in ICT skills in programmes such as e-Workshop, but later on, they moved their focus to using ICT as an enabler. YW-SO mentioned the reason:

*Effectively we are heavily users of ICT, but more in using it rather than promoting it. We are not going out there to champion the ICT is "very good, please use it"...which we did at the early stage, early years we did, we got computers into the homes, we put Internet connections, we put printers, we sent trainers in to train the kids, we set up workshops, we did all that, but it didn't work*

This excerpt explained that this collaborative partnership learnt that by merely giving and equipping the orphanages with ICT equipment, they did not provide a long lasting impact on the children. YW-SO considered that the previous programmes did not work because his observation showed that they did not offer the continuous connection that the children have with the volunteers, wherein the children started to be closer to the volunteers after the programme:

*We found out when we did our e-workshop, when we trained about 1500 children from homes throughout Malaysia, but we found that the minutes we stop the coaching...the connection with the kids disappear because they learned computers but they don't need to see the volunteers anymore, or they learned computers, and they just emailed their friends or play games from the computers, there's no reason for the volunteers to continue with them.*

The quote also implies that the aim of the programme was to develop the relationship with the volunteers, other than developing skills, which was not explicitly mentioned by any stakeholders interviewed as one of the programme objectives mentioned earlier. In this example, it showed that the changes of the programmes were meant to deal with the

relationship between children and volunteers. In further conversation with YW-SO, I discovered that the CyberCare board of directors viewed that it was important for the volunteers to be given some time to build a relationship with children in orphanages because most of these children were vulnerable and had been placed there due to some difficulties with their families. Some of them may suffer emotional drawbacks that make it difficult for them to create relationships with others in a short time. Consequently, a longer programme is required to accommodate the issue.

MC-SO related the change of programme focus from a heavy ICT focus to the inclusion of self-development and community service content in the newly designed programme to the lack of ICT usage by the orphanage administrators and children after the programmes. This was what drove them to collaborate with PIKOM under its MAINPC project, and to come out with the new programme where they teach the children ICT, and how to use ICT to run community projects in a curriculum that contained life skills training, ICT training, and community service project components, as explained earlier in Chapter Two regarding the Care4U programme. The partnership with PIKOM did not last long, because of the lack of funding, but the curriculum has continued to be used by both parties in the programmes they conducted separately.

The only NGO perspective on the drivers of change in collaborative partnerships was provided by SL-NGO from the Lions Club. JF-NGO from FOKD did not have any view on that as he was new to the arrangement. SL-NGO's views can be categorised around drivers of change in the programmes, and drivers of change in the structure in CyberCare. The first view is included here. SL-NGO observed that throughout the development of collaborative partnership in CyberCare, the programmes have gone through the changes of approach that led the collaborative partnership to reach an outstanding level of professionalism in the area of care for orphanages. SL-NGO viewed the improvement as being driven by the “*trials and errors*” of the programmes:

*From the beginning they went with trial and error (ICT utilisation and curriculum development). Over the years now, they have fine-tuning to a very professional level, if I must say. And now, they are tied up with the*

*UTAR, working with the undergraduates to do a lot of these works, all the IT solutions and all that. And they have reached a very high level of professionalism in taking care of all these orphanages. I think not many organisations have that know how.*

Rather than contributing to the end result of the programmes or collaborations, these “*trials and errors*” which he referred to the programmes that have been conducted, evaluated, and improved in CyberCare served as a learning process that seemed to better develop the programmes and relationships between the stakeholders involved, to the extent that it was believed as reaching a high standard of professionalism in community care for children in orphanages. However, SL-NGO is no longer in the partnership, so perhaps he will be less likely to build up CyberCare than people with continuing involvement.

Many orphanage administrators expressed their curiosity about what actually drove change in CyberCare, which suddenly changed from having many programmes to stopping the programmes without any communication with the orphanage administrators. They had no idea of what actually drove changes in these collaborative programmes. For example, DZ-OA mentioned:

*It made a pilot testing called “E-Hasil,” something like that, whereby with the system, all the welfare homes have a website where we will put all our details, the kids’ details, contributions, donators...all inside that. So, we just key-in into the website. It was to make it easier. All homes have the same way of keeping records...The system has been stopped now. I think, maybe they have a problem with that, then they stop it. We have also been involved with “Smart Bestari” where we also involved with that eLearning last time, but now it’s all not existed anymore. (translated)*

This lack of communication led to the issue of sustainability. In line with their view of partnership with CyberCare being based on short-term programmes in the previous section, the orphanage administrators regarded the collaboration with the orphanages as not sustained. They viewed the change in the programme as the end of the partnership as AT-OA described it: “*Like now I see it is stop. So, how to sustain? There’s no sustainability at all. I don’t know why....*”

Since the inception of CyberCare, what has made the people and organisations collaborate are the programmes and activities carried out for children in orphanages. When there was no programme/activity, connection with orphanages also ceased. While CyberCare still had ongoing programmes such as Care4U, these were not implemented in all orphanages continuously at the same time.

### **5.5.2 Change in the collaborative partnership structure**

The driver of change also included the change in the collaborative partnership structure. The responses from CyberCare and NGO provided information about the impact of the detachment of CyberCare from the Lions Club on the structure of collaborative partnership. While CyberCare described the change as one to the “*administrative structure*,” the Lions Club referred to it as a change to the “*collaborative partnership structure*.” The different terms given may be due to the perceptions from two different angles. YW-SO regarded the Lions Club as helping to structure CyberCare into an organisation and managing administrative work:

*...it (the Lions Club) gave us a lot of structure, a lot of good practices like having monthly accounts, having yearly submissions, you know-having meetings and all that, having a president, having secretary, having a treasurer...so those were all very good, because when you (are) volunteering, the last thing you want to do is the paperwork. You want to just go there and do the work...so in that sense, the first five to six years, I would say the Lions (Club) was very good structure for Cybercare because when you're new, a lot of things you don't know how to run. They (the Lions Club members) were very useful.*

Whereas, SL-NGO perceived CyberCare as a club sponsored by the Lions Club with “*autonomous members who elected their own board of directors*.” As a part of the association, SL-NGO stated that the Lions Club would give its commitment and support to CyberCare. These two perceptions show that YW-SO perceived the structure from how he and other members formed CyberCare as an organisation, and SL-NGO perceived it from how the Lions Club supported CyberCare as a way of collaboration.

Later, there was a change in the structure driven by the lack of support received from the Lions Club network, and the different ways in which the Lions Club and CyberCare sought to serve the community. According to YW-SO, the lack of support in terms of financial and voluntary human resource drove CyberCare to withdraw from the Lions Club network. YW-SO noted that one of the reasons for CyberCare to partner with the Lions Club was a desire to get the Club members to volunteer for CyberCare's programmes. Over time, YW-SO realised that the Club was focused more on "*fundraising than volunteering.*" This led CyberCare board members to decide to "*withdraw from the group, and restructure into the new organisation.*"

The change in the "*collaborative partnership structure*" was explained by SL-NGO. At the time of the interview, CyberCare had moved out of the Lions Club network, restructuring as a stand-alone organisation. SL-NGO noted that this major change was driven by a perception of a lack of support and finance from the Lions Club members, "*...One of the reasons involved, I think, is that CyberCare's Lions Club members felt that the other Lions Clubs (members) have never given them support.*" SL-NGO further explained the principle underpinning this lack of support:

*...the reason for Lions Club is that the Lions Clubs don't donate to other Lions Clubs. So, if the public donated money, and then we get it, and donated to another Lions Club, that can be abused. People can see that, you know. It's not right. Can you imagine one Lions Club is getting money, they give it to another Lions Club....*

The consistency of SL-NGO's responses with those of YW-SO may signify that there was a transparency in the relationship, and that problems have been clearly discussed before the decision was made. However, there were different emphases given to what constituted "*support.*" While YW-SO stressed both financial and human resource supports, SL-NGO stressed on financial support.

### 5.5.3 Change of collaborative partners

Responses about the change of collaborative partners were provided by the service organisation and corporate stakeholders. What drove the change of partners from the point of view of CyberCare were the needs or focuses of CyberCare at the time. YW-SO viewed the partners in the collaborative setting of CyberCare as including people and organisations who can help them to deliver their services to the community, and they were changing as CyberCare progressed towards maturity. The partners changed as their needs changed. In the early stages, when CyberCare concentrated on “*providing infrastructure to the orphanages*,” most of its partners were from “*ICT industries and government ICT departments*.” Later when they concentrated on “*eWorkshop training*,” the partners were “*venue and trainers providers*.” Currently, with their focus on “*personal development, ICT and community service skills*,” their partners provide “*training and software, life coaching and human resources*.” From the perspectives of CyberCare, this changing set of collaborative partnerships provided a successful example, rather than it being seen as a failed arrangement. It showed that the concept of collaborative partnership to include multiple-stakeholders remains, even though the partners keep changing. These explanations also suggest that CyberCare was in control of its direction, rather than being dictated to by corporate sponsors.

In contrast, the findings from corporate partners emphasised the role of change in corporate focus on changes in partnership. The corporate representatives suggested that the programme and corporate focus that drove the corporations to collaborate with CyberCare, after some time became the drivers of change when the programme completed or the focus changed.

This can be described from the perspectives of the early corporate stakeholders who always relate their partnership to the importance of ICT as a mechanism in achieving their collaborative aims. For example, a representative from Microsoft commented in a newspaper article:

*...Our giving is guided by our desire to help bring the benefits of information technology to under-served people and communities, and to*

*provide support to organisations in communities in which our employees live and work (Microsoft, 2000).*

Samsung's focus during its short partnership through its DigitAll Hope programme in 2005 was *"to encourage the use of technology as a tool to enrich the lives of the disadvantaged"* (Chong, 2005). The interview with ML-Corp explained that Accenture viewed technology as a mechanism to improve children's education opportunities as she says, *"...And the key part of it (helping the children in orphanages to improve their education opportunities) was providing technology to help them in these processes."*

In contrast, the focus and programme changed when CyberCare established partnerships with new partners. It put more emphasis on the humanistic approach including psychological and emotional aspects in the programmes. This is indicated by the views of the latest corporate stakeholders, such as PIKOM and LifeWorks, who shared the same aspiration to develop the community. Satisfied with the latest approach, CJ-Corp from PIKOM explained, *"...we found that CyberCare has the good approach in the sense of it not only teaches them how to use (ICT) but it also tries to introduce meaningful projects...."*

In this instance, the good approach CJ-Corp was referring to was the MAD curriculum that they have developed collaboratively. SN-Corp from LifeWorks did not view an emphasis on mere ICT utilisation during the early years as sustainable, but she placed more emphasis on the human aspect as the most important one for work efficiency.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the collaborative partners changed due mainly to the change of corporate focus, because of leadership change, or because financial support ceased or the agreement ended. This changing of collaborative partners led to the changing of collaborative focus which then led to the transformation of the programmes, which was the substance of collaborative partnership in CyberCare. From having many ICT corporate partners, and short-term ICT-based programmes and activities in the first phase of implementation nationwide, CyberCare has had to reduce its programmes and narrow down the coverage. At the time of the interview, it has two active programmes, YLM and Care4U, but during the period of fieldwork, a further reduction to just one programme, Care4U, the



internship programme with the university students, was taking place. The area of coverage was also limited to the Klang Valley. This programme involved the usage of the MAD curriculum as a mechanism of implementation. YW-SO mentioned the main reason for these changes as being based on CyberCare's experience working with children and analysing outcomes from phase to phase.

However, throughout the phases, CyberCare seemed to adapt its focus and programme to its partners' aims. Realistically, these changes may also be possibly due to the difficulties of getting partners and funding after CyberCare's main corporate partner, Microsoft, ended its ten year partnership in 2008 when it changed its focus to women's issues rather than children. In the same year, CyberCare and partners started to write the curriculum with the interns of the Care4U programme, the internship programme that had been introduced in 2007. The closeness of these two events: the end of the Microsoft partnership, and the write up of the curriculum may show that CyberCare was looking for some solution or mechanism that can help the organisation to sustain its programmes. The curriculum is now used for conducting the Care4U programme and the organisation puts more emphasis on personal development of the children rather than on ICT skills as before. These changes seemed to be a solution to issues emerging from time to time rather than being well planned in advance. This conclusion is supported by the statements of some stakeholders mentioned throughout the thesis that the organisation was experimenting with the programmes, and learning during the process.

#### **5.5.4 Change due to the completion of the programme and lack of financial resources**

Apart from the drivers of change mentioned above, the completion of the collaborative programme and the lack of financial resources were also important factors that drove change in the collaborative partnership. This was based on the orphanage administrators and corporate stakeholders' responses. While most of the orphanage administrators were unsure what caused the changes in the programmes, most of them assumed that these changes were due to the lack of funding, as ER-OA noted:

*...And after, sometimes everything stopped. I think for five years or so, very quiet, no news from CyberCare. I think because of the funds. They don't have enough funds to continue that same programme or...I do not know...*

The lack of financial resources to continue the Care4U programme in collaboration with MAINPC of PIKOM was explicitly mentioned by CJ-Corp, “*Once the whole programme ran out of money, we have slowed down and the curriculum was already developed. So we kind of like stop there...*” The finding was that after the curriculum was completed, CJ-Corp did not see much need for PIKOM to continue their collaboration. However, CJ-Corp did not deny the possibility that PIKOM will continue to reconnect with CyberCare when there is the need to do so and they have enough financial resources as he envisioned, “*...Going forward we believed that when we get the funds start coming in again there could be opportunity to continue working together by enhancing the curriculum.*” This suggests that although the formal partnership has ended, the organisations see themselves as potentially having a future relationship. However, my interpretation of CJ-Corp’s words was based on the assumption that he was being straightforward in stating his intention to re-link with CyberCare, rather than assuming that he was just saying so to be polite.

#### **5.5.5 Change due to the lack of committed individuals**

The final factor that drove change in this collaborative partnership was the lack of committed individuals. Two stakeholder groups provided their views on this matter, but they referred to different groups. While orphanage administrators referred to volunteers in CyberCare, volunteers referred to the children in the orphanage. A few of the orphanage administrators associated the change with a lack of committed individuals to handle the programmes. For example, AT-OA expressed the following view:

*Now I don't see anything. I think once they did call us, and then suddenly die off. You see, they must have the right people to come in. Like in the beginning when they started, they have very good people. Totally involved in the project.*

The “people” in the excerpt refers to the volunteers in CyberCare. Rather than seeing change as driven by external factors, as has been mentioned by many other stakeholders earlier, the volunteers see change as “evolutionary” or “internal” when they described the change which was driven by the needs of the programme under control of the service organisation. When they talked about the driver of change in their collaborative work, the volunteers (YY-Vol, YYi-Vol, and YS-Vol) brought up the issue of the recent changes in their collaborative work at Orphanage2 as part of the YLM programme. In this programme volunteers visited the orphanage once a week to help children in their personal development. The project culminated in children developing a community project. The volunteers facilitated this process. However the programme has been discontinued. It was mainly driven by the issues with the child participants themselves like the “*lack of commitment*” and “*procrastination in their work.*” The volunteers justified their decision and agreed with YY-Vol:

*We think they (the children) are not very committed in some sense to their work. And because of those cancellations where they did not inform us, or they informed us at the last minutes. And then, they kept procrastinating with their work. They keep on like that and extend the time of the date, the date of doing things. So, that’s where we all come to a conclusion where maybe we should stop for a while and try out with another home...*

YY-Vol also argued that if they keep on working like that, they cannot create any result from the programme. When asked if they put in any effort to change the children, YY-Vol stressed the two-way understanding in order to create results:

*Yeah, we did put our effort into changing them. We tried. But the problem is if you want to change someone, the person has to be willing to change also. I can see that they are changing also. They are better in, for example like leadership skills and from their commitment, I can see that there are some of the main minorities in the group of children in (Orphanage2) where they have the patience to like continue this coaching and community service project. But most of them, I don’t think that they have any much commitment in this.*

However, the volunteers do not view this as a permanent decision. Rather, it is a kind of lesson they wanted the children to learn as YYi-Vol mentioned:

*Yeah, like YY-Vol say, we left because of lack of commitment, but when they are ready to be, I mean to learn or to change or to be involved in this again, I think we will be willing to serve....because we were there before. We were there for them to ask, for them to talk to, to get them but they were not really responsive. So when they are ready, maybe we will be back.*

YY-Vol viewed that as a way of giving the children more time to think and reflect on themselves, rather than a sign of the volunteers giving up, because when the children are ready, they will return. This decision seems similar to that taken by PIKOM, the corporate stakeholder in the preceding subsection, in temporarily ceasing to collaborate until the need arises and there are enough funds to resume collaboration. The decision could also be seen as a way of not appearing committed while at the same time stopping an activity.

These issues have also driven change in the volunteers' commitment towards collaborative work in CyberCare. This group of volunteers did not consider themselves as a part of CyberCare anymore. For example, YYi-Vol mentioned:

*For me, in future I don't think I will be in CyberCare, because my interest is not in this line (she preferred to focus on special children). So it will be okay for me to do my voluntary work, but I don't think I will collaborate with CyberCare. So, as YY-Vol said, we went... for coaching in another home under our own name. So, I think we will be doing something else a bit first.*

These volunteers' decisions showed that they tried new things when their first attempt did not seem to produce results they expected.

The service organisation, corporations, NGOs, orphanage administrators, and volunteers appeared to relate their discussions on the drivers of change to diverse factors, based on their experiences of collaborating with CyberCare. The representatives from the corporations who were involved more with the administrative and management aspects tend to emphasise the structure, partners, needs and finance as the drivers of change. The orphanage administrators considered themselves as being on the receiving end of programmes and their partnership with CyberCare linked by the programmes they have with CyberCare. For them, the change in

the programme may signal the end of the partnership. As the volunteers participated closely with the children, the issues they have with the children can influence their motivation in continuing their involvement in the collaborative setting. What can be seen from these findings is that many aspects of collaborative partnership are interrelated. A change in one aspect will be likely to induce change in many other aspects. Even though the change in certain aspects like the change of programmes may be due to the need to solve certain issues in order to sustain the collaborative programmes, it may affect other aspects or stakeholders differently. In some cases, this might lead to the end of the partnership.

## **5.6 Summary**

Based on the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders, what normally drove the stakeholders to form partnership in this study was based more on pragmatic rather than strategic approaches to partnership. This was shown through the way partnerships were formed by meeting the right people at the right time. For instance, SN-Corp came into the partnership when she just intended to start working with children. PIKOM was looking for someone to help with its project to develop the curriculum, Accenture was looking for a platform for the employees to do voluntary work, and CyberCare was looking for partners to continue its work and improve its curriculum. People normally approached others directly, or through trusted referrals. For example, UTAR students approached the lecturer, YW-SO approach ML-Corp and SL-NGO.

The way in which the corporate stakeholders mentioned how they came to connect with, and later disconnect from a collaborative partnership with CyberCare, exposed the way of corporate practice which values short-term commitment based on corporate focus over long-term commitment needed by the collaboration serving the community. It is difficult to oblige corporate partners to stay in a relationship over a long period. Requiring the corporate partners to have a long-term partnership may be at odds with their corporate foci. This reluctance to engage in long-term partnerships may require other partners like the community organisation to adapt to the practise as has been done in this collaborative setting, where CyberCare seemed to find ways to match its focus with the corporate foci.

The valuing of long-term partnerships is apparent in the statements of some stakeholders, but such long-term partnerships were not evident in most of the relationships with organisations associated with Cybercare. There were also varied perspectives among the stakeholders in terms of how long is long enough to be considered as a long-term partner or programme.

The working structure of this partnership showed that communication was predominantly dyadic, between Cybercare and its various partners. The centre of management and communication was CyberCare, the service organisation. For example, Microsoft, Hitechniaga, PIKOM, government, and the other partners, all communicated with CyberCare, and CyberCare communicated back to them. CyberCare acted as an intermediary or liaison organisation in this collaborative arrangement. This meant that the situation where all stakeholders are communicating together rarely happened in this collaborative setting.

Despite having diverse objectives, dyadic relationships, changed drivers, and going through transformation, the partners successfully carried out the programmes they initially planned together. To discover more on how these collaborative partnerships survive in the long-term despite all the challenges, the next chapter will discuss the findings from multiple-stakeholders regarding the challenges in this sustainable collaborative partnership effort.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CHALLENGES OF MAINTAINING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP IN A LONGSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Five, the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership from the perspective of multiple stakeholders involved were discussed. The findings show that what had initially driven the stakeholders into partnership was not necessarily able to sustain the collaborative partnership, as various challenges and issues emerging through the process drive changes in the collaborative arrangement and efforts.

This chapter brings together the views of stakeholders concerning the challenges of maintaining collaborative partnership in a longstanding ICT-based community service organisation. The majority of participants in my study mentioned various challenges they faced in carrying out collaborative efforts. However, different participants mentioned different kinds of challenge, while even within a particular group of stakeholders, different aspects were identified as challenges by individual respondents.

This chapter will discuss five major challenges of collaborative partnership in a longstanding community service project. I begin by discussing the main challenges in sustaining collaborative partnerships which mainly consist of the issues around insufficient resources. This is followed by views of the challenges of programme as sustaining collaborative partnership efforts, and communication and organisational cultures. In the final section of the new directions for setting up as a stand-alone organisation, the discussion involved the challenges that the service organisation faced in separating from one of its most prominent partners.

## **6.2 Sustaining collaborative partnership**

The main challenges of sustaining collaborative partnership in this study include diverse constraints due to lack of resources, restrictive rules and regulations, and insufficient corporate support.

### **6.2.1 Lack of resources**

Having enough resources is important in making collaborative efforts successful. In the context of Malaysia, most of the multi-stakeholder ICT's partnership initiatives are synergised through the combined resources and expertise from public and private sectors, and community (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2006). However, in this partnership, all groups of participants mentioned lack of resources as the main challenge in carrying out collaborative work. This was mostly emphasised by service organisations, corporations, and volunteers. Financial and human resources were the key types of resource identified as constraints. A few stakeholders also mentioned website management, the difficulty of obtaining venues, and limitations of time. These resources were related to each other, inasmuch as the limitations in one type of resources may lead to difficulties with other types of resources and vice versa.

#### **6.2.1.1 Challenges related to financial resources**

This collaborative partnership faced a number of financial challenges, including being impacted by the global financial crisis. Financially, the challenges included lack of funds, conditions imposed on the spending of funds by funding organisations, and agreement with the funder.



### ***Insufficient funds***

While all participants excluding orphanage administrators agreed that the lack of funds was the main challenge that created difficulties in carrying out a collaborative partnership agenda, the types of challenge and range of difficulties identified varied. The findings reveal that insufficient funds reduced the capacity to hire fulltime staff, conduct and maintain programmes and activities for children, sustain partnerships and sustain members' motivations.

### ***Difficulty in hiring fulltime staff***

Despite the view in the previous chapter that career opportunities are one of the sustaining factors of collaborative partnership in CyberCare, all participants from the board of directors of the service organisation considered that insufficient funds made it difficult to hire enough fulltime staff. MC-SO described it as *“a big task force”* to manage the smooth running of the collaborative partnership programmes. At the time of the interview, there was only one fulltime staff member managing the administration. MC-SO was also of the strong opinion that funds were the only thing they needed, to keep collaborative work going, *“I don't see a problem anywhere other than funding. If there's money to fund (the fulltime staff), I mean, a lot of things can be done.”*

### ***Difficulty in conducting and sustaining the programmes and activities***

Insufficient funds impacted on the nature of the programmes and its activities. In order to acquire more funds, the collaborators were usually forced to conduct fundraising activities: for instance, a marathon to raise money to serve the children, as YW-SO expressed his frustration, *“when we actually want to serve the kids, but (what) we have to do (is) a run to raise money to raise the kids”*

Furthermore, the participants from the service organisation, corporate, volunteer and government stakeholders mentioned that insufficient funds impacted on the sustainability of

the programmes from various angles. First, the challenge of insufficient funds was viewed as impacting on the implementation of the programmes by all participants. The effects mentioned included the “*slowing down of the programmes*” (MC-SO); “*discouraging opportunities to move forward*” (MS-SO); and “*stopping the pilot*” (YW-SO). The “*pilot*” referred to by YW-SO was the latest collaborative pilot project that they had conducted. While the service organisation participants discussed financial challenges as the real issue in the discontinuation of some programmes, the orphanage administrators were not clearly informed of the reason, although some assumed it to be financial.

Second, various participants from the service organisation (MC-SO), corporate (CJ-Corp), and volunteer (KS-Vol) stakeholders viewed the lack of funds in the context of the world economic conditions at the time. For instance, MC-SO noted that the “*World economic downturn affected the main partner’s organisation which directly interrupted their planned programme.*” In this instance, he did not blame the key corporate partner for the discontinuation, consequently avoiding more conflicting explanations. He also described the programme as being “*interrupted*” or “*being put on hold for a while,*” illustrating his hope that once the economic condition had improved, the collaborative project would resume.

CJ-Corp, the corporate participant who was the key partner in the discontinued project, similarly noted that the “*world economic crisis led to the programme to be put on hold.*” While he mentioned on occasion the programme having “*to come to an end*” elsewhere he envisions the programme as resuming once the funding and need were available. He also admitted that the project was hard to sustain without sponsorship from government and corporations, contradicting the government’s view that the project should become “*self-sustaining*” after a short time. To be resumed in future, CJ-Corp insisted that they would especially need the support of those two groups of stakeholders.

KS-Vol, the volunteer participant who used to be involved with the programme, took a different angle. He saw the world economic crisis as causing the company to adjust its corporate social responsibility allocation, leading to the end of the programme:

*...when there was an economic problem, the first thing that people wanted to cut off was corporate social responsibility for things. This is where they didn't want to waste their money, so that was how I felt our project was allowed to go.*

This participant emphasised his strong attachment to the service organisation, and appeared to portray a feeling of disappointment with the corporate decision. He regarded the corporation as the party with total control of financial resources. He also claimed ownership of the project, as he referred to it as “*our project*.” Unlike the service organisation and corporate stakeholders above, this volunteer did not raise the possibility of the project being continued.

Finally, participants from the government linked the difficulties in sustaining many projects to a society not ready to invest in new projects. KJ-Gov, who was in charge of managing and allocating DAGS (the government grant scheme supporting the partnership), explained the challenge of insufficient funds in relation to his experience in general in monitoring the projects under the same grant. He claimed:

*If I were to generalize, 70% of the projects did not go into the sustainable phase. Why? Our venture capital industry, risk capital industry in Malaysia is not mature, unlike Silicon Valley or anywhere else in the world, which is a “mature society.” This means we did not have a high network of individuals who have got the money to invest.*

KJ-Gov also claimed that the Malaysian investors at the time had more confidence in collateral risk, rather than capital risk. He gave an example:

*All our money for funding goes to the bank...The bank is based on collateral. You have one chair, I'll give you money to buy one chair. So, that chair is my collateral. The risk is there. If you don't pay, I'll take back the chair. This is the collateral risk but there is no risk in money. Risk money means you just fund the idea, and at that time we didn't have too much philanthropic money.*

However, he viewed CyberCare as one of the DAGS-funded projects that outperformed others under the same grant, as it was able to draw out risk capital investment from Microsoft via its philanthropic programme. The other two government participants, RA-Gov and SJ-

Gov, who were also involved in monitoring the projects, regarded CyberCare as one of the model projects and success stories of DAGS. He viewed the lack of willingness of Malaysian corporations to invest risk capital as a significant barrier to the success of similar projects.

### ***Difficulty in maintaining partnerships with other NGOs***

Apart from the difficulty of sustaining programmes, some participants from service organisations, corporations, and NGO stakeholders also viewed insufficient funds as a challenge to sustaining NGO partners in collaborative work. MS-SO, the fulltime staff member of the service organisation observed that the NGO partners were more prone to discontinue their partnerships with CyberCare, due to the non-profit-making nature of these organisations, which she viewed as having weaker financial capacity to support the programmes.

Corporate partners also viewed insufficient funds as a challenge for sustaining collaborative partnerships. Similar to MS-SO's claim on the non-profit sector, ML-Corp (who used to be a fundraiser and volunteer for CyberCare programmes) also realised the challenges faced by non-profit organisations in the country through her participation in the programmes. She claimed that "*non-profit organisations, they just don't really have the resources. It's very hard to sustain (the partnership).*" She refers here to all types of resource, not just financial funding but also human resources. In order to run sustainable projects, a non-profit organisation needs profit making partners to fund the collaborative works.

### ***Impact on the motivation of individuals within the service organisation***

Insufficient financial support was also viewed as a challenge that impacts on the motivation of the collaborative members in sustaining their efforts. This was mentioned by SL-NGO, the NGO participant whose club was previously a sponsor for CyberCare. He claimed:

*You see, these young people have the stamina, energy to carry on, and carry on. And sometimes it can be very frustrating, especially when you do not receive the financial support*

By “*these young people*,” he was referring to the members and volunteers of the service organisation. Based on his observation, he seemed to notice their efforts, aware of the constraints of the current situation of available funding in the country and the challenges faced by CyberCare members. The volunteers were also referred to as committed individuals by the majority of the orphanage administrators, and were recognised through their constant visits to the orphanage and activities with the children.

As financial support is important in ensuring the smooth running of the programmes or collaborative efforts, the continuing insufficiency of this will be likely to demotivate those people involved in planning and implementing the works.

### **Conditional funds**

The second category of financial challenge was that of conditional funds. Such funds would only be given if the receiver agreed to adhere to the funder’s required conditions. The specific issue raised by two participants from the board of directors of the service organisation involved the conditions that required a change of focus, and restricted the spending of the grants.

#### ***Conditional granting of an award that demanded a change of focus***

In the first instance, the participant discussed the pre-application or pre-award stage: the stage of decision making as to whether to apply for or to agree to receive the grant. MC-SO mentioned his experience in dealing with grant providers or potential partners:

*... If somebody said they will give us certain grant, and they want (us) to modify the things until we have lost the meaning of what we wanted to do.*

*Then, we would rather not (to) do it (modification), because we don't want to loose our focus because of what they wanted us to do..*

In this example, CyberCare board directors were selective and careful in accepting the grant to satisfy the funding requirements. MC-SOs viewed the issue of a conditional grant as a problem to be resolved. This challenge was also related to the existence of power imbalances within the collaboration, with granting bodies being in a powerful position.

### ***Dramatic difference in aims that restricted spending***

In the above example, MC-SO showed the decision that they made before the acceptance of the funding. In another case, YW-SO described the experience of the organisation being rejected by the corporate sponsor fund at the end of the grant period, after every effort had been made to satisfy this particular sponsor. This case shows that the corporate partner imposed its power on CyberCare. YW-SO expressed his disappointment:

*We even have a weird case of a sponsor, wanting an exclusive sponsorship, and asking us to remove all sponsors, we have actually cancelled all sponsorships...the only sponsor we could have is Microsoft.....at the end of the year, during the course of the time (when) we were presenting how we used the funding to pay for salary and staff....suddenly because whatever change of direction, they challenged (questioned) why we needed to take funding and pay salaries...They said, "No, you want to use the money, you have to use it to buy school books, school bags, school shoes, text books, and things like that." As a result, we cancelled the sponsorship. So, we went suddenly from having many sponsors...to only one sponsor, and now they cancelled it. We have a situation like this.*

This quote illustrates the dramatic difference in aims between the sponsor and the service organisation. The situation also represents the significant power imbalances between the two stakeholders, the service organisation and the corporate sponsor. This challenged the collaborative partnership arrangement. From the action taken, the corporation seemed to be a more powerful party compared to the service organisation. It did not care to compromise with the service organisation which was depending on its financial support and had less power to influence the decision. Compared to MC-SO's example, this was a more stressful challenge,

since the rejection happened after the agreement was made. This case is further discussed in the section discussion on breaching agreements.

## **Agreement**

In my study, the role of financial benefits in the agreement between partners was mentioned as a challenge to sustaining partnerships by service organisations, corporations and volunteers. We can discuss these findings by dividing them into the challenges of seeking agreement, renewing agreement, and breaching an/the agreement.

### ***Seeking agreement***

YY-Vol, a volunteer participant, mentioned the need to seek agreement from the corporate partner or sponsor in conducting the Care4U programme during his internship with CyberCare. He described the dealings with the corporate sponsor as where the challenges lay most of the time. He claimed that most of the financial aspects were decided by the corporate partner who had agreed to fund the project. This volunteer indicated the need to get agreement from the corporate partner before running a pilot project or conducting activities. To seek agreement, volunteers needed to present a detailed budget about their programme to the corporate sponsor representative. YY-Vol gave an example of an incident where his team's proposed project had been rejected by the corporate sponsor:

*...the first time when we came out with our ideas where we needed to do something like camps for the children, of course they rejected it, because the budget was so high. So, they wanted to do something that could be repeated...So that's why we came out with the MAD Curriculum.*

This explained how the team came up with a curriculum that was collaboratively developed and collaboratively implemented. This situation also explained the challenge faced when the volunteers were depending on others to finance the project.

### ***Renewing agreement***

In partnering with corporations, CyberCare would normally sign a formal agreement. While some of these agreements were meant to be long-term, because of individual corporations' preferences the agreements still needed to be renewed every year. YW-SO shared his experience of this process.

*...there is no such thing as CyberCare having a collaborative partnership with Microsoft, full stop. Then, it's done. CyberCare is a partnership, we sign it, but every year, we have to go back and convince them again. Because every year or three, four, or five years, the CEO changed. The head of corporate, PR (public relations) changed. The head of corporate affairs changed. The person in charge of CSR changed...*

The need to renew the agreement constantly was viewed as a challenge to the partnership, especially by the director of CyberCare. The reason for such renewals was that although the agreement was signed with the company, the decision was made by an individual. The signed agreement could not secure corporate support for the full stated period, because individuals such as the CEO could choose not to renew the agreement or to impose changes at any time.

### ***Breaching agreement due to differences of expectation***

Most of the issues that led to a breach of agreement were due to differences of expectation among the stakeholders. The first one dealt with unfair decision making or what YW-SO labelled as an “*insensitive corporate partner*.”

The findings showed that such an issue arose from what YW-SO referred to as an illogical decision made by an individual (the bank chairman) that was not favoured by the groups (including the CEO of the bank). For example, the “*weird corporate sponsor*” case (mentioned above in the section on conditional funds) was also regarded by YW-SO as breaching an agreement. The breach in that case was that while both parties had agreed to all stated conditions at the start of the grant, and the grant receiver had fulfilled all the conditions of the agreement, the sudden cancellation at the end of the funding period was based on the



assumption of the corporate partner that community service had to be volunteered, and should not be paid. This caused YW-SO to label the corporate sponsor in this instance as “insensitive,” as he further expressed his frustration, “...the very day he (the chairman) cancelled, that’s the time he told us, starting from the next day, CyberCare has no new funds. That’s just to give you an example of how insensitive a corporate can be.”

The breaching of agreement is also referred to as a “broken promise.” KS-Vol, the volunteer involved in the same internship programme as YY-Vol, mentioned a “broken promise” in dealing with PIKOM. Besides suggesting that the corporate social responsibility adjustment in this corporation was due to the world economic crisis earlier, he expressed his disappointment with PIKOM when it did not deliver on the promise it had made. Considering the efforts made by him and his internship team in the process of learning, this incident could impact them in two ways. Positively, it could make them better prepared for the real challenge in their working lives. Negatively, it could build their distrust, especially towards the corporate sector, which could influence them to make generalisations and to become suspicious of the efforts made by corporations to support the community, especially in applying their corporate social responsibility. This was evident when KS-Vol also mentioned that “they (the corporation) are supposed to pay a big amount, but RM1000 was just a compensation for us to close our mouth. We spent a lot on this project.”

However, the issue viewed as a major challenge by the volunteer participant above has been perceived differently by the corporate partner itself. As CJ-Corp clarified:

*I don’t know (if there is any challenge). I thought that when we went through the pilot, everything was fine. I don’t know on their part whether they see any issues. There were a couple of times when the payment took a little bit longer than necessary because of the funding situation but I think at the end of the day, everything went well and I think both sides made their commitment.*

Another issue of expectations was apparent here when the corporate participant portrayed a naive impression about the issue at the beginning of the quotation. However, while he gave some sense that he was knowledgeable about the issue, he did not recognise it as the big

challenge it was seen as by the volunteer participants. Instead, he took it lightly as a simple issue to resolve when he said:

*...because concept wise we were very much in the agreement with what to do, what we need to do. So, it is unfortunate that the program had to come to an end because of the funding situation. But other than that, I don't recall any behaviours where there could be in conflict.*

In these two instances, we can also see how the participant positioned himself throughout the conversation as external to the partnership; but when he came to explain about the work that had been carried on, he looked at it as two partners working together as “*both sides made their commitment,*” and sometimes he embedded himself/his organisation into the partnership as one group in understanding of each other well as “*we were very much in the agreement.*”

This study shows that having an agreement from the beginning of the programme could not help to secure financial support for the collaborative works, as the funders were in total control of the fund, and capable of reducing or terminating it as they liked. It also shows that the parties who were involved with the ground work like the service organisation and volunteers see the *process* of carrying out the collaborative work as important while the funders like the corporations were more likely to view the final *product* as key. The contrasting expectations from different stakeholders here further showed that there was a lack of consensus on the agreement among the partners in carrying out the collaborative programmes.

#### **6.2.1.2 Human resource challenges**

The other challenge of resources was in terms of the lack of human resources. This can mainly be categorised into the difficulties of bringing in fulltime staff and volunteers to join the collaborative work, and children to participate in the programmes.

## Challenges in maintaining and recruiting fulltime staff

Both service organisation and government stakeholders agreed that maintaining fulltime staff to serve the community was challenging. They had to let fulltime staff go as they looked for other jobs (JN-SO) or they progressed in their careers (RA-Gov), and obtaining funding for fulltime staff was also a concern for the board of directors. RA-Gov, the government participant, based his view on the testimonies of some fulltime staff members that he had interviewed who, after about a year, had looked for new jobs. According to him, those staff did admit to him that they enjoyed working with CyberCare but they had to progress in terms of their career. This was why some of them left as fulltime staff at CyberCare, but continued to be involved as volunteers (RA-Gov).

However, the interviews with CyberCare members revealed that they preferred to increase paid staff than fully depend on volunteers. They were continually seeking paid staff to manage the administrative work and collaborative programmes to reduce the volunteers' burden. The challenge for them was to recruit staff to do specialised jobs. At the time of the interview, they only had one fulltime staff member who had too many tasks. YW-SO said that he had been trying to get a webmaster to organise the website, but had found this very hard: *"if they (the webmasters) are good then they are very busy in network, if they are not good, they also have no interest to help us."* The other specialisation in which he was seeking to recruit staff was in social networking wherein the person can help to keep CyberCare connected with volunteers, with managing the programmes, or dealing with sponsorship. However, this was not realised yet, and he had to continue to rely on volunteers to do various tasks. His role as the founder or key leader of the service organisation was also obvious in his continuous usage of the personal pronoun *"I"* rather than the organisation or group in discussing this challenge, showing his sense of ownership and control of the organisation. ML-Corp, the corporate stakeholder also realised the challenge of having limited staff in CyberCare, and expressed her empathy in saying, *"insufficient manpower makes it very hard for them (CyberCare) to sustain it."* The limited number of fulltime staff increased dependence on volunteers.

## **Challenges in recruiting and sustaining volunteers**

Similar to the challenges with fulltime staff, recruiting and maintaining human resources was also a part of the challenge in dealing with volunteers. Some issues of volunteering that were challenging to this collaborative partnership were mostly felt by the service organisation as the key partner in this arrangement. YW-SO from the service organisation and RA-Gov from government also referred to volunteers as “*social workers*.” RA-Gov differentiated between government and non-government social workers to explain about the issue of unpaid volunteers. He claimed that government social workers were paid, so there was no such issue. He categorised non-government volunteers into “*fulltime*” and “*part-time*” volunteers, referring to fulltime volunteers as “*the people who worked hard and dedicated their spare time to assist the community*” and “*who could absorb the cost*,” whereas part-time volunteers were those people who would like to help but “*they need to be assisted*” financially as they “*could not absorb the cost for things such as travel*.” However, RA-Gov did not mean that the volunteers needed to be paid. Based on this categorisation by RA-Gov, the issues surrounding volunteers discussed by the participants here mainly relate to “part-time” volunteers.

This study shows that some non-profit organisations seek remuneration for their workers. YW-SO and SN-Corp who were volunteering actively for CyberCare informed me that they were also working on creating evidence that community service can be remunerated and rewarded in order to enhance recruitment. Participants suggested their aim was to see a shift in social expectations from a current view, held by corporations for instance, that community service should be volunteered and funds could not be used to pay the volunteers. More issues regarding volunteerism will be discussed as follows.

### ***Insufficient volunteers***

As this collaborative partnership depended on volunteers to carry out collaborative programmes, all members of the board of directors agreed that the lack of volunteers was their main challenge. Insufficient volunteers reduced the readiness of the service organisation,

created a dilemma in managing time, and reduced the organisation's availability for voluntary work.

First, in SY-SO's view, a lack of volunteers reduced the service organisation's readiness to carry out the programmes, especially with the orphanage partners. She admitted "*we (are) lack(ing) of volunteers to actually move to other homes from where we actually started.*" MC-SO referred to a similar issue as impacting on the smooth running of the programmes. SY-SO further noted that having insufficient volunteers contributed to a lack of readiness among CyberCare members towards potential partners who were interested in their programmes and who had approached them. This directly reduced the opportunity to build new partnerships; they had to reject some potential partners, because as SY-SO said, "*they are ready, we are not ready.*"

Second, insufficient volunteers also led to a dilemma in balancing volunteering time for doing children's programmes, and seeking sponsorships. Both MC-SO and YW-SO emphasised this challenge. For example, MC-SO mentioned:

*This (to choose to spend time volunteering for children or looking for sponsorship) itself is a challenge...because if you focus on both, each one itself is more than a fulltime job. So we try to set the balance between (the two)...how (can) we balance this?*

Third, while SY-SO and MC-SO identified the challenge in term of the impacts of the lack of volunteers, YW-SO also saw the challenge in terms of what contributed to the lack of volunteers. Considering himself as a volunteer as well, he compared other volunteers with him:

*How many people are as lucky as me, running my own business, managing my own time? Most people are working for someone. So, they got to finish their work, then they have to rush to CyberCare to volunteer..... How many people can volunteer every Saturday just to get the kids to workshop? So, as a result, this makes it very difficult...We end up having to rely on limited resources and then trying to raise funds just to get people to organise other people to volunteer.*

This participant suggested that the various life commitments among the existing volunteers reduced their availability for voluntary work.

What also emerged from this study was the dilemma of having volunteers sit on the top management of the voluntary organisation. This issue may relate to the challenge of insufficient support from the board of directors addressed by the fulltime staff, which led to her dissatisfaction in working with the organisation. MS-SO emphasises why it was a challenge for her:

*...the directors of this organisation are basically volunteers, and they give a lot of excuses or reasons for saying, "No, I have another fulltime job that I need to do, and you are the fulltime staff, so you handle it." Rather than we do it together....*

As the only fulltime staff member with a lot of tasks to be settled, she hoped that she could get someone to help her to reduce the burden by working together with her, as she had experienced during her internship period before she started her fulltime work. This also shows that the board of directors in CyberCare did not maintain the same way of treating the interns and fulltime staff.

### ***Recruiting and maintaining volunteers for the internship programme***

The other challenge of working with volunteers, as viewed by the corporate, voluntary, and NGO partners, was in recruiting and maintaining volunteers for the internship programmes. The corporate participant, SN-Corp, viewed the "*enrolment of the new volunteers and getting them committed to the programme*" as a challenging aspect in her collaborative work. At the time of interview, she was the one who was involved as a coach in training the volunteers, together with YW-SO from the service organisation. She also realised the need for the coaches' roles to be taken over by the new people, but this was not easily done while they were still struggling to maintain the volunteers, as she said, "*YW-SO and I cannot be doing it all the time. We need to train new blood and get people to take over...*"

A similar challenge in recruiting and maintaining volunteers was also identified by the volunteers, but from a different context. In this case, they were dealing with the challenge of recruiting other volunteers from other universities for their internship programme, as required by CyberCare. This challenge is presented in a more narrative format, as it is based on a very long story told to me from the volunteer.

KS-Vol explained the challenges faced by his internship team in finding volunteers for their internship programme with CyberCare. Due to the internship requirement, they needed to recruit volunteers from other universities to join their project. It was hard for them to get students from other universities and colleges to volunteer because of the clashes of timetables, perceived long duration, training time, students' own assignments, distant location of the place, lack of transportation, and the fact that recruitment took place in the festive season when many people were on holiday. KS-Vol commented "*the whole thing was so messy and so tough.*" Besides all the difficulties they had to face, they had to carry out the programme within the time frame of their internship.

After facing many challenges, the interns finally managed to get fifteen students signed up as volunteers. However, not long after they were recruited, the volunteers aged around 17 to 18 years old dropped out one by one, mostly due to disagreement with their parents as the programme finished around 10 to 11 at night, and the orphanage was far away with lack of public transport. KS-Vol commented: "*the parents were so angry.*" As he stated, "*Some of the students really stood tough and talked to the parents to convince them, but some of them dropped out because they did not manage to convince their parents.*" Despite the many issues mentioned, he kept highlighting the role of parents. This lack of understanding among parents may be due to the lack of clear communication and contact from the internship team about their programme with the parents of the students involved. At the end, they also recruited UTAR students, and all ten of these stayed with the programme until the end.

The task given to the intern students may seem to be a way for CyberCare to prepare them as future volunteers. The challenge of maintaining volunteers was also considered by JF-NGO, an NGO participant. JF-NGO praised the level of intelligence of the interns and their ability to

take guidance and act on it, but he seemed concerned with the challenge that might be faced by CyberCare in putting too much reliance on the “*capability of the interns.*”

### ***Teamwork issues***

Besides the issues of recruiting and sustaining volunteers, teamwork was an issue that also emerged in the programmes. Regarding the teamwork issues, YYi-Vol, a volunteer who was from an earlier batch of interns in the Care4U programme, saw her main challenge in keeping on volunteering as working in a big team during the internship programme. There were twenty-three of them, and she had to deal with different opinions, ideas, and ways of resolving issues. Throughout her experience in the programme, YYi-Vol believed that their ability to be tolerant, patient, and honest with each other was what kept them going through the challenges. Similar to other volunteers in the internship programmes, she mentioned how they resolved a conflict:

*...we sat in a big square and then we solved the problem within the room. We talked about whatever, we spoke out about whatever we wanted, our feelings, and then what we should do, and ended up, we would apologise to each other, and then start to change attitudes.*

This excerpt showed YYi-Vol’s view that a consensus decision-making process was used to resolve the issue. She also valued the ability to express their feelings and change attitudes as positive growth among the volunteers.

### ***Clash of ideas/ideology***

YY-Vol looked at maintaining the interest of volunteers in general, rather than just focusing on the Care4U programme. He looked at the clash of ideology as a challenge for CyberCare to maintain the volunteers as he claimed:



*...if you said...volunteers helping them (CyberCare), it's very hard. Maybe some of these people cannot buy in to the ideas or things, maybe they won't stay at all.*

He used the term “buy in” to refer to agreement with other people. In this case, YY-Vol claimed the clash of ideology may prevent CyberCare from attracting and maintaining more volunteers. This view may be based on his own experience, since he was not satisfied with some of the beliefs and ideas of the coaches in CyberCare that he argued to be inconsistent with what he believed. He expressed his recognition and dissatisfaction as follows:

*...we also learnt many things from them. We learnt to apply what we have studied, because we are in a Psychology field, so we can apply what we have learnt in the same way. But there are also some negative things, maybe what we learn is like we have to follow what they want. That's why we don't want to continue with them.*

Besides recognising his opportunity to learn and apply the knowledge, YY-Vol perceived the coaches as imposing their own ideology in the training, which appeared to him to be some kind of directed learning. Although this dissatisfaction related more to ideological content concerning different religious understandings, the mode of coaching also played a role when the coaches (YW-SO and SN-Corp) insisted the volunteers change their attitudes according to what they believed as good. This issue eventually led him and his peer volunteers to withdraw from volunteering with CyberCare and to build a stand-alone volunteering group.

### **Challenges in recruiting children as participants**

The other human resource challenge was to recruit child participants from orphanages. The volunteers have to go through the orphanage administrators before they can get the children to participate in their programme. In the process, the volunteers needed to convince the orphanage administrators, which was not easy. While KS-Vol mentioned the difficulties in the initial process of getting the orphanages to participate during his internship programme, YS-Vol was concerned with the process after recruiting the children in general. He was concerned with the willingness of the children to stay through to the end to undertake a community

service project. This may have been due to his experience in volunteering in one of the orphanages, in which the programme had to be put on hold due to the lack of commitment from the children in the process. This will be further discussed in the section relating to the challenges of participating in sustainable collaborative partnership efforts.

## **Website management**

A further human resource challenge, which was significant to the ICT-based community service organisation, was that of website management. The issue of website management in relation to CyberCare's programmes was only highlighted by the service organisation participants.

### ***Orphanage websites***

Because of the lack of fulltime staff and volunteers, the service organisation faced the challenge of managing websites, both those of the orphanage and its own. As introduced earlier, this collaborative partnership began as an e-community system that managed volunteers, monitored volunteers and registration, and showed the progress of the academic excellence award online. However, YW-SO mentioned that around 2005 or 2006, they had shifted away from the e-community system because the community was not ready to use it. YW-SO stated that the volunteers built the websites for the orphanage administrators to manage them by themselves, but it ended up that the volunteers had to become the webmasters for ninety orphanages, because the administrators in orphanages did not know how to update their websites. At that point, they decided to shift direction, as he described the situation according to the business theory:

*That's usual in business, if you sell someone something and they don't use it, that means the product is not good. So, we decided that the product was too early. People don't go to a site to find out about a community service. They just call (us)...They are not at the level of maturity where they go to the site, they do the planning, register the volunteers, they get notified, they follow up...they are not ready (for that). One day they might, but now they are not ready.*

The lack of website utilisation led YW-SO to conclude that the orphanage community was not ready for change yet. In contrast, most of the orphanage administrators I interviewed recognised CyberCare from the creation of websites for their orphanages which they valued even though they were not capable of updating the websites. While CyberCare wished to give the skills to the orphanages for them to maintain the websites themselves, the orphanage administrators regarded this as a part of CyberCare activities which were supposed to be done continuously by its volunteers.

### ***CyberCare website***

CyberCare's own website was not well managed either. At the time of the interview, YW-SO preferred to focus on getting the content of the programme right, rather than updating the website's appearance. He mentioned that many volunteers had suggested putting the training on hold and cleaning up the website first, but he refused because for him:

*The website will make me look good, the website will make people feel comfortable...but it's not going to change the kids' lives. I think what changes the kids' lives is the content work, the industrial programme (internship programme/ Care4U) work, the kids get to implement things, and things are actually smooth. That's where I want to focus on.*

This was indicative of a shift to personal development, away from a heavy focus on ICT. This shift mainly resulted from insufficient human and financial resources and community unreadiness.

### **Time**

All volunteer participants spoke about time in connection with their experiences of conducting collaborative work during the internship programme and their experiences of volunteering after completed the internship. Time was discussed in terms of programme duration and management. The challenges of programme duration and management in this study included shorter programme duration, and travel time and distance. In the case of the

Care4U programme's need, the findings reveal that the volunteers asked for a longer duration to make the programme more effective and have a better impact on the children. Volunteers felt that the frequency of contact was very important in volunteering for children in orphanages, as the volunteers needed to gain trust and establish relationships with the children before they could really get them to be actively involved in the programme. In continuing to volunteer after the internship finished, the volunteers viewed time in relation to travel distance, and saw travelling to distant locations as a waste of the time they had available to them. This aspect being emphasised by the volunteers may be due to their main roles in implementing programmes that are normally scheduled out of office hours, or at weekends.

## **6.2.2 Rules and regulations**

The other challenge was the rules and regulations of the orphanages. The challenges in dealing with these were widely discussed by the orphanage administrators, volunteers, and members of CyberCare and mainly concerned the volunteers' awareness of their restrictions. The challenge involved issues dealing with the venue, time management or schedule, the usage of facilities, and acceptable activities.

### **6.2.2.1 Restriction on venue**

The issue of venue restriction mainly arose when there was a conflicting view between the orphanage administrators and volunteers on the best way to take care of the children. The restriction, which was viewed positively by the orphanage administrator, was seen differently by the volunteers. For instance, YY-Vol mentioned his experience with his internship team volunteering at the same orphanage:

*...We have some challenges because...they (the children) are bound by rules by which the pastors, the administration of the homes didn't allow them to do (activities) outside of the home...So they could just do activities within their home. For example what they did was to decorate their library. So, they are limited by those things... I think that was the main challenge.*

In my discussion with the orphanage administrator, he regarded the volunteers who did not understand the rules and regulations of the orphanage as a challenge for him. Whereas the volunteers regarded the same restrictions as the main challenge for them in carrying out the programme and limiting the children's opportunities to be creative

#### **6.2.2.2          Restriction on the usage of facilities**

The issue arising from a restriction on the usage of the facilities provided by the orphanages showed a mismatch between the expectations of the different stakeholders involved, mainly the orphanage administrators and volunteers. The orphanage administrator (P-OA) mentioned the complaints she had received from the Pastor of Orphanage2 regarding the volunteers' irresponsible usage of the orphanage facilities requiring her to restrict the usage for the volunteers. These issues led P-OA to perceive that "*CyberCare was not in tune with what they were doing,*" as the volunteers were not consistent in following the instructions given. These issues were also seen to be what led the orphanage administrator to change the way they treated CyberCare volunteers, as YY-Vol commented:

*...Actually from the start, I can feel that they are very supportive, for example in letting us use the church facilities, but at later times when they have more rules and where they wanted us to write formal letters for this, and after that, they restricted us from using the church. I can see that maybe they are closing up again.*

The phrase "*closing up again*" obviously meant that it was not the first time such a situation happened. The first instance might refer to the time when P-OA mentioned a "*de-bridging point.*" It showed the same issues being regarded as challenges by both parties, but they did not recognise each other's reasons or difficulties, showing a lack of two-way communication between them.

Another challenge highlighted by the volunteer participants was the orphanage's restrictions on children's access to the internet. KS-Vol reported the administrator (AK-OA from Orphanage6) as saying, "*If you all want to follow this way, we might as well cancel off...I*

*don't want them to learn email, and I don't want them to learn browsing."* The internship team had to agree with him, and adjusted the programme according to what he wanted so that the children could join the Care4U programme. While the feedback I received from that orphanage administrator (AK-OA) clarified that the restriction was based on past issues with children using email, he did not specify what sort of problem had arisen. AK-OA only stated that he allowed the children to use the internet under adult supervision.

### **6.2.2.3            Restriction on children's activities**

Limited acceptable activities were another issue relating to the awareness of orphanages' rules and regulations. The orphanage administrator, P-OA, regarded the activities contradicting the orphanage rules as a lack in diplomacy among the volunteers. She viewed:

*Based on my experience, the top people in CyberCare like YW-SO are very diplomatic in the way they dealt with Rumah Hope. They went through the proper channel, but not the volunteers. CyberCare's volunteers were lacking in diplomacy. It is because this home doesn't like to have yoga activity, and martial arts, but even though we have told the volunteers, they still teach them yoga, and martial arts. And the kids start practising. So, it's not good.*

This excerpt shows contradictory views in relation to belief and culture. In this case, the orphanage administrator's refusal to allow the children to get involved with yoga and martial arts may be due to the origin of those two in religious beliefs which were contradictory to the teaching of Christianity as a religion adopted by orphanage2. For example, yoga is believed to originate from Hinduism, and martial arts like karate are related to Buddhism. The administrator viewed learning these kinds of activities as accepting the philosophies of the related religions. This might not have been well understood by the volunteers.

What this also implied was the expectation of the orphanage administrator, that the stakeholders in the partnership would discuss and seek consensus from the orphanage management prior to the implementation of the programme and during the process. Once things had been agreed, the administrator expected the parties involved to adhere to what they

had agreed to. Communication between the stakeholders, especially the volunteers and orphanage administrators, was also lacking in this case as both groups seemed to judge each other based on assumptions.

#### **6.2.2.4 Conflicting programme schedules**

The final challenge that was often related to the rules and regulations of the orphanages was the issue of time management and schedules. Almost all orphanage administrators mentioned the clash of CyberCare programmes with their own or other programmes that they had arranged earlier. Most admitted that CyberCare had many good programmes, and they wished to get their children involved, but usually they were not being informed ahead of time, which resulted in the programmes clashing with their own. This may be due to the timescale of the university students involved, where their activities were limited within a semester or year. When it came to the clash of programmes, it was difficult for the administrators to make decisions (JS-OA from Orphanage1). In this situation, some administrators allocated time by taking away their activities (RAI-OA from Orphanage3), but most of the time, they placed emphasis on their own programmes, which meant they had to reject those of CyberCare.

Other related issues involved the last-minute rescheduling or changing of regular activities with the children in orphanages, burdening the administrators with adjustments to their schedules (RAI-OA). Other issues arose when the schedules were in conflict with the orphanage administrators' preference. For example, RAI-OA claimed that the night time programmes on weekdays were problematic, as they affected children's sleeping time and performance in schools (RAI-OA). P-OA from a Christian orphanage also mentioned a complaint she received from the Pastor about the activities conducted on Sunday, which was a public holiday and the service day for the church.

The challenge of communication among the stakeholders is further discussed in the section about ambiguous communication.

### **6.2.3 Insufficient support from corporations**

The lack of support was another challenge raised by the service organisation directors, and volunteers, which overlaps with two of the categories above.

SY-SO claimed that what they were doing was not truly understood by many parties, especially the corporate sponsors who only wanted to see a clear result from their sponsorship. However, she described what they were doing as “*something not so apparent to be seen*” as it “*just something that is developed in the children.*”

This claim was also shared by YW-SO, who considered finding and sustaining corporate partners who are “*truly honest and sincere with their CSR*” to be difficult, because the corporations would rather “*sponsor happy, excited, receiving goods, and smiling children*” than “*the problematic children because they didn’t want their organisations to be pictured with problems.*” Similar to SY-SO, YW-SO claimed the corporations just wanted simple uncomplicated things. Some stakeholders like the Lions Club and government regarded the service organisation’s proposal as too ambitious. This may be due to the plan to involve collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders which they know was not easy enough to be implemented.

## **6.3 Programme as sustaining collaborative partnership efforts**

One of the challenges of carrying out programmes in this collaborative partnership involved addressing issues of acceptance and recognition. The participants discussed the importance of gaining trust and recognition from society in general, and government agencies and orphanages in particular, to enable them to achieve their aims: reaching out to the children; including more partners, sponsors and volunteers; sustaining and adding more resources; increasing government support; and rolling out the curriculum nationwide in future. The collaborative effort to gain trust from the community ranged from a simple tangible programme to a more complex one, involving the use of the curriculum in the Care4U



programme. Issues related to programmes in this research were mostly highlighted by members of the service organisation and orphanage administrators.

### **6.3.1 Continuation of collaborative partnership programmes**

Referring to all of their programmes in general, service organisation participants regarded what they were doing as new and unique. They asserted that it might take some time before the uniqueness of the programmes was accepted and recognised by other parties. YW-SO claimed:

*...the challenges we faced as an organisation because what we do, no one else does. And if we don't do this, maybe over time, the government will do it, maybe the school will do it, maybe the home (orphanage) will do it, but I think if it's like a project..it will be a long time before they do..*

Due to this situation, the government participant, SJ-Gov mentioned that getting involvement from a number of orphanages in the project was a great challenge for CyberCare at the time. This claim supported the government's perspective on the programme-based partnership in Chapter Five which emphasised that CyberCare was trying to resolve issues in orphanages of which the orphanages might not themselves be aware. This was particularly related to the e-community programme implemented in the initial stage of ICT concentration. For example, RA-Gov mentioned the issue of a runaway child who was separated into a different orphanage from his sister because the particular orphanages did not cater to both genders. RA-Gov further stated that the orphanage administrators may describe the issue as being that the orphan was not happy with the orphanage and had run away just to be with the sister, but the underlying issue might be bigger, involving psychological issues such as depression and longing for attention. The government has accepted that the e-community programme, as shown by RA-Gov's recognition that ICT can be used to address such issues as in the example earlier because ICT (according to him) will allow children to interact online, and see each other via webcam.

In order to sustain a collaborative programme that can give long lasting impact to the children, YW-SO claimed that the programme needed to gain acceptance from the Malaysian society in general. The partnership also aimed to increase support, especially from corporations and other government agencies, in order to expand the latest programme nationwide. For that reason, YW-SO claimed that he was working on creating evidence with other partners to try out some programmes to find out the most suitable one to realise their aim:

*....what we are doing now is to collect evidence. Pure ICT training doesn't work, the eWorkshop doesn't work, pure camp doesn't work, eWorkshop and camp work better, but still not perfect. Now, the best curriculum we got consists of ICT, life skills, (and) project (community service project). That works. How to roll out nationwide, we don't know. We are trying out one pilot, two pilot....this is fourth pilot. If the pilots work out, we'll go and sign up (with) more universities...*

Here, the series of piloted programmes YW-SO mentioned were the Care4U programme which utilised the MAD Curriculum that CyberCare and partners had collaboratively produced. In piloting the programme, YW-SO stressed the need to get the content of the curriculum right by implementing it.

There is much evidence that these collaborative efforts successfully gained the trust of the target community through their programmes. All of the orphanage administrators I interviewed remembered them through their previous e-community programmes when they had spread these out nationwide. These results also show that CyberCare's techniques for coping with challenges and gaining trust from the orphanages by starting with something tangible, such as by donating ICT equipment, and moving on to more complex programmes, worked out well in developing rapport with the orphanages. For the latest Care4U programme utilising the MAD Curriculum, not much feedback can be provided by the orphanages, because it was a new programme.

### **6.3.2 Challenges of participation in sustaining collaborative partnership efforts**

This section discusses the issues of maintaining participation in sustaining the collaborative efforts from the community practice which involved the issues of children's lack of commitment, risks of participation, philosophy and resistance to participation, language as a barrier, and cultural and structural constraints.

#### **6.3.2.1 Lack of commitment led to discontinuation of programme**

The service organisation, orphanage administrator, and volunteer participants described the challenges of the YLM programme with the children in orphanage2 that had been put on hold due to the lack of commitment of the children. The child participants also admitted that they did not have the commitment to carry out the programme. For example VN-Kid said, "...*we were not giving ourselves...*" In contrast, JN-Kid had a positive view that the group of children just needed commitment and belief from all group members to carry on with the project.

Briefly, the programme started with YLM, and then CyberCare tried to do Care4U and use the MAD curriculum. Agreement was sought from many parties involved with the programme including the coaches, volunteers, orphanage administrators, and children, and all of them agreed to change it. JN-Kid, the child participant who led the group, described the programme as follows:

*Actually we went to Kg Pandan before, and we saw that they were less fortunate than us. At least we have got shelter and electricity, but they don't have that. So, we want to learn how to give to people, and we starting out this programme (fundraising).*

This was how CyberCare triggered the children to start the new programme and cultivate a sense of awareness to help others in order to teach them to contribute. However after it had been agreed, the Care4U programme which was scheduled to start in early December 2009 was postponed until the end of the month. The feedback from three child participants I

interviewed mentioned that the problem was due to the change of programme from the musical concert that they had planned to the charity programme that they had not yet planned. However, none of the other stakeholder groups involved mentioned this reason.

### **6.3.2.2 The perils of participation**

This subsection discusses the main issue of encouraging child participation in CyberCare's recent programme. The findings show that the implementation was not without its challenges. Specifically YY-Vol mentioned the main reason for him to regard the children as less committed was because of the constant last minute cancellation of the weekly programme sessions. He explained his frustration:

*When we just reached there, then only we know "Oh it's cancelled, we don't have the coaching session"*

The children could easily cancel the programme because they were given control of it. Although the purpose of CyberCare and its partners was to empower the children by giving them control of the programme, the results were not as they expected. Ironically, the children ended up by disappointing the volunteers who had been involved with them since the beginning of the programme.

Consequently, the volunteers decided to step forward and decide for the children. The children were also informed about the volunteers' feelings about the decision to temporarily discontinue the programme. YW-SO described the decision as risky, because of the possibility the children would be permanently disconnected. However, he regarded it as something "*worth of trying*" as he just wanted to train the children that they have choices in life, and they will become what they choose to be. As this decision was just for the children to learn, he mentioned to me that if they have not received any news from the children in the near future, CyberCare and its volunteers would be the ones who would initiate contact with them. This provided another example of how CyberCare was experimenting and creating evidence in developing a child-centric programme to empower the children.

### 6.3.2.3 Philosophy of and resistance to participation

This study also gained findings about the methodology used in empowering the children through the programmes. The methodology used in this project involved a process where a range of people could contribute to the decision-making. For example, YY-Vol, the volunteer, was the one who highlighted the commitment issue mentioned above, advised on action to be taken, and together they made the decision. YY-Vol made the suggestion out of concern that the continuous dealing with uncommitted children over a longer time might negatively affect the volunteers' motivation. This consequence has been mentioned in Chapter Five regarding the driver that changed the volunteers' interest in volunteering with CyberCare.

YW-SO described the method of decision-making they normally practised in dealing with given issues in a programme:

*...in CyberCare, our methodology is "If someone brings it up, more than two times, if they bring it up on the third times, we would accept it." YY-Vol brought it up, CW-Vol brought it up, finally YY-Vol brought it up again. That's why we said, "Okay, third time, we'll do it."*

After the discussion with the volunteers, YW-SO mentioned that he went to the session with the children and asked for their opinion about the programme. When they were not in agreement to continue the programme, YW-SO recapped the situation in the programme when they said they were going to commit but continued to postpone the sessions from time to time, and did not show regular attendance. To make it clear, he defined commitment to the children: *"...There's no commitment, commitment means you are really doing it, you are honest to yourselves, you'll stay true to yourselves."*

YW-SO also explained the following process in making a decision, in which he included the children and gave them a suggestion, as put forward by the volunteers:

*...I said, "coaches have brought it up to me, and I agreed with them. These are suggestions to you. Why don't we stop the programme? When you are*

*ready, because your work schedule is ready, or school is ready. When you are ready, call us, we'll start the MAD curriculum..."*

In these instances, YW-SO defined what he meant by commitment and readiness, and spoke about what the children should do when they feel ready. As the children listened to this, YW-SO mentioned that they were shocked because as YW-SO assumed, they did not expect that they would take such a decision.

The children's responses revealed that they were well informed about the decision taken. While JN-Kid did not mention that she was not ready for the programme, she seemed confident to carry out the project, but both VN-Kid and RC-Kid admitted that they were not yet ready. Both VN-Kid and RC-Kid perceived that they would be ready when they could give full commitment, and they mentioned their intention to call CyberCare when the time came.

While the decision taken resulted from the discussion among the stakeholders involved in the programme, it did not include the involvement of related stakeholders as a whole. The orphanage administrator who was the caretaker of the children in the programme was not informed of the decision, as P-OA stated:

*...(Orphanage2) has approved the programme but I don't know why CyberCare did not go through with that project...On our side, we just the approval (for children)...I might have thought that they had set their standards to perform, that was why they sent for classes and when the children were not to their expectation they called it off. I'm sure that they have good reasons. At that point in time, I don't remember receiving an explanation*

This is also another example of the lack of communication between the programme enablers and the orphanage administrator. Although the reason was unknown and uncommunicated, the administrator showed that she maintained trust in CyberCare and the volunteers in confidently assuming that the decision was taken for a good reason. Despite the lack of communication between CyberCare and volunteers with the orphanage administrator, they seemed to communicate well with the children as all the decision taken were being well

understood by the children except for the reason of the programme delay. This example shows that CyberCare has been able to build trust with the orphanage administrator through the programmes it has conducted with the children in the orphanage.

The findings showed that specific programmes for children were developed from time to time, and the volunteers approached the children directly through the programmes. During the process, CyberCare and its volunteers faced some challenges that required them to apply suitable means to deal with this.

#### **6.3.2.4 Language as a barrier to participation**

This challenge is particular to the programme with children rather than with the stakeholders *per se*. In this study the curriculum and programme, designed by professionals and university students used English (which is not the first language of the locals) for content delivery. The study showed that some orphanage administrators and volunteer participants viewed the use of English as the medium of instruction in CyberCare programmes as a challenge.

In this situation, they referred the challenge to the children involved, rather than to themselves. For example, DZ-OA, the orphanage administrator admitted that it could be challenging for his children as they were all Malays, and the programmes conducted in English would make it difficult for them to interact. A small number of other administrators from the Indian orphanages also shared a similar view. KS-Vol, the volunteer who trained the children himself, noticed the difficulties in the children he trained in retaining information, due to their poor command of English. Apart from this, KS-Vol noted that some of the children also had learning difficulties such as that they could not recognise words properly (probably having Dyslexia). However, KS-Vol also noticed that most of the children in the programme, including those with learning difficulties, were only struggling with reading and writing, but could converse well in English. Another group of children that KS-Vol observed were capable of understanding more English in the hands-on setting of a computer lab.

## **6.4 Communication and organisational cultures**

Another challenge in this study concerns ambiguous communication and cultural issues among the stakeholders. Even though all orphanages signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to join the partnership, they claimed a lack of clear communication as a main challenge. Where there was no communication or follow up of the programmes, the orphanage administrators were most likely to make their own assumption. The challenge of communication was also voiced by the volunteers and the service organisation. Although the participants seemed to share similar cultural values, and the partnership practised flexible working, the findings reveal that there were some related cultural and structural constraints. In these terms, the service organisation, corporate, NGO, and volunteer participants discussed the difficulties of partners understanding different approaches, and the difficulties of volunteers adapting to cultural differences. The discussion on ambiguous communication and cultural constraints in a range of contexts will begin with the challenge for all stakeholders, and will follow with the specific challenge between the service organisation and the Lions Club.

### **6.4.1 Communication and cultural constraints among the stakeholders**

This section comprises the responses from the stakeholders involved in the issues of miscommunication with the corporation; assumptions about discontinued programmes; imprecise collaborative partnership benefits; lack of direction in moving forward; difficulties in adapting to cultural and religious differences; and anticipated difficulties in getting support at the new location.

#### **6.4.1.1 Miscommunication with the corporation**

Poor communication with the corporate partner led to a change in agreement with the corporation. KS-Vol described the challenge of miscommunication with the corporate partner in carrying out his internship programme (Care4U):



*I'm not sure where the mess was, but there was a mess where PIKOM stopped interacting with me...(in the process of implementing the Care4U programme) He told us that he didn't know that the project was still going on. And that was a bomb to me. There was miscommunication...*

In this case, he mentioned that due to miscommunication, the corporate partner thought the programme had been abandoned. This was the most challenging time for his team, which he referred to it as a “*mess*” and a “*bomb*.” They were planning and carrying out the programme on a big scale, knowing that the corporate partner had agreed to support it with a certain amount of sponsorship. He also mentioned that YW-SO was furious and was blaming PIKOM for making such an assumption. However, in the end, he claimed that they managed to produce favourable results even without support from PIKOM: “*But even without their partnership, we could do it by ourselves also.*”

On the side of the corporate partner, they did not view a similar issue as a serious challenge, as mentioned in the section of breaching agreement earlier in this chapter. For them, it was just an issue that could be quickly resolved.

#### **6.4.1.2 Assumptions about discontinued programmes**

Connected to the issue of nurturing and communication in the discussion of conflicting programme schedules, the other issue that orphanage administrators always linked to lack of communication was dealing with programme discontinuation. The common feedback given by the administrators for example, “*...I don't know whether they have a project...Because they didn't send us the information. I think they reduced their project*” (TT-OA from Orphanage9) or “*After the programmes, they used to come here to do follow-up and so on. But then, after sometimes, they totally stop everything...*” (AT-OA from Orphanage8). As a result of the lack of communication, and the issue that the participants often linked to the lack of follow-up programmes in the above examples, the administrators assumed that the programmes were discontinued.

Many orphanage administrators also saw such situations as programme inconsistency, which left the orphanage administrators in an uncertain situation. For example, JS-OA from Orphanage1 mentioned, “...CyberCare, they came in consistently but then they were not consistent. Just for a certain time, and then after that it’s all gone.” JS-OA further related his assumption as to the issue of partnership: “...After that couple of years, I don’t have anything to do with CyberCare...Our webpage is not updated, nothing has been going on...That’s why as I said relationship was not built.” Here, JS-OA expected that for the partnership to be built, there should be continuous communication and consistent follow-up. When CyberCare disappeared without any communication or follow-up programmes after the last programme with them, there was not enough for the relationship to endure or for them to be called partners. The disappearance of CyberCare without information also left him doubting their relationship status, as he said, “Maybe wrong for me to say that our partnership is existing.” This may be due to the fact that he realised that they had signed a partnership MOU, but when the programmes discontinued without any clear communication, he was in a dilemma to explain the uncertain relationship.

With such a communication gap and discontinuation of the programmes, all orphanage administrators regarded the programmes as unsustainable. AT-OA questioned, “Like now I see it is stop. So, how to sustain? There’s no sustainability at all.” Furthermore, DZ-OA from Orphanage7 argued:

*....it is not sustainable because there is no follow-up after that. The kids, normally they will remember and can do everything that they have learnt but after one to three months, they will forget. Sorry to say, it’s not just CyberCare’s programmes but most of the programmes, whether it’s motivation or leadership programme or whatever, it’s all just for that duration only. After that, no follow up. So, it’s just ended like that.  
(translated)*

DZ-OA began his argument by looking specifically at CyberCare’s programmes and moved towards generalising that to the other programmes he had observed. His concern was more on the impact the unsustainable programmes have on the children. He apparently valued long lasting impact, which he believed could only be achieved through sustained programmes.

The issue of an undelivered promise that surfaced from this concern over the impact of the programme on children was also voiced by other administrators such as RAI-OA from Orphanage3, who said, *“I see that much earlier, they did (follow-up)...Earlier, they said they got follow-up. But so far, (there is) no follow-up yet. So what they (children) have learned, they learned, and what they have forgotten, they forgot.”* In this instance, RAI-OA acknowledged that CyberCare did follow up the programmes in the beginning, and promised to continue to do that. However, at the time of the interview, the promise remained to be delivered, and like DZ-OA, he was also concerned with the programmes’ impact on children as he viewed the discontinuation of the programmes as able to interrupt children’s learning as well.

#### **6.4.1.3 Imprecise collaborative partnership’s benefits**

JS-OA, one of the orphanage administrator participants, expressed his dissatisfaction when the benefits of the programme were not communicated to him:

*..And then they have their own programme and it is all about CyberCare and nothing to do with us...They wanted to, maybe raise money, or by the refunds, by showing this programme companies will participate. But how we are going to benefit? So they want children, they asked us to please send these children. I found it did not benefit us, so I didn’t participate...*

If the benefits of the programmes are not effectively communicated to the partners, this can lead some, like JS-OA, to become suspicious. In this example, he suspected that CyberCare had some hidden agenda in getting the children’s participation. He suspected that CyberCare’s purpose was to attract sponsors rather than to benefit orphanages with the programmes. His view was similar to the way CyberCare viewed the Lions Club below.

#### **6.4.1.4 Lack of direction in moving forward**

Unsatisfactory communication from the service organisation also left partners without direction, according to orphanage administrators and volunteers. For example, JS-OA sadly

claimed, “...*lack of communication now, apparently there is no direction.*” He was referring to the lack of direction in scheduling the programmes, because CyberCare normally did not inform the orphanage administrator of its planned programmes ahead of time. This created difficulties for the orphanage administrators in slotting programmes into the orphanage’s schedule, which may indicate his desire for greater participation.

Volunteers described a lack of awareness of the direction in which CyberCare was heading, as KS-Vol mentioned:

*..maybe their aspiration and motivation are going down...I don't know what is going on in their minds, what is their plan, I don't know whether they got other dilemma or what, they are pursuing their own business, and this is not an income generating project (KS-Vol)*

In this instance, KS-Vol’s curiosity about what was going on in CyberCare resulted from CyberCare’s lack of transparency. As an active volunteer who described himself as attached to CyberCare, he was concerned with CyberCare’s ability to sustain itself in the future. He seemed to think that CyberCare members might abandon the organisation because it was non-profit making.

#### **6.4.1.5 Difficulties in adapting to cultural and religious differences**

Similarities were discovered in the aims and strategies of both the YLM and Care4U programmes, where the lead coaches’ main aim was to change the attitude of the children (YLM and Care4U) and interns (Care4U), and they used the main strategy of sharing their life experiences to inspire them to change and to carry out the programme or project. In Care4U, the interns also shared their life experiences, but it was very rare for this to happen in YLM. Both YLM and Care4U programmes were also meant to train the children and interns to be coaches. In YLM, the coaches aimed to train the children to be coaches to other children in their selected project. In Care4U, the interns who had been trained by the coaches were intended to coach the children of their selected orphanage. However, in the process, the

positive intention of fostering change underlying the programmes brought about certain challenges, due to cultural differences among the participants.

The volunteer participants mentioned the cultural differences between them and the coaches as something that made it hard for them to adapt to their ideas. For example, YS-Vol claimed:

*...sometimes they (the coaches) will force us to accept their idea. But sometimes we may not be able to adapt to the idea because of the cultural differences.*

I was curious to find out that they were having such a problem, because they were the same Malaysian nationality and from the same ethnic background as one of the coaches. YS-Vol then clarified that he was from a Chinese education background in which he was different from the coach who was a western educated Chinese. He gave an example of such situation:

*...they are using NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming)...They want us to change and then I didn't change, so they forced me to change... They wanted me to talk more but in my culture, only when the person asks me to talk will I talk..I cannot just follow what they say and just follow them.*

Another volunteer, YY-Vol also supported YS-Vol where he mentioned that he did not like certain content of NLP. He gave example on the aspect of religion:

*In our culture, religion is still quite a strong element in our lives for most of the people. So they are "playing like more on between the lines." For example, one of the major ideas is that especially for our coaches, sometimes they gave me their ideas as if every god is the same. In things like this, they are like neutralising our religion. So, this is something where I don't think they will get much acceptance from the homes, maybe from some volunteers who may have greater or stronger religious background.*

In a multi-cultural country with people of multi-religious backgrounds like Malaysia, the issue of religion has to be taken into careful consideration, as a majority of the population still maintain strong religious values. In this instance, YY-Vol appeared to insist on the need for the coaches to have more clarity in mentioning their own religious beliefs, rather than trying

to make it ambiguous to accommodate different believers or what YY-Vol termed as “*playing like more on between the lines.*” This complaint reminded me of the earlier days I attended Care4U coaching sessions. I remember YW-SO, the coach informed that they were “*faithful*” and “*faithless*” in conducting the coaching but I did not ask further as I was at the beginning stage of gaining acceptance to the group and adjusting to my role as observer. Nobody else asked the coach for any details either. In my conversation with YW-SO, he stressed that the members of CyberCare were not religious, although they used to employ material from the Bahai religious movement. As for SN-Corp, she believed in all religions and accepted any practice that she valued from any religion. YY-Vol’s concern about the orphanages’ acceptance was understandable because most of the orphanages in the country were religious based. In this case, there was a challenge to many parties. While YY-Vol insisted the coaches needed to be transparent about what they believe, YW-SO tried to remain neutral to gain acceptance from the participants.

#### **6.4.1.6 Anticipated difficulties in getting support at the new location**

KS-Vol’s anticipated lack of support that they might face when UTAR moved to the new campus (and the CyberCare programme would be moved as well) also linked to the issue of adaptation with the new organisational culture. KS-Vol anticipated two challenges that they would potentially face at the new place. The main challenge was the support in term of facilities. He referred back to the hard work his team had gone through in the past, in getting all the facilities they needed from the university. What he was concerned about was the continuity of what they already had, to the next batches, as he mentioned:

*We managed to cut a lot of red tape. I thought there’ll be continuity that is easy to get through. Now, unfortunately, we are moving to Kampar, and we are not well-known in Kampar.*

This issue of continuity and change is linked closely to the discussion above about the challenges in getting and maintaining resources, and signing agreements. KS-Vol’s discussion on discontinuation led to his anticipation of difficulties in recreating relationships. He further stated:

*...you have to recreate the relationship, and it will take time. .... If we are recreating, we will start back from scratch. But, it should be able to be done.*

Even though KS-Vol was not happy with the fact that the programme had to move to the new place, and he expected that recreating the relationship would be more challenging for their progress rather than continuing the existing one, he positively believed that it could be achieved. The way KS-Vol always used the pronoun “we” in his conversation (when in fact he had already graduated, so whatever changes that happened to the programme in the future would not affect him personally) showed his feeling of belonging within CyberCare.

All these issues dealing with communication and culture between stakeholders in this collaborative partnership setting showed that the stakeholders (especially from the group of orphanage administrators and volunteers) strongly valued continuing commitment in the programme, and constant and clear communication with the partners in sustaining collaborative partnership. However, these stakeholders only emphasised the need for constant communication with the service organisation, rather than with all of the stakeholders involved. This further explains the dyadic relationships that exist between the two stakeholders in this collaborative partnership. The similar challenge of communication and organisational culture in specific to the challenge between CyberCare and the Lions Club will be discussed next.

#### **6.4.2 Communication and cultural constraints between CyberCare and the Lions Club**

This section discussed the challenges of ambiguous communication and cultural issues, particularly in relation to CyberCare and the Lions Club. It consists of the challenges of adhering to the protocols of the Lions Club; different understandings of sponsorship promotion; difficulties in understanding different organisational approaches; and disputes over shared resources.

#### 6.4.2.1 Adhering to the protocols of the Lions Club

The main cultural challenge that seemed to lead to other communication and cultural challenges between CyberCare and the Lions Club was adhering to the protocols of the sponsoring club, the Lions Club. This was mainly mentioned by the service organisation participants. YW-SO recognised the Lions Club's contribution to helping CyberCare structure its collaborative efforts in the beginning of five to six years. However, later on, the relationship changed, as YW-SO claimed:

*...But, after that it's more of a hindrance than help because people get upset, "why you don't turn up for regional meeting, why don't you turn up for cabinet meetings...how come you are serving another project, how come we come and support your project, and you don't come and support our project..*

In this example, the impression is created that in order for club members to be accepted and gain support from other club members, they had to attend all the club meetings and functions. This situation strengthened YW-SO's view of the Lions Club as a "social networking club." These social networking events which were supposed to strengthen their relationships turned out differently; YW-SO termed it "a hindrance" when not all members were in tune with the practice. YW-SO also claimed there was team segmentation in the Lions Club, with some groups supporting CyberCare because CyberCare members went to their functions, while others did not support them because CyberCare members did not attend those functions.

This issue of insufficient support from other Lions Club members seemed to have been communicated by the members of the service organisation to the sponsoring Lions Club, as SL-NGO understood this to be the reason for CyberCare's decision to withdraw from the Lions Club network. This will be discussed further in the next subsections.



#### 6.4.2.2 Different understandings of sponsorship promotion

The first challenge of communication between CyberCare and the Lions Club was in terms of non-verbal communication. Various stakeholders had a different understanding of the sponsorship matter, such as the promotional symbol of the sponsored partners printed on shirts.

This case involved sponsorship for the programmes directed at the orphanage community. YW-SO explained what he termed “*misunderstanding*”:

*...when we do function, you notice that only this small logo is Lion, the big logo is with Microsoft (pointing to his shirt), they (the Lions Club members) don't like that..they think the project should be big Lions and then small Microsoft but yet I have to do the work. What they don't understand is normally the reason why I can have a big logo in Lions if I am raising funds to donate to people, of course Lions have to be big, but in this case, Microsoft is donating to CyberCare for us to do our work, they have to be the sponsor, they have to be big. So there are quite a few people in Lions who don't like us for that. We feel that we are not promoting Lions as much as we should, whereas we are focusing more on providing a community service, to me, the logo doesn't really matter...*

As discussed in Chapter Five, the Lions Club (which is a big international voluntary organisation) did not donate funds to the service organisation directly, but contributed funds based on collaborative fundraising activities. The findings also demonstrate that the Lions Club sponsorship meant more for legitimising CyberCare as an organisation, rather than acting as a funding provider. This misunderstanding may due to the lack of communication and different organisational practice between the two organisations. While CyberCare valued the right of those who provide financial support to CyberCare to be promoted more, the Lions Club may see that they should be given greater priority as a patron to the organisation.

#### 6.4.2.3 Difficulties in understanding different organisational approaches

The cultural issue discussed by the service organisation and NGO participants concerned the difficulties in understanding each other's ways of carrying out programmes, due to different cultural approaches within the organisations. YW-SO compared the programmes of CyberCare and the Lions Club:

*...the Lions Club is actually an active club, and will be a club which does three or four projects a year. That's called active, we have an ongoing project every day you know...non-stop. ...So for them, they find it very difficult because when we report, we report so many projects...In fact, the complaint they make seems to be that you are cutting and pasting. So we say, the reason why it looks that way is because we are continuing it (programme) every day. Every Sunday, there is (Orphanage2) Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM), every fourteenth weeks we have the industrial training with the Care4U...so it looks repetitive but that's because we do it on an ongoing basis...So, we were one of those that when we have a project, we have it for the entire year, they have one project a year, so they have a lot of excitement, they do hawker funds raising, sell food, and sell tickets for raffle, things like that. That's quite different...*

Here, YW-SO described the complexity in terms of understanding programme designs and the way they were conducted. He referred to CyberCare programmes as consisting of a series of similar format activities while the Lions Club programmes consisting of different events or functions. He also seemed to devalue the programmes conducted by the Lions Club and made them sound simplistic, perhaps indicating a lack of trust.

SL-NGO in turn seemed to be aware of the challenge faced by CyberCare. In the conversation, SL-NGO noticed that they had different ways of carrying out the programmes, due to their cultural differences, which had created the gap with CyberCare. His explanation suggested that the differences may be due to the age gap between them, where the Lions Club members were older than the CyberCare members, and still preferred the traditional way of conducting programmes or serving the community.

#### **6.4.2.4 Disputes over shared resources**

In the process of withdrawing from the Lions Club, CyberCare faced some challenges, including a dispute over shared resources.

The members' decision to withdraw CyberCare from the Lions Club network was not well-received by some members of the Lions Club, and they raised issue about the resources collected under the "Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur." Some members of the Lions' Club requested that the money collected under the name of the Lions Club be returned to the Club, and the volunteers be given a chance to join the other Lions Clubs. YW-SO disagreed with this, arguing as follows:

*...Both situations I disagree with because people didn't donate to the Lions, they donate to the CyberCare project. And in a donation, they make it very clear... volunteers have joined like you, I am sure you will join us because of CyberCare.*

However, this claim is hard to understand. This is because when SL-NGO discussed the "change in the collaborative partnership structure" in the preceding chapter he explained that the donation given to a particular Lions Club will not be allowed to be donated to other Lions Club. This means that the donation received by CyberCare when it was under the Lions Club banner should be retained with CyberCare.

### **6.5 New direction for setting up as a stand-alone organisation**

This section discusses the main challenges faced by the stakeholders in the process of withdrawing CyberCare from the Lions Club to set up a new organisation, and it is closely related to the previous section.

### 6.5.1 Leadership for sustainability

In this study, the problems associated with leadership discussed by the corporate, NGO, and volunteer participants mostly concerned the ability of the current key leader and the availability of the succession plan to drive the collaborative partnership forward.

The first leadership challenge that emerged from these findings concerned the growth of the service organisation. SN-Corp, the corporate participant, expressed her concern about the progress of the service organisation, which she referred to as not growing, but stagnating:

*...right now it is somewhat stagnant, because it is driven by YW-SO and his team who are not fulltime CyberCare staff or leaders. It is YW-SO's passion.... right now, you can see the pattern, it is a kind of stagnating. And somebody has to own it. Somebody has to decide that this is where we are going, this is the big goal, and in the next ten years, this is where we are going to go... Right now, it is like a plateau and you need to break through that plateau*

In this excerpt, SN-Corp provided her view of the current leadership of CyberCare, as she observed, and suggested how it should be changed to make better progress. SN-Corp's view of her preferred CyberCare's organisational transformation reflected the corporate organisation setting which was more structured and governed by the formal leader. This corporate leader normally has ownership over the organisation, as manifested in her position as the owner of a company. An uncertain succession plan to drive CyberCare forward was another challenge of leadership in this collaborative partnership.

SL-NGO from the Lions Club believed that CyberCare had to have a succession plan in order to move forward. He expressed his concern:

*...How many members in the team would have the type of determination, the type of commitment to pursue the course of this project, despite all the challenges they have to face. YW-SO is the very determine fellow. I think, I assume maybe there are one or two more in the team but are they developing their succession plan to take over?*

Like SL-NGO, the volunteer KS-Vol also questioned the leadership, but he emphasised more the responsibilities of the board of directors as the management team carrying the efforts to sustain the organisation, rather than letting it all be done by the interns as he reasoned, “...*We interns do not stay longer in the company (CyberCare), you board people are going to be there in the long period....*” His view was in contrast with the perspectives of the corporate and NGO stakeholders mentioned. While both stakeholders envisioned the change of leadership members to better sustain CyberCare, the volunteer preferred the board of directors to retain. This may also be linked to various comments made previously: for example, MS-SO’s complaint on the lack of support from the board of directors, and JF-NGO’s concern over CyberCare’s dependency on interns

All the participants, when they mentioned leadership or leadership issues, related it to the founder of CyberCare, YW-SO as he led the organisation from its establishment until the time of interview. In this finding, YW-SO is seen as a strong champion, but lacking nurturing skills. The findings also revealed that some collaborators preferred a more formal structure of leadership rather than an informal one.

### **6.5.2 Challenge in setting up a new organisation**

All the challenges discussed, leading to the separation of CyberCare and the Lions Club, showed that the partners would choose to exit when they do not get the advantage that they had expected when they had decided to form the partnership. In these findings, the decision to exit did not simply resolve the problems they were facing, but rather created a new set of challenges. YW-SO described the current progress on his plan to set up CyberCare as a stand-alone foundation:

*Apparently we have to raise one Million in cash as a new enforced ruling which must be dispersed and used within a year around 70% (of 1 Million). And the CyberCare project only needs to use about 200,000 a year when we are moving fast. How...you’ll like giving a rule, so that I simply spend the money fast. So, we are struggling with that...So, we are facing a bit of challenge. Today, the foundation (new organisation of CyberCare) is not up yet, we are still trying to find ways to make it work.*

In the instance, YW-SO expressed constraints in dealing with the authority in registering as a foundation. In order to be qualified as a foundation, the organisation has to prove that it has one Million cash and 70% of it must be spent annually. This provided a new challenge to CyberCare.

Despite all the heavy challenges of separation mentioned by YW-SO, MC-SO did not seem to see it as something complicated, merely mentioning that *“I don’t say it as a real problem because the decision to reinforce (the withdrawal from the Lions Club) was unanimous,”* and in another occurrence, he mentioned, *“There’s no profit, there’s no reason to have objection (from Lions). (Only) A big money concern.”* The different ways of viewing the same issue may be due to the roles played by the participants. YW-SO was the main founder of this collaborative partnership, and he was the main player in the negotiation between the partners as well. As a consequence, he may have dealt with a lot of people and organisations, and have known more about the issue.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The findings of this study are limited to the data gained from different stakeholders, in which the challenges they discussed depended on their involvements and roles in this collaborative partnership setup. For example, the service organisation’s main roles were in managing the collaborative partnership, consequently they dealt more with issues like managing financial and human resources aspects but they could not provide much input on the implemented programmes with children.

The need for financial resources was crucial in this collaborative partnership. Many issues to do with sustainability were related to financial resources. For example, many participants viewed a lack of financial resources as preventing the partnership from hiring more fulltime staff, carrying on more programmes, and sustaining some partners.

This collaborative partnership seemed to gain trust from many individuals and organisations that they have worked with. However the trust faded when they did not maintain continuous

contact or follow up with these individuals and organisations. This situation shows that effective communication and nurturing are crucial, especially with the orphanages. This collaborative partnership also recognised government involvement as being positive.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will analyse how the findings laid out in Chapters Five, The drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in a longstanding community service project, and Six, Challenges of maintaining collaborative partnership in a longstanding ICT-based community service project, address the research questions posed by this study. It will further explore the significance of these findings to key debates in the field. This final chapter focuses on the core issues of sustaining a collaborative partnership from the experiences of multiple stakeholders in the arrangement through interviews with multiple stakeholders, document review, and participant observation. The conclusion is drawn from the findings of this study. The discussion is mainly centred on the debates from the field of collaboration and partnership, and the theory of collaborative advantage proposed.

I will first discuss the limitations of this research and make recommendations for future research, before going on to explore the ways in which the findings contribute to knowledge through the outline of the addressed research questions. This is then followed by the discussion and summary of the findings from the two main research questions. The research implications for theory and for policy and practice are discussed next, before the chapter is concluded. This provides a basis for exploring current challenges and their implications for the theory and the policy and practice of collaborative partnership in community settings. I conclude with the strengths of the research.

#### **7.2 Limitations of current research and recommendations for future research**

This qualitative case study offers an initial understanding of this largely unexamined topic on community collaborative partnerships in Malaysia. It has, however, a number of limitations.



In the first section of this chapter I outline the key limitations of the implications of the scope and methodology of the work, and signal future research directions that might emerge from these.

**Limitations of scope and recommendation:** This study is designed to optimise the understanding of a particular case, rather than to generalise beyond it. According to the social constructivist paradigm, I am part of the research instrument. As a result, my interpretation might be different from that of researchers emerging from different contexts, due to multiple factors such as cultural background and ethnicity. The findings of this research are context-specific. The study focuses on the collaborative partnership involving multiple-stakeholders in developing a community of children in orphanages situated in an urban area of Malaysia. Therefore, the findings of this research reflect the local context of the community collaborative partnership in Malaysia. It could not be generalised to other contexts.

As this study is conducted in an urban area, it is not known if similar issues, for example, are also faced by community collaborative partnerships in particular, which serve children in rural areas. Further research is needed to explore the issues of sustaining collaborative partnership in rural areas. Furthermore, my research only focuses on exploring the drivers of change and stakeholder perspectives on challenges and issues across collaborative partnership. It did not explore whether demographic factors play a role in shaping collaborative partnership. This could be examined by future research, as Malaysia is a multi-racial country, and there might be similarities and/or differences between different stakeholders' perspectives if demographic factors such as race, gender, and religion are taken into account.

**Limitations of methodology:** Data gathered through document review, participant-field-observation, and interview for this case study complement each other and have provided me with a detailed, rich, and thick description of collaborative partnerships and practice. The document review guided me in selecting the case and exploring its development. Documents provided important information about the activities undertaken within these collaborative partnerships. Yet as the document review drew heavily on mass media sources such as

newspaper articles, most information seemed to be “publicity-like” in style with a focus on demonstrating programmes’ successes and displaying sponsors’ commitment to “corporate social responsibilities.” These documents did not present the less successful moments in the partnership, nor did they reflect the experience of all stakeholders involved. The interviews were conducted to fill up this gap. However, I was also aware of the possibility that the public relations talk might present in interviews, because among the participants were those who were involved in sponsoring the programmes. The field observation greatly served the purpose of developing rapport with the participants, immersing me as an insider, and identifying the potential interview participants, but it did not provide a complete picture of the roles and relationships of all stakeholders involved, as not all stakeholders participated in the observed programmes. This information gap was covered through the interviews conducted with the selected individuals representing each group of stakeholders in partnership. However, there was a lack of relevant information on the topic focus from the children that could be considered for analysis, as the children’s involvement was considered as indirect stakeholder in this collaborative setting. Other limitations in interviewing the children included the language barrier between the child participant and the interviewer due to their different cultural backgrounds. However, this did not interfere with the rest of the findings, as it was an isolated case and the child’s accounts in this study remained at a minimum. Furthermore, the unequal distribution of participants based on the demographic factors could not be used to make a comparison between different demographic factors. The information generated from this small numbers of participants could not be used to formulate a generalisation regarding the whole population under study.

These research findings can serve as the basis for further research. In the future, research of a similar focus could be conducted through a participatory action research method within a longer time-frame. This is because the data from multiple-stakeholders were gathered retrospectively in my current study which some authors regard as “*doing research about stakeholders*” rather than doing research “*alongside stakeholders*” as in participatory action research (Quixley, 2008, p. 4). My current findings on multiple-stakeholders’ past experiences could serve as lesson to be learnt for interested individuals or organisations. By using interviews as a method, we could not change the long time and past mistakes, whereas,

in participatory action research stakeholders will have the chance to find an immediate solution on any arising issues as it is concerned with “*achieving ongoing improvements*” (Quixley, 2008, p. 4). If any issue arose like the linguistic and cultural challenges along the data collection process, immediate action could be sought.

### **7.3 Contribution to knowledge**

This is the first empirical study in Malaysia which has attempted to explore the ability of the collaborative partnership of the longstanding community service organisation serving underprivileged children to develop and survive over time. Considering the way CyberCare is progressing, it is apparent that sustaining collaborative partnerships within similar contexts remains challenging and highly experimental. However, there was a lack of available literature which could be related to similar studies and historical background in Malaysia. This study contributes to the scarce literature in the field of community collaborative partnership, in particular the Malaysian context. It also adds to the extant literature on collaboration and collaborative advantage based on practice in general. This study explores two main research questions:

1. What are the drivers of change and transformation of the collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organisation from the perspective of multiple stakeholders?
  - a. How do collaborative partnerships come to be forged and sustained?
  - b. To what extent do different partners in a longstanding community service project have similar aims?
  - c. Are long-term partnerships necessarily more effective partnerships?
  - d. What are the drivers of change and transformation in the collaborative partnerships?

In relation to the first question, stakeholders’ motivations in joining and continuing the community collaboration to empower the underprivileged children were related to their pragmatic needs, and partnerships were built mainly through individuals’ personalities,

personal relationships, shared resources and programmes. The communication was predominantly dyadic, with the service organisation, CyberCare, being the management and communication centre for the other stakeholders. Most stakeholders came into partnership with different objectives, but they converged at some point with those of CyberCare. The valuing of long-term partnerships is apparent in the statements of some stakeholders, but such long-term partnerships were not evident in most of the relationships in this collaborative arrangement. Many aspects of collaborative partnership are interrelated, where the changes in one aspect may lead to other changes. The overarching findings involved the discovery that within the partnership a particular programme, the newly developed MAD (Make A Difference) curriculum, was used to sustain the collaborative efforts.

2. What are the challenges of collaborative partnership facing a sustainable ICT-based community service project?

In addressing this second question, I explore the implications of the findings around challenges to multiple stakeholders' collaborative partnerships for policy and practice. Underlying the findings of these two questions were the complexities of collaborative partnerships in serving the community and the challenges related to the situations.

The following sections discuss and summarise the findings from the two main research questions, with the emphasis on the core challenges from the perspectives and experiences of multiple stakeholders involved in the collaborative efforts to serve the children in orphanages in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. It provides a basis for exploring current challenges and their implications for the theory, and the policy and practice of collaborative partnership in community setting. The discussion begins with the importance of communication and nurturing in sustaining the collaborative partnership.

#### **7.4 Communication and nurturing are needed to sustain the collaborative partnership**

As I will show throughout the discussion, the lack of clarity and transparency in communication led to negative assumptions which may threaten relationships and implementation. For example, one of the orphanage administrators, JS-SO suspected that CyberCare had a hidden agenda to attract sponsors in asking for the participation of children from his orphanage. This was because CyberCare did not clearly explain to the administrator the details of the programme and the way the orphanage could benefit from participation.

The findings support previous studies that emphasise the importance of constant communication and nurturing in sustaining collaborative efforts (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood, 1991; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2005, 2008; Perrault et al., 2011; Prins, 2010b; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a; Wildavsky, 1986). At first glance, it might seem that my study suggests that this collaborative partnership was lacking the aspects of nurturing and communication which are important to sustain the collaborative efforts and relationships. However, some of these conflicts are structural (such as the timescale of interns from university, and the anxieties of orphanage administrators about the internet's influence on children), in which case they are not easily resolved via communication.

Even in situations where collaboration is running well with a relative degree of trust, Vangen and Huxham (2003a) emphasise the need for continuous nurturing to sustain satisfactory levels of trust, and Wildavsky (1986) suggests careful nurturing to renew partners' enthusiasm during the process. The lack of such constant communication and nurturing as revealed in this study has impacted the collaborative partnership's structure and implementation of its programmes. The most significant impact was seen in relationships with the orphanages as perceived by the orphanage administrators. Despite the agreement at the beginning of the partnership, due to the gap in communications some of the orphanage administrators were still uncertain of their partnership status: whether to consider their orphanages as partners or to regard CyberCare as a partner. On top of this, not all of them viewed the programmes as sustained. It is not just constant communication that is required to

carry the collaborative partnership forward, but more than that, it is important for communication to be clear and transparent.

While the worldwide network of innovators of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the area of ICT for development, Global Knowledge Partnership (Overseas Development Institute and Foundation for Development Cooperation, 2003) regarded implementation of a properly structured partnership agreement as able to ensure continuing communication and transparency, this thesis has argued that correct implementation based on initial agreement cannot resolve communication problems in all partnership settings. For example, in this study, there are a few cases of miscommunication and lack of transparency even after the partners have formally agreed on the related procedures and what they wanted to work on collaboratively. This shows that having a well-structured agreement is not the only factor ensuring on-going communication and transparency. In addition, some scholars (see Thomson & Perry, 2006, p. 25) take the view that “*communication among partners is based more on interdependent relationships than on contractual agreements*” as presented in my study. This is due to the complexity in implementing collaboration, the voluntary participation, autonomous actors, and less visible traditional management systems like “*hierarchy, standardisation, and routinisation*” (Thomson & Perry, 2006). This may explain why some participants in my study expressed the need to have a more organised management structure in CyberCare.

Besides the issues mentioned, there were also some advantages to the styles of communication practised in this collaborative setting. This was portrayed in this study where some decisions to join or continue with the collaborative efforts made by individuals within the partnerships were because of the political or social links between them which McQuaid (2000) refers as informal structure. It was the informal structure of the partnership (McQuaid, 2000) through the established informal relationship and communication which drove this collaborative partnership forward. This finding also supported Perrault et al's. (2011) view that established informal relationships and communication can contribute to successful community collaboration. For example, YW-SO used to help SL-NGO with the Lions Club programmes before CyberCare was formed as a Lions Club. The relationship built through the

programmes led YW-SO to approach SL-NGO, and SL-NGO to agree to collaborate. This partnership used both informal ways of communicating, like text messages, and more formal means such as meetings of the board members. Established informal relationships provided flexibility for CyberCare members to achieve collaborative decisions like discussing collaborative plans and programmes in a member's home or in a cafe while at the same time reaching professional/formal decisions. This informal structure did not just contribute to the smooth running of the decision-making process especially when the project was conceived, but also led the stakeholders to develop the formal structure with general agreement to set up and carry out the collaborative project.

The ability of this collaborative partnership to survive through transformation was consistent with the conclusions of Melaville et al's. (1996) research, namely that a long-term collaborative partnership was enabled by a series of interrelated activities designed to solve the shared problems and create a new system of services for children and families. This process prompted changes in the system including integrating and restructuring services (Melaville et al., 1996). This research supports the view that change within collaborative partnerships is a positive outcome rather than a threat. Through the collaborative programmes, in the long run, some of the close partners in this collaborative partnership were aiming to change society's acceptance of the child-centric programmes and perception of the community service work.

Sustainability is often associated with the length of a collaborative relationship, which is commonly viewed as related to positive performance (Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008). Other views defined longevity as related to past success while sustainability is inherently future-oriented (Cropper, 1996). The collaborative partnership discussed here was longstanding, having been established in 1998, but the programmes carried out for the children in orphanages, and the numbers of paid staff and volunteers have steadily decreased. However, the programmes and their content were viewed by stakeholders as improving in terms of having a positive impact on the children. Rather than viewing collaborative performance as a determiner of sustainability, this collaborative partnership performance depended on available resources. When there were enough resources, the

partners were very active, programmes were designed on a bigger scale, and coverage was wider, though possibly less effective. As sustainability is always associated with “long-term relationship,” the next section focuses on multiple perspectives on the term described by the stakeholders in this study.

### **7.5 Long-term partnerships: not necessarily more effective partnerships**

What mainly drives the partners to come into a partnership can be related to the type of partnership undertaken. Types of partnership can be differentiated by the type of commitment the stakeholders undertake (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). As commonly stated in the literature, partnerships can be considered to be driven by project or programme (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000), or to be strategic (McQuaid, 2000) or problem-oriented (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). The latter is considered to involve longer term relationships compared to the former (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). However, this association of partnership types with duration of commitment is challenged in this study. The types of partnership identified by the participants did not match the longevity of the partnership, as classified by the literature (e.g: Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000) reviewed in Chapter Three of this thesis. The findings revealed that partnerships were mostly pragmatic and programme based. Some stakeholders agreed with the literature, which suggests that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder was the only group that saw the partnership as short-term problem-based, while the balance of the other stakeholders considered their relationships as either long-term or short-term programme driven.

In the literature, a project/programme oriented partnership is normally regarded as dealing with short-term issues (e.g: Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). Conversely, in this case, the majority of the participants from CyberCare claimed that they have a long-term partnership based on long-term programmes. This view was supported by an orphanage administrator, and CyberCare’s long-time corporate partner. Only the Lions Club can be considered as having a long-term partnership with CyberCare, which was more strategic rather than project/programme driven. The findings show that this relationship was based on the nature of the partnership in which the Lions Club helped to structure the service



organisation and the duration of its involvement. This finding is consistent with the literature that views strategic driven partnership to involve longer term relationships (McQuaid, 2000) than other types of partnerships. However, the partners' long established commitment could not guarantee that the partnership could be sustained, as the Lions Club in this case has finally separated from its long-term partner, the service organisation.

Although the findings demonstrate that the long-term partnerships were based on the programmes they had together, there were slight differences in terms of how the participants described the kind of project/programme, length of commitment, and partners that they were involved with. The programmes were described as consisting of a programme that was designed to be conducted continuously in stages over the long term with all long-term partners only, or to include either long-term and short-term partners, or many one-off programmes conducted continuously. The project or programme was also referred to as a campaign, or an online linking system. The stakeholders who claimed to have a long-term project or programme driven partnerships also provide diverse views on what they considered as long-term commitment. Their common value of long-term commitment was in the continuity of programmes, the network (online linking system), and the campaign. Only one stakeholder from the service organisation was more specific in mentioning that the long-term partnership was to be more than a year. This stakeholder specifically referred to the relationship CyberCare had with the corporations. For this particular stakeholder, a corporation which only stayed in a relationship for a year was only prioritising publicity rather than commitment to a cause.

The stakeholder's perspective above is an illustration of an understanding of the corporate aims as driven by extrinsic, rather than intrinsic motivations. Commonly, motives of a corporation may be attributed by the stakeholders as extrinsic wherein the company is seen as attempting to increase its profits. Corporate social responsibility motives can also be seen as intrinsic, wherein the company is viewed as acting out of a genuine concern for the central issue (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). The service organisation's perception of corporations which seemed to value publicity over commitment to a cause explained that the corporations were seen to be driven more by their extrinsic motives rather than intrinsic ones. It has been

argued that this view of corporations as merely serving their extrinsic motives could be a threat to constructive partnerships (Du et al., 2010). The stakeholders are more likely to make constructive inferences on the underlying character of the corporation, and react more positively towards it if they have stronger attributions of its intrinsic motives; otherwise the stakeholders will show less favourable attitudes and behaviour toward the corporation if they perceive its motives as predominantly extrinsic (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Y. Yoon, Gurhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006). In this case, the behaviour of the corporations themselves may disappoint other partners which may lead them to draw such a conclusion.

The study also shows the corporate view of long-term commitment as being based on long-term campaigns. In considering initiatives, Falck and Heblich (2007) argued that short-term actions like donating money for social activities or sponsoring popular events are not the most effective practice. Rather, they suggested a long-term proposition as producing more effective outcomes from corporate social responsibility. Their view is that “if it (the company) treats society well, society will return the favour” (Falck & Heblich, 2007: p. 253). In this study, Microsoft was one of the corporations that claimed to have a long-term commitment with CyberCare. Microsoft’s long-term involvement primarily involved financing, which was channelled through its corporate social responsibility campaign. Among the purposes of Microsoft’s campaign was the corporation’s need for the society to react in support of its anti-piracy efforts. As Falck and Heblich (2007) suggested, this kind of campaign required a long-term commitment to be effective. However, it is not something new for corporations to come out with such statements of commitment, especially in a press statement, as commitment towards social issues is what’s expected from corporate social responsibility practice (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Such statements are seen as indicating their valuing of corporate social responsibility, or their need for the public to perceive them as valuing corporate social responsibility by stating what they think people want to hear about long-term commitment.

The findings show that the majority of orphanage administrators and corporate stakeholders interviewed regard their partnerships with CyberCare as being of a short-term programme-driven type. In line with McQuaid (2000) these stakeholders normally came to form partnerships because of certain programmes. This view also supported Carnwell and Carson’s

(2008) view of such partnerships as time limited for the span of a specific project where the partnerships would cease to exist once the funding ceases and the aims have been achieved. While both groups of stakeholders shared a similar view of the type of partnership they had with CyberCare, they defined length of commitment differently. The orphanage administrators used the words “short-term” to describe the intermittent programmes they had with CyberCare. Some of the administrators were more specific, defining “short-term” according to the occurrences of the programmes (two to four times; a few times; two-day; and two-night). Two other views also regarded one-year and two-year programmes as short-term relationships. However all of them valued long-term or continuous programmes for their children.

Commitment is clearly related to a long-term relationship. The corporations in this study regarded their short-term relationships as being based on their current corporate social responsibility or on corporate aims. They did not see the need for their corporation to commit longer than their corporate aims required at the time. One of the corporations regarded the requirement of commitment as a threat in a collaborative partnership, as it can result in one partner being bonded to the other in the long run. This kind of belief is what Masterson (2002) argued was a factor that may lead to failure in some partnerships. Masterson (2002) suggests that part of shared commitment is a shared identity, but the partners’ perception of existing professional boundaries that are threatened may make creating a shared identity difficult. Although there are always certain constraints in getting partners’ commitment to the collaborative setting, some writers in the field relate high levels of partner commitment to high levels of collaborative partnership success in meeting the collaborative aims and vice-versa (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Conversely, the corporate partner who did not value long-term commitment above did not see short-term relationship as conducive to a collaborative partnership, and ironically, she was still very active in continuing collaborative efforts in CyberCare.

This study shows that government stakeholders are the only group who described the relationship between the government and CyberCare as a short-term problem-oriented partnership. This is incompatible with Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) view that problem-

oriented partnerships “*will remain as long as the problem persists*” (p. 9). However, the government shared the explicitly articulated value that the most effective partnerships are longer than a year but while DAGS was not designed to support the project in the longer term, it provided a structure to ensure that the project was sustainable. As in enforced cooperation (McQuaid, 2000), the applicant must adopt a tripartite model of partnership to receive DAGS funding. The requirement of the collaborations to adhere to the government model of partnership above supports the claim of Vangen and Huxham (2014) that government organisation may often influence and shape the collaborations. The DAGS funding model matches the recommendations of some scholars of collaborative partnerships such as Gray (1985) and Gray and Wood (1991). Gray (1985) suggests that the pooling of resources in collaboration allowed partners to explore what different partners can do beyond what a single organisation can in working alone (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood, 1991).

Overall, the study shows that stakeholders related sustainability to long-term commitment. The definition of long-term as “continuous commitment” that was implied by all stakeholders involved in this study was consistent with most of the previous research which tended to consider long-term partnerships as continuous relationships (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000a, 2008). Many writers suggested that sustainability is a main requirement for the success of partnerships (Alexander et al., 2003); sustainability in collaborative relationship is usually associated with performance (Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008); sustainability is closely associated with collaboration (Perrault et al., 2011); and unsustained partnerships leave a legacy of mistrust and pessimism that erodes the basis for collaboration among community entities in the future (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a). Nevertheless, the perspectives offered by stakeholders in this research were at variance with the literature on sustainable partnerships. Although some stakeholders were in congruence with some other stakeholders in mentioning that they were driven by project or programme or problem to form the partnerships, they provided diverse perspectives on the requirement of commitment to sustain the collaborative efforts. These findings support Takahashi and Smutny’s (2002) research, namely that there is little or no relationship between the ability to form partnerships and sustaining collaboration. In addition, I did not encounter any literature that mentioned the length of time in a specific number, but

some stakeholders in this study specifically associated the length of commitment with the specific number of time, duration or occurrence of programmes. I suggest that a clearer sense of what researchers mean by “long-term” might be helpful in terms of defining effective partnerships in future.

Based on the current findings, I would define “*sustaining collaborative partnership as an ability of the collaborative efforts to be carried out and adapted continuously with available resources under continuous commitment of the stakeholders involved regardless of the change and transformation that occurred to the collaborative partnership setting,*” and “*continuous commitment*” is also defined as “*long-term commitment.*”

## **7.6 Change as integral rather than a threat to collaborative partnership**

Despite the potential for creating stability (McQuaid, 2000; Walsh & Meldon, 2004), the collaborative structure in my study was highly dynamic (Huxham & Vangen, 2008). This dynamic nature of collaborative partnership is often viewed as having a negative impact on relationships and collaborative work. This collaborative partnership and its structure illustrated this dynamism, with many changes during the period investigated. These included the changing programmes, partners, resources, and corporate focuses. However, the findings revealed that most of the changes that occurred were integral to the collaborative partnership, rather than a threat. This implies that the changes that were commonly seen as a threat to collaborative partnership in the literature applied differently to this study.

The process of change in this collaborative partnership setting is best understood by analysing it from the lenses of two sets of polar opposite strategies, “*big wins*” and “*small wins*” (Bryson, 1988, 2011). Big wins are demonstrable, completed, large-scale achievements, usually accomplished despite having to deal with substantial risks. They are a very significant marker of more ambitious goals. Small wins is described as “*a concrete, completed, implemented outcome of moderate importance* (Weick, 1984, p. 43) *which rarely involved substantial risks*” (Bryson, 1988). Compared to a big win strategy, a small win strategy is believed to prevent big losses (Bryson, 1988). However, it may make big successes

unachievable (Bryson, 1988). In this study, both big win and small win strategies were applied to this collaborative partnership arrangement alongside the progress of the service organisation.

A big win strategy can be seen to be pursued in the initial phase of CyberCare's establishment as an organisation in 1998. It began with the aim to bridge the digital divide for children in orphanages and linking all of the selected orphanages online via an online linking system. It involved a large scale project and big name partners in the ICT industry. Pieterse (2005) described such a scenario as the sudden acceptance of technology as the shortcut for development. Such an idea implies that by providing access to ICT, the digital divide can be reduced or prevented. In keeping with this belief, CyberCare's focus in their programmes was initially on providing ICT infrastructure to the orphanages nationwide and ICT skills to the children. As a result, they partnered with ICT related corporations as well as the ICT arm of government.

As research was undertaken on the digital divide, scholars discovered that merely providing people with access to technology will not necessarily overcome inequalities of access and use. In fact, the term digital divide itself has been debated. Some scholars argue that the term "digital divide" is misleading, because inequalities of access to technology are based on socioeconomic circumstances. These scholars argue that referring to the divide in technical terms suggests that technical solutions (see Pieterse, 2005) can be used to solve the related issues. Furthermore, Pieterse (2005) argues that bridging the digital divide would involve bridging the income gap, whereas in reality, disparities of income are increasing. He also argues that the rapid changes and competitive drives in the field of ICT are increasing the digital divide even more. He also agrees with the research which suggested that the "*digital divide will never be bridged*" because "*it would take Africa about 100 years to reach the 1995 level of Ireland*" (see Ya'u, 2004, p. 24). Pieterse (2005) symbolises attempting to bridge the digital divide as "*mopping up with the tap open*" (p.14). The transformation of CyberCare's focus supports this shift in emphasis in discussions of technology and inequality. The collaborative partnership changed from a very heavy ICT focus in the programmes of the early years to the current design, which included personal development content as well. This

was seen as a shift in collaborative effort, from pursuing a big wins strategy to a small wins strategy. The latter was documented in a curriculum that consisted of self-development, ICT, and community service elements compiled in many modules to be carried out in a programme incrementally within a particular period. These changes were driven by community unpreparedness to use ICT, and the organisation's assessment that the old programmes were not effective. In addition, the changes in the programmes' needs and area of focus also led to the changes in partners. The changes range from having ICT focused partners in the early years to the venue and training providers, human resource providers, and the expert life coach used at the current time. This change of partners was also driven by the changes in corporate focus, in which it was based more on programmes and needs.

The pilot projects were implemented after the initial phase when the big wins strategy was being pursued in this case study. This is in contrast to Bryson's (1988) suggestion that the pilot project is one of the ways to promote a small win strategy incrementally. In this study, pilot projects implemented throughout the partnership served as part of the partners' learning process from phase to phase. Changes made to previous programmes contributed to improved new programmes being designed.

The findings also show the transformation of the programmes as one of the ways that the partners adapted to the resources that they had at the time. This transformation enabled collaborative efforts to be sustained. At the beginning of the partnership, when the partners had sufficient financial support and human resources, programmes were implemented nationwide through a big wins strategy. However insufficient financial support and human resources more recently forced them to narrow down the implementation to one specific geographical area, taking on a small wins strategy. While this narrowing of scope had a negative side, these changes also included the movement from many short-term programmes and activities to one structured programme, utilising the MAD Curriculum, meant for long-term implementation. Some partners viewed this as the most comprehensive programme they have had until the present time. This view is in accord with Brown et al.'s (2002) work which, among other things, indicates that having training materials in community partnerships can better assist partners in carrying out collaborative efforts and create a better understanding of

continuity in providing services for children. The curriculum served as a tool to incrementally integrate the partners together in the process of sustaining the collaborative partnership efforts in CyberCare (refer to Appendix 11 for further details).

The findings of this study support the position of Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, and Allen (2001), which is that many changes, including membership and collaborative purpose, are necessary to sustain collaboration. For example, a major change that has happened to this collaborative partnership was its withdrawal from the Lions Club group to become an independent service organisation. Typical of other collaborations, the decision to withdraw was made when the perceived collaborative advantages - financial support and volunteers - were no longer available. Other factors included different cultural approaches between these two organisations, which Frank and Smith (2006) claim can add to the difficulties of understanding each other's ways of viewing and implementing programmes. As Walsh and Meldon (2004) mention, this situation will also create difficulty in developing a common approach. The challenge faced by the collaborative partnership in this study in withdrawing from the Lions Club was similar to that discussed in Alexander et al.'s (2003) studies: in their quest to create value, balancing the dependence of the partnership on a lead organisation versus establishing the partnership as independent entity.

This study also shows that not all suspended partnerships lead to ongoing bad feeling or distrust. The example is the view expressed by CJ-Corp from PIKOM that it may be possible to reconnect with CyberCare if there is future need. Another example is that the Lions Club representative interviewed claimed that they are willing to continue helping if needed by CyberCare in future despite the separation of these two organisations. This may show that ex-partners still maintain their trust in these collaborative efforts even after their withdrawal and changes in the partnership structure. This is somehow inconsistent with the view of Huxham (2003), and Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2008) that such changes as affecting trust building and efforts to develop mutual understanding, and unsustained partnerships may cultivate mistrust and pessimism (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a). Such differences may be due to the different nature and context of study. Although Huxham and Vangen also researched the collaborative arrangement in community and voluntary organisations, their research coverage



was wider than this study. Their studies involved many diverse inter-organisations and have been carried over the years in diverse contexts, while my study was based on a single case study and was exploratory in nature.

### **7.7 Merging different aims rather than reaching agreement on common aims**

It has been argued that partners have to be clear about the aims of joint working if they wish to execute any strategy or policy. Much of the literature stresses the importance of partners reaching agreement on common aims prior to the setting up of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Gottlieb et al., 2005; Melaville et al., 1996; Wildavsky, 1986).

However, this case study supports the observation that in practice, the different values and interests held by different people and/or organisations create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The findings of this study support the notion that both common and differing interests between stakeholders exist at the start of a collaborative venture. These may be changed or redefined as the collaboration proceeds (Wood & Gray, 1991). A few cases in this collaborative partnership indicated where the partners had common interests in the beginning, but realised they had differences later on.

As Huxham, and Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2008) suggest in their discussion of practices of partnership, the findings of this study showed that the stakeholders did not wait for total consensus on aims before starting their collaborative programmes. This research also showed that rather than grieving over their different aims, stakeholders in this partnership developed their understanding, and found ways to adapt to the differences. In fact they focused on what they could work on with the resources that they had at the time

Huxham (2003), Huxham and Vangen (2005, 2008), and Vangen and Huxham (2011) also suggest that in a collaborative arrangement, goals exist at individual, organisational, and collaborative levels which has many consequences in terms of managing agreement on those

goals. These different dimensions of goals seemed to the researcher to exist in this study as well but the partners in this partnership arrangement did not identify such three types of aims clearly. Also, they could not mention clearly whose aim is considered as the collaborative aim. Different stakeholders demonstrate different views when describing their collaborative aim as discussed in Chapter Five.

This study demonstrates that CyberCare is the key partner that kept this collaborative partnership moving. Regardless of these diverse aims, the findings indicate that as long as the key player can adapt and merge these aims, the collaborative partnership will be sustained.

### **7.8 Agreement is not necessarily a promise or precondition to collaborative partnership**

As can be found extensively in the literature, agreement is viewed as contributing to the smooth running of the collaborative partnership, and should be set up prior to collaboration. For example, Carroll and Steane (2000) argue that agreement is very important, as it shapes the form and substance of a partnership. This, according to Carroll and Steane (2000) will determine the norms of behaviour that influence how the partners should behave during the process. It is also expected by most commentators on collaborative partnership that when the agreement is made, all the partners involved with the agreement will adhere to what they have agreed on.

However, there were mixed perspectives and experiences among the stakeholders in this collaborative partnership regarding the agreement. Some perspectives of the participants interviewed fit within the existing view in the literature. For example, writers in this field remind collaborators to be more selective in choosing the right stakeholders (Gray, 1985) to better continue with the collaborative efforts. A similar observation was made within this study, primarily by the members of service organisation as the key players of this collaborative partnership. Due to their experiences and the challenges of working in this collaborative arrangement, the board of directors of CyberCare were aware of the need to select the right stakeholders to maintain the focus of the service organisation. For example,

the service organisation would not agree to accept new partners that required them to change to the extent that they would lose their main focus on serving the children. Most of the stakeholders, especially the service organisation, government and NGO, viewed the agreement as helping them to structure the collaborative arrangement.

On the contrary, the findings reveal that what the majority of the literature suggests is necessary is not always relevant to practice. The findings have most consensus with more practice-based literature such as that written by Huxham and Vangen. In terms of agreement, this study demonstrates that the agreements were often simply used to formalise the partnership rather than as total or 'must follow' guidelines to ensure the smooth running of the collaborative work. There were particular examples within the case study of agreements being sought on an on-going basis, rather than being agreed at the beginning of the collaborative partnership. This is true of agreements sought by interns with corporate partners around the Care4U programme's budget matters. Some of the major challenges in this collaborative partnership were also related to the agreement issues, as discussed in the subsections on renewing and breaching agreements. As discussed in Chapter Five, in these cases, what was agreed to on paper would not necessarily secure continuing collaboration.

What can be learnt from the experience of the collaborators in this particular setting is that it is hard to bring all the stakeholders together, and to have the clarity of formal or informal agreements known and understood by all stakeholders as stated in literature. For example, Frank and Smith (2006), and Carroll and Steane (2000) require the partners to have agreement between actors to do something; Wildavsky (1986) presumes the partners to have accepted the project planning and implementation; and Melaville et al. (1996) emphasise the need to establish common goals and mutual agreement on shared resources prior to collaboration. In this study, the agreement which was normally made by one stakeholder with CyberCare was enough for the collaborative activities to be carried out. This study shows that in a situation where an agreement was breached in the midst of the programme, the partners would have to find a quick solution in order to sustain the collaborative works. The differences in understanding the agreements were not always the main issues that contributed to the

cessation of agreements in this collaborative partnership. The end of agreements and partnerships could most often be attributed to other issues like insufficient resources.

## **7.9 Expectation of benefits from joint resources**

A popular notion in the literature is that people and organisations join partnerships because they have some resources to share, and they anticipate that working collaboratively will help them to generate more advantages. The findings on the practice observed in this case study support this argument. The pooling of resources involved in this partnership enabled the stakeholders to produce some large scale and meaningful projects for the community.

This collaborative partnership generally emphasised the win-win situation, where all partners were expected to gain something from what they brought to the collaborative arrangement. What can be suggested as an extension to the existing literature is the variation among different stakeholders in terms of the value placed on various benefits of collaboration. For instance, while both service organisation and government saw value in collaborative partnership, they prioritised the benefits differently. The service organisation prioritised the benefits that can be brought by other stakeholders to the partnership, whereas the government's main concern was the equality of shared benefits in its tripartite model of public-private-community partnership. The corporations emphasised the benefits that can be produced when partners are able to share both common and different values and interests. One of the NGO participants placed more emphasis on how his organisation benefited CyberCare by offering a structure that enabled CyberCare to be recognised and function as an organisation. The orphanage administrators looked at how the partnerships can benefit the children, and the volunteers were concerned more with how they can contribute to the programmes, and with getting credit for study through internship programmes. These diverse degrees of expectation and contribution of collaborative ideas of the stakeholders were also related to the membership structure.

However, the findings were not consistent with the claim in the literature that partnership can be used to avoid some economic disadvantages (McQuaid, 2000). This was because at the

time that the world was facing economic crisis, one of the collaborative programmes researched here had been discontinued, and the partners separated due to lack of resources. This example suggests that economic disadvantages may not be overcome through collaboration. Resorting to partnership, in this instance, did not necessarily improve socioeconomic conditions. In difficult economic times, getting new partners to collaborate can also be a problem.

The anticipation of gaining advantage from working collaboratively can also lead to a challenge when partners are in conflict. In this study, the challenge emerged in the process of CyberCare's withdrawal from the Lions Club. Both partners were in dispute over shared resources. A similar dilemma has been experienced by all community care network partnerships studied by Alexander et al. (2003). Based on their studies, Alexander et al. (2003) claim that partnerships constantly struggle with the need for ongoing support from members who provide more financial support which they refer as lead organisation, while at the same time recognising that resource obligations need to be more widely diffused if ownership of the partnership and its activities is to be truly achieved. In my study, the lead organisation was not necessarily the one which provided the most financial support, but the one which had responsibility to liaise with all partners, which was CyberCare. CyberCare's expectation of the Lions Club to share its financial and human resources did not meet the Lions Club expectation that they focus more on providing structure based on fund-raising methods to sustain the programmes. These differences led CyberCare to withdraw from the Lions Club, but in the process of withdrawing, both partners faced another challenge in terms of determining the right owner for their previous shared resources. This study shows that collaborative advantages should be anticipated together with the collaborative inertia in joining the collaborative partnership arrangement to have a better working plan.

#### **7.10 Creating synergy encouraged community involvement and ownership**

It is commonly accepted that partnership is able to synergise diverse organisations and reduce wasteful duplication, leading to the achievement of greater output and cost savings (McQuaid, 2000). The findings of this research supported the notion of synergy in

collaborative arrangements. Various stakeholders, especially from the corporations and NGOs, regarded the service organisation, CyberCare, as a platform for them to carry out their goals in serving the community, especially services for children. As mentioned by some authors (Frank & Smith, 2006; McQuaid, 2000) this synergy creation can result in improved relationships between different groups, extending ownership.

The findings also support the view that partnership can be a good way to enhance existing strengths and activities (Frank & Smith, 2006). The stakeholders also admitted that with what has been built by CyberCare, they can easily come on board bringing their existing network to the collaboration rather than building a similar initiative from zero. For example, JF-NGO whose organisation focused on preserving the forest mentioned that CyberCare provided him with a platform to include children in his programmes, and for him to leverage on his existing networks to CyberCare.

Alexander et al.'s (2003) studies highlighted conflict within their study sites when paid staff members were added to coordinate partnership activities. In their study, volunteers saw this decision as diminishing their ownership of the partnership. This is different from the collaborative practice in CyberCare. In various instances, the stakeholders involved in the collaborative partnership, especially from the service organisation, searched for ways to get more paid staff without any concern about volunteers having a sense of losing ownership. The volunteers, including the one who considered himself as closely attached to CyberCare, did not mention any concerns about those activities of paid staff. This may have resulted from the close relationships between the volunteers and paid staff in this collaborative setting. The responses that I received especially from the stakeholders who used to observe and be involved in voluntary works revealed that all fulltime staff including those who previously worked with CyberCare were actively involved with voluntary work as well. This scenario shows that there was no issue of conflict between the fulltime staff and volunteers in my study regarding the intention of CyberCare to hire more paid staff.

### **7.11 Imbalances of power did not prevent collaboration**

According to a number of writers, collaboration also involves the process of power sharing or pooling of resources (Gray, 1985; Perrault et al., 2011). Various scholars (Gottlieb et al., 2005; Gray, 1985; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2008; Melaville et al., 1996; Perrault et al., 2011; Provan et al., 2005; Wildavsky, 1986) view sharing power as important. The existence of power sharing was also evidenced in this collaborative partnership. The process of power sharing involved the sharing of the main resources brought to this partnership including material, financial and human resources; services; knowledge; expertise; and intellectual property. However, it was hard to identify if there was a balance in the power sharing or control between the stakeholders as different stakeholders had different perceptions of this matter.

The corporate stakeholders and volunteers demonstrate that in carrying out collaborative efforts, resources were normally controlled by those who provided funds, or knowledge and expertise. The service organisation members regarded their organisation as merely helping to mobilise the resources, liaise with the partners, and influence the decisions. While the orphanage administrators viewed themselves as having control in providing child participants, they regarded CyberCare as having control of the material resources, and the planning and implementation of the programmes.

Gallant, Beaulieu, and Carnevale (2002) adapted Starhawk's (1987) feminist and ecology-based framework of power in explaining three types of power. These are: "power-from-within," "power-over," and "power-with." The first type, "power-from-within," is considered as personal power which contributes to energy, knowledge of self, character and self-discipline. The second type, "power-over," involves the patriarchal use of dominance, exploitation, and coercion in interpersonal relationships to control the behaviour of another, through oppression or instilling the feeling of powerlessness in others (Rafael, 1996). Finally, "power-with" refers to the energy and optimism created when individuals come together, collectively pool their contributions and abilities, and learn from each other. Gallant et al (2002) also considered this final type as compatible with the enablement of partnership

philosophy as it portrays the sharing of control between partners, stressing the positive strength built between stakeholders that are able to sustain and move the relationship forward.

Even Gallant et al. (2002) suggested the third category of "power-with" as an ideal type of power for a partnership approach; this study shows that it is not always the way power relations worked in practice. In fact, this collaborative partnership appeared to illustrate a mixture of the stated types of power. Based on this categorisation, "power-from-within" can be found in each individual member of the stakeholders. For example, all stakeholders were in agreement that the founder, YW-SO, was one of the initiators of this collaborative arrangement which portrayed him as having "power-from-within."

Second, the oppressive "power-over" style was sometimes imposed by certain partners, as happened with the corporate partner who demanded to be an exclusive sponsor, but suddenly terminated the sponsorship. Nonetheless, at other times, the third category, "power-with" was evident in this study. It appeared that "power-with" was working well when the partners came together, and pooled their resources to carry out the programmes collaboratively. This was shown through the collaborative efforts between CyberCare, LifeWorks, Volunteers, and PIKOM in the process of developing a curriculum.

When talking about power in collaboration, most often people will assume power to be balanced. However, if what we are looking for in the balance of power is the equality of power and control among the partners in all aspects of collaborative partnership; it is hard to determine from this case study. Despite equality being idealised by the government in its tripartite model involving public-private-community sectors, evidence of this collaborative partnership practice suggests that there is unequal power sharing in partnerships. These findings support McCann and Gray's (1986) view on the balance of power in partnerships. They argue that the balance of power precisely means, "*no one stakeholder perceives itself able to control the situation*" (McCann & Gray, 1986, p. 60). For example the unequal power sharing in this collaborative partnership can be seen in the management process. The process of managing the partnership can be seen to flow from the bottom up, as it was managed mainly by the service organisation as a community agent. In contrast, the management of



grants mainly involved a top-down process as the grants were controlled by the funders that usually involved the authoritative power like government or corporations. Although there was a mixture of different types of power, in some situations, the findings were also in agreement with the view that the power rests with those controlling resources (McQuaid, 2000). But who was greater than the others was difficult to determine.

In the context of power sharing, it may be seen that those without control of financial resources can be disadvantaged in terms of power (see Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008). Participants within this collaborative partnership did not allow themselves to be vulnerable, even when another partner manipulated financial resources against the partnership aspiration, such as with the case of the “exclusive sponsor” mentioned earlier. The findings show that the stakeholders in this partnership were able to find a way to bring what they were working on to completion despite issues such as insufficient financial resources. The way some partners connected and disconnected from the collaborative relationship further showed that they realised the “*power of exit*” (Huxham, 2003, p. 407; Huxham & Vangen, 2008, p. 32), and exercised it. Examples were seen in the decision made by some volunteers to withdraw from CyberCare and instead carry out volunteering work on their own, and CyberCare’s decision to detach from the Lions Club.

#### **7.12 Building trust is not a precondition for sustaining collaborative partnership**

The literature suggests that trust is a precondition for successful collaborative partnership, and many researchers also claim that partners normally struggle in trying to build trust, especially at the beginning of the relationship. However, the stakeholders in this partnership came to collaborate without taking much time to build trust, bearing out the observations made by Huxham and Vangen (2008) that sometimes it is ideal to begin on some small yet tangible action, and afterwards to allow trust to grow gradually. In this study, the process of intensive trust building can only be seen in the initial phase: getting the orphanages into the partnership before beginning to equip them with ICT infrastructure. As suggested in the literature on trust, CyberCare began with modest aspirations (Vangen & Huxham, 2003a) around non-threatening issues (Provan et al., 2005) equipping orphanages with ICT equipment first. They

later tackled the more ambitious or threatening issues (Provan et al., 2005) when they had gained trust from the orphanage administrators. In this case, CyberCare expanded its collaborative efforts more deeply to involve the aspects of children's emotional well-being in their self-development.

In many other situations, the findings of this study show that trust building was not emphasised at the beginning of collaboration. Most other stakeholders came into partnership based on the trust that was already there, such as through referral by trusted personal contacts or a direct approach from the related individuals, especially the founder of CyberCare. For example, CJ-Corp from PIKOM was referred by the Lions Club, and SN-Corp from LifeWorks was referred to CyberCare by one of CyberCare's board of directors. Most stakeholders also came into partnership via the direct approach rather than through referrals. For instance, JF-NGO was approached by the intern students who handled the programme, and SL-NGO and ML-Corp were approached directly by YW-SO as the founder and director of CyberCare. However, what actually drove them to collaborate was more practical, based on what they needed at the time, and what others could provide rather than trust. More important than trust were the quality of CyberCare's project proposal, individual personalities and individual commitment; meeting the right people at the right time also enabled partnerships and drove this collaborative partnership forward.

This study also reveals that it is not always true that diminishing trust leads to collaborative inertia. The findings show that the withdrawal of particular stakeholders from this collaborative partnership did not result from decreased trust, but other factors such as drained resources or a change of corporate focus. In fact, some of the ex-partners still envisioned continuing the relationship when the situation permitted. For example, CJ-Corp from PIKOM explained the reasons why his corporation had ceased to collaborate were the lack of financial resources and the need to develop the curriculum that was no longer there. However, he explicitly expressed his intention to reconnect with CyberCare when the corporation had enough financial resources and had a plan to expand the previous collaborative work.

### **7.13 Open and autonomous structures bring advantages rather than disadvantages**

As mentioned in Thomson and Perry (2006), many scholars believe that in order for a collaboration to be effective, it needs a strategic hierarchical organisational structure to coordinate a collaborative partnership. However, Huxham (2003) claims that the structure of collaboration should be conceptualised as ambiguous, complex, and dynamic (Huxham, 2003). In practice, this lack of clarity is often connected to the complexity of collaborative arrangements and the complexity in the organisational networks when many organisations are actually involved in multiple collaborations with other organisations (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2008).

This study partially supports Huxham's (2003) claim about such ambiguity, complexity, and the dynamics of membership in collaborative partnership in the theory of collaborative advantage adapted to this study. There was no single standardised structure within this collaborative partnership. There were no legal agreements even when they were formalised, and the structural relationships were not clear across different partners. This collaborative partnership began with an open structure with a working structure developing in the process of collaboration. In this study, the service organisation as the key partner had a clear management structure, with key members of the organisation serving as the board of directors for the organisation. This board was responsible for managing the partnership and collaborative work. However, the way they carried out the collaborative work with other partners was more autonomous and multifaceted than hierarchical in nature. Although CyberCare was the key leader, it was flexible, in the sense that it adapted to the working structures of other stakeholders. Even though this service organisation had its own system to monitor the collaborative programmes, it also allowed other partners' monitoring systems to be applied. These other monitoring systems served different functions, ranging from structuring the collaborative partnership to controlling resources.

The structure of collaborative partnership in CyberCare developed based on their focus at the time, and the identity of their partner in collaboration from time to time. This finding aligns with Takahashi and Smutny's concept of a collaborative window (Takahashi & Smutny,

2002). This idea of a collaborative window mainly applies to the establishment of the partnership in identifying new partners. They argue that for a partnership to emerge a collaborative window must open and collaborative entrepreneurs must act by recognising the window and bringing together appropriate partners. For example from this study, in the early years of formation, the founder had seen the chance to partner with Microsoft and at the same time the government introduced the new grant for ICT related projects. At the time the CyberCare project was designed to focus heavily on ICT-related elements. However, the focus changed with the change of partners over the years.

The findings also revealed that there were multiple roles played by individual members of the service organisation, especially the key initiators as analysed in Chapter Five. For example, YW-SO formally held a director and founder position in the board of director structure, however in practice, he was also the volunteer, and corporate sponsor. All other members from all groups of stakeholders especially from the service organisation and corporations, at least held with them the formal roles within the organisations they represented, and informal roles as volunteers for the collaborative programmes with CyberCare. Despite those examples, the findings show that majority of the stakeholders involved were clear about their roles, even where they undertook multiple roles. This is different from the findings in Huxham (2003), and Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2005) where participants in their studies portray ambiguity over multiple roles: to represent themselves as individuals or their organisations. One factor that shaped this difference may be the small size of the case study organisation by comparison to those studied by Huxham and Vangen.

As a key stakeholder in this collaborative setting, the service organisation also acted as the centre for management and mobilisation of the stakeholders. Relationships within the partnership were based heavily on two-way communication between CyberCare and each stakeholder rather than all stakeholders regularly coming together to meet at the same time. This was in contrast to some suggestions in the literature such as Gottlieb et al.'s (2005) emphasis on bringing all partners to the table in making decisions and solving problems as an exercise of sharing power and expertise in collaborative partnerships. Conversely, this study supports Carnwell and Carson's (2008) claim that requiring all partners to work together is a

more rhetorical than a practical proposal. In particular in this study, dyadic relationships helped partners have a close relationship with the service organisation, but there was a lack of encouragement for the relationship between other stakeholders to strengthen.

The disadvantages of having unstructured collaborative partnerships are emphasised in the literature. However, this case study has demonstrated that there are also advantages to this lack of structure in a collaborative setting. This is because by having an open structure and being flexible, the service organisation which was the key stakeholder was able to attract more stakeholders to join the collaborative arrangement. This study has also shown that, as discussed in the power sharing section, having an open and autonomous structure in this collaborative setting provided the ability for the key stakeholder to adapt quickly to changes

#### **7.14 Government as enabler not constraint**

In contrast to much reported research on collaboration and partnership which views the involvement of government sectors in carrying out collaborative efforts as more problematic than helpful, this research suggested otherwise. The group of stakeholders including the government officials, service organisation and corporation regarded government as an enabler rather than a constraint. The government has provided a number of opportunities and interventions especially in terms of funding and expert facilitation for ICT development in Malaysia as reviewed in Chapter Two.

The DAGS tri-sectoral partnership model is seen as one of the examples of an enabler for the seeded/piloted ICT projects. As portrayed by the term ‘demonstrator’ itself, the grant was provided with the understanding that the project can fail or succeed within the year for which the money is awarded. For that reason, DAGS does not require any project which failed to repay their costs. This scheme may have reduced the risks associated with the establishment of community collaborations. This government support increased the number of ICT projects which were initiated including the community related projects, and encouraged community involvement by ICT organisations. In fact, one of the key findings of this study is that

CyberCare was represented as one of the DAGS funded projects which featured continuous piloting with the partners making improvements to the programmes.

Government engagement in this collaborative partnership was strategically designed for a period of a year. This type of government involvement is similar to that in Mayo's (1997) studies. In her studies, the exit strategies being put on the agenda by the government have raised the short-term issue of collaborative partnership where there was a criticism in the study on who will be responsible to continue the project after the government left the setting. In contrast, this issue was not highlighted by the participants in this study. In fact, the service organisation regarded the government as one of the committed stakeholders that supported the project to be continued. For example, CyberCare members regarded the government as having opened up other opportunities for the collaborative arrangement, as CyberCare members and partners are often invited to the NITC-hosted events which allowed them to meet the new potential partners and sponsors. Such situations portrayed the current development of the NGO – seen as valuable to civil dialogue - by government within Malaysia (Muzaffar, 2001). The monitoring process carried out by the government was also viewed by the service organisation as a part of commitment shown by the government in which YW-SO mentioned that the government has also allowed an initial one-year grant they received to be continued up to five years. Similar to CyberCare, the corporate stakeholder, PIKOM, also viewed the government as providing opportunities, especially in terms of funding. This is demonstrated by the government's provision of the ICT Trust Fund that PIKOM was applying for re-start a stalled project.

Overall, the findings support Ninson's (2012) study, which suggested the involvement of local government in a community project is not a precondition for the sustainability of the project but if the government is involved, that could be necessary for the successful implementation and sustainability of the project. This is particularly shown in this study when this collaborative partnership was able to conduct large scale programmes with nationwide coverage at the time they received the grant and under direct monitoring from the government. This collaborative partnership was also able to survive its efforts even after the government grant finished, and the attachment to the government was decreasing. The

participants described the government as an enabler, rather than a constraint, even after the grant had finished. This indicates that the involvement of the government cannot be written off although it may not determine the sustainability of this collaborative partnership arrangement.

### **7.15 Leadership for sustainability**

As mentioned in the literature review, leadership plays a very important role in maintaining collaborative efforts in any partnership arrangement. Melaville and Blank (1991) assert that the potential leader for a newly formed partnership is the one who has been the driving force of the collaborative endeavour. However, the authors argue that reliance on a single individual will not contribute to the positive development of the collaborative partnership over the long run as that will prevent the progress of new ideas, underuse available talents, and weaken the growth of reciprocity fundamental to the successful collaborative efforts.

In this study, the problems associated with leadership that were discussed were mostly concerned with the availability of the succession plan and the capability of the current key leader to drive the collaborative partnership forward. The first leadership challenge in this study was having no certain plan to drive CyberCare forward. Consistent with Melaville and Blank (1991), who accept the view that the creation of new champions indicated a partnership's effectiveness, SL-NGO believed that CyberCare had to have a succession plan in order to move forward. As a person who involved in leading an NGO for a long time, SL-NGO appeared to understand the NGO as consisting of a collective who agree to a common goal and set of rules that potentially sustain the organisations even after the founders are no longer involved (Lyons, 2001). Such a view also relates to Melaville and Blank's (1991) belief that the community in collaboration gained strength through added actions in support of shared goals. So, having a succession plan was important to move the collaborative efforts forward.

Another leadership challenge in this study involved the capability of the current key leader. SN-Corp's ideas, on the structural connections of both organisation and individuals in

discussing the leadership challenge of this collaborative partnership, supported Huxham and Vangen's (2000a) view on the structure involving individuals and organisations in partnership as leading the collaborative plan and implementation forward. Furthermore, her acknowledgement of YW-SO as the main driver who was responsible for inviting other partners into CyberCare, and who worked closely with the management team to maintain the collaborative efforts in CyberCare, was in accordance with Takahashi and Smutny's (2002) description of managers as collaborative entrepreneurs as discussed in Chapter Three.

Based on Takahashi and Smutny's (2002) view in the literature review, although YW-SO was the main leader of CyberCare and of this collaborative partnership, he could be considered as a collaborative entrepreneur, rather than a collaborative manager. Takahashi and Smutny (2002) suggest that collaborative entrepreneurs are those who bring the partners to collaborate together, and collaborative managers are those who have responsibility for resolving conflict, managing the staff and partners' matters, and responding to unexpected obstacles in the partnership. As a collaborative entrepreneur, he had the capability to recognise various opportunities (e.g. resolving problems of vulnerable children, and identifying available government grants) for collaboration, and the capacity and networks to bring together appropriate stakeholders to initiate and continue the collaborative efforts. YW-SO could also be considered as a collaborative manager, as he was responsible for promoting, maintaining, and adapting organisational procedures and approaches according to the changing situation. However, various challenges with uncertain solutions expressed by the stakeholders involved throughout this thesis show that he was perceived to be lacking in ability as a collaborative manager. This is because, among other things, a collaborative manager is required to be responsible for adjudicating conflict, handling various staff duties in the partnership and individual organisations, and confronting the unexpected difficulties in the partnership. In fact, Takahashi and Smutny (2002) suggest that a collaborative entrepreneur and a collaborative manager may not be the same people throughout the life-cycle of the partnership, as they require different skills. In the practice of this collaborative partnership, it was not easy to have the roles of collaborative entrepreneur and collaborative manager separated as partners voluntarily joined and offered their expertise to the partnership, and the key leader has not changed yet.



However, this study supports the views of Huxham and Vangen (2000b) who emphasised the importance of having at least one individual who is capable of championing and nurturing the partnership. In this finding, YW-SO can be seen as a strong champion but lacking in nurturing. Besides showing that the challenges in the leadership practice of this collaborative partnership were the same as those typically found in the empirical research (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a, 2000b, 2005), the findings of this study reveal that the collaborators preferred a more formal structure of leadership.

#### **7.16 Cultural and structural constraints**

As other studies related to collaboration with various partners claimed (Frank & Smith, 2006; Vangen & Winchester, 2014; Walsh & Meldon, 2004), the cultural and structural constraints were also part of the challenges in this study. In order to enrich the lives of the local community and stimulate a sense of community ownership, the researchers who studied community projects such as the learning centre initiatives have suggested that it is important for such initiatives to have a flexible structure and organisation, to fulfil local needs and reflect local culture (see Keeble, 2003). Despite sharing similar cultural values, religious beliefs, and the practice of partnership being based on the flexible working structure, this study reveals that there were some related constraints among the stakeholders involved. In these terms, the service organisation, corporate, NGO, and volunteer participants discussed the difficulties of partners in understanding different approaches, and the difficulties of volunteers in adapting to cultural differences. The difference in values and interests held by people or organisations may create difficulties in the process of reaching goals (Frank & Smith, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004), as can be seen in the discussion of the clash of values and interests between the groups of orphanage administrators and volunteers regarding the orphanages' rules and regulations. This issue was also seen in the service organisation's understanding and expectations of the Lions Club protocols, as described in Chapter Six.

The cultural issue discussed by the service organisation and NGO participants concerned the difficulties in understanding each other's ways of designing and carrying out the programmes. This finding supported Frank and Smith's (2006) claim that the merging of differing

institutional cultures can increase complexity in partnership, and this partnership may find it difficult to develop a common approach (Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The differences between the service organisation and the Lions Club in carrying out the programmes were due to the cultural differences between the two organisations. Among the reasons mentioned for such differences was the age gap between them. The Lions Club members were older than CyberCare members, and still preferred the traditional way of conducting programmes or serving the community through fund-raising activities, but the service organisation did not share that same way and value. This also represents the clash of the old and new ways of volunteering. The “old” volunteering is strongly connected to certain social environments, such as religious or political communities, involves long-term and often membership-based commitment, and the involvement of individuals is driven by altruistic motivations (Rehberg, 2005). In contrast, “new” volunteering is more project-oriented, and volunteers also have specific expectations as to form, time, and content of their involvement (Rehberg, 2005), as portrayed by CyberCare’s members.

The cultural constraints in this study also involved difficulties among the volunteers in adapting to cultural and religious differences in carrying out the programmes. Although the programmes were carried out with the positive intention of fostering change based on Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), in the process, this approach also brought some challenges to the collaborative partnership setting. NLP is an approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy developed in 1970s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in California as a methodology intended to understand and change human behaviour-patterns through learning (Tosey & Mathison, 2006). However, the model which gained its popularity in the western world since 1970s started to decline in the late 1980s as NLP became discredited as a pseudoscience, due to the lack of scientific evidence in practice and dubious claims by its advocates (Deville, 2005). Interestingly, in this finding, the probably “rejected” model in the West has been adopted in the developing countries to promote “participatory freeing” education. Yet this study has suggested that the model clashed with some of the beliefs rooted in the community.

As stated in the literature review, a number of studies have suggested that the collaborators have the power to withdraw from the collaborative arrangements when they need to do so. For example, Huxham (2003: p. 407) and Huxham and Vangen (2008: 32) mention it as the “*power of exit*” or “*threat of exit*” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000b: 298). In these writings, the authors are against the normative view which regards partners with the most control of financial resources as having control of power, because in practice all partners have at least the “power of exit.” They argue that such “threat of exit” is available when the partners, including the supposedly weaker ones, possess resources that cannot be substituted by other partners. In this study, the challenges discussed, especially with the Lions Club, led CyberCare to exercise such power. Unique resources like expertise, programmes and curriculum, access to community and sponsors, and volunteers available to CyberCare may provide the organisation with this “power of exit.”

### **7.17 Implication for theory**

The theory of collaborative advantage provides a rationale for why people and organisations pursue collaboration. Based on this theory, collaborations are paradoxical in nature, and the theory is structured around a tension between collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia. Collaborative advantage explains “*the synergy that can be created through joint working,*” and collaborative inertia as “*the tendency for collaborative activities to be frustratingly slow to produce output or uncomfortably conflict ridden*” (Vangen & Huxham, 2014, pp. 51-67). Both of these tensions need to be considered carefully in managing collaborations to achieve advantage rather than inertia. Huxham and Vangen (2005) structured collaborative advantage theory into the themes representing issues identified by practitioners as causing anxiety or reward. Among the constructed themes include managing: 1) aims/goals; 2) power; 3) trust; 4) cultural diversity; 5) leadership; 6) membership structures; and 7) collaborative dynamics (e.g: Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Vangen & Huxham, 2014). These constructed themes are interrelated.

This research investigated the complexity of collaborative situations and related challenges to sustain the collaborative partnership from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders involved

in the arrangement. The findings show that in most situations, rather than forcing the collaboration to move on to the particular direction, this collaborative setting was moving forward based on the ability of the stakeholders to adapt to the changes during the process. Overall, the findings further confirmed that there is a need to consider the implications of both aspects of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia in initiating and sustaining collaborative partnership efforts. Underlying the findings of my study were the interrelated themes of collaborative advantage as mentioned above. This supported Huxham's and Vangen's various writings on the collaborative paradox of collaborative advantage theory. This study also suggested three themes (that have been highlighted by the mentioned authors above but have been emphasised differently): resources; programme; and communication and nurturing to be added as major themes for this study.

In applying the themes of the collaborative advantage theory discussed in Chapter Three, this study has presented an empirically grounded account of collaborative partnership practice from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in serving the community. The findings show that the anticipated advantages were what motivated partners to initiate collaboration, but this did not contribute to the ability of the collaborative partnership's efforts to be sustained over the long-term. Sustaining collaborative partnership in this study refers more to the ability to sustain collaborative efforts rather than collaborative partners. Collaborative efforts were carried out mostly through the programmes which make it appropriate to consider "programme" as one of the important themes of collaborative advantage for this study. The ability of the partnership in this study to survive over the long-period resulted more from the ability of the members to face the challenges, and adapt and react to the changing surroundings, rather than following the theoretical suggestions of what makes an effective collaboration. The focus on the practice and inclusion of multiple-stakeholders' perspectives provides a challenge to the dominant economic and managerial discussion that tends to stress policy provision, measurable outcomes, and effective practice for managers. Here, I have emphasised the importance of improvisation and change rather than the importance of any initial agreement. This contributes to the understanding that sustaining collaborative partnership of a community organisation expands beyond the constricted discussion of measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies.

The findings of this study show that different stakeholders perceived different challenges. This was due to their different involvements and roles in the collaborative partnership. Their roles can be linked with the challenges they discussed. For example, the service organisation's main roles were to manage the collaborative partnership; consequently the organisation dealt more with issues like managing financial and human resources aspects. The need for financial resources was crucial in this collaborative partnership. Many issues connected with sustainability were related to financial resources. For example, many participants viewed a lack of financial resources as preventing the partnership from hiring more fulltime staff, carrying on more programmes, and sustaining some partners. It is important here to add "resources" as another theme to be emphasised in achieving collaborative advantage.

This collaborative partnership seemed to gain trust from many individuals and organisations that they had worked with. However, trust faded when they did not maintain continuous contact or follow up with these individuals and organisations. This demonstrates that effective communication and nurturing is crucial, as stressed by Vangen and Huxham (2003a, 2014), especially with the orphanages. While Vangen and Huxham (2003a, 2014), and Huxham and Vangen (2005) frequently highlight the aspect of communication and nurturing under sustaining trust, this study regards "communication and nurturing" as another major theme of collaborative advantage because of their critical need in many stages of collaborative effort, based on the analysed grievances of the participants in this study. More studies have to be conducted on how the aspect of communication and nurturing can be understood by the participants and effectively implemented by the voluntary-based community collaborations.

This study shifts from the belief that collaborative partners need to have everything organised prior to collaborations and to fully follow the guidelines right from the start. This study accepts experimentation and changes throughout the process of collaboration in which it is more in line with the paradox of collaborations in the theory of collaborative advantage. This study does not seek to evaluate the successfulness (the best practice) of the collaborative arrangement or provide the guidelines to be followed by others, but it means to help participants to understand their collaborative relationships in order for them to determine their

own strategies for sustaining collaborative partnership. Furthermore, as an exploratory study, it goes beyond the focus of management issue for managers only, to include all aspects that mainly related to the ability of the collaborative efforts to go forward despite the complexity and challenges.

### **7.18 Implication for policy and practice**

The complexity and challenges discussed earlier provide lessons to be learnt for others in the field and invite further consideration from the policy makers to improve and consider relevant actions or planning. This section extends the discussion in terms of the implications for policy and practice within the study setting, and more broadly, for the general population.

Based on the present study, the practice of collaborative partnership with multiple stakeholders represents a new approach in serving the community in Malaysia. Many community collaborative projects started to develop but not many empirical studies on collaborative partnership have been carried out. This study can be considered as the first empirical study to explore the ability of the collaborative partnership of the longstanding community service organisation to develop and survive over time in the country. The findings revealed that this particular case study was going through experimental stages and changes continuously. There was no specific guideline as to how to start and carry on the effort which was accessible to all stakeholders in the setup. The members of the service organisation, the key stakeholder in this collaborative partnership, managed all other stakeholders based on their knowledge and experiences in business. In the process, they faced various challenges which required them to make changes to sustain the collaborative efforts. Some arising issues required their immediate action, to which they did respond. This study can help participants to understand their collaborative relationships and determine strategies for sustaining collaborative partnership. It also can provide others interested in a similar setting to learn from the practice. This may also be the start of more empirical studies of community collaborative partnership in the country in future.

Throughout the data collection process I discovered that there was a lot of important information that could not be retrieved because of inefficient documentation systems. This happened in many organisations. At the governmental level, it was hard to find out the exact number of orphanages in the country, as not all of them were registered with the Department of Social Welfare. It is suggested that the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development could devise a policy or regulation to require all orphanages to be registered with the Department of Social Welfare. Following this, a monitoring system should be devised to ensure that the orphanages are run according to the rules and standards of the devised policy. This is important to ensure that there is no orphanage operating illegally and that the well-being of children is maintained. The key stakeholder also did not keep the data properly, claiming that this resulted from the difficulty of operating as a voluntary-based organisation. Due to this, the exact date for each occurrence and activity to start and end was hard to determine. The service organisation could not provide the details of all partners that come to join and disconnect from the collaborative setting because they did not document that. In future, it is suggested that the service organisation make a serious effort to improve its documentation system.

Government involvement is often described in the literature on collaborative partnerships as a constraint. In contrast, this collaborative partnership recognised government involvement positively. The government adapted the tripartite model which involved a multiparty participatory structure as a way of promoting transparency and accountability. This practice seems to be similar to the new collaborative model that is moving away from the previous industry-oriented model that tends to regard “*third-sector agencies as suppliers of centrally packaged services to passive consumers*” (Smyth, 2008: p. 55). Smyth (2008) suggests this model advances central authorities as “*important for resourcing and accountability and that local, reflexive regulation is needed for local actors to have autonomy, with the institutional environment able to listen*” (p. 55). However, how far this model allows the end beneficiaries - the community - to have real freedom to fairly and reasonably negotiate their pathway (Smyth, 2008) in practice may be contested.

The Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS) was one particular policy programme with extended theoretical underpinnings closely related to this study. It promoted the practice of tripartite partnerships and played an important role in supporting the start-up community projects which utilised ICT in the country. Many projects are reported to be funded by this grant and some success stories (John, 2003) were exposed to the public but not much was publicised about the unsuccessful projects. The viability and sustainability of the projects receiving the grants was also unknown to the public. We need to know how far the grants were being wisely utilised and which projects were able to achieve the purpose of the grant, as well as the complexity and challenges they have gone through. As suggested by Nain (2003), systematic qualitative follow-up studies need to be conducted to acquire more substantive and valuable data on the projects in order to measure actual ICT usage, the accrued benefits, and incurred costs, information which is lacking at the current stage. There is also the need for the DAGS to be reviewed and thorough research conducted on the project recipients. The research needs to be conducted on all projects, including both the sustainable projects and the ones that have collapsed. The findings of this research will be important to improve the grant and related policy and practice in the future.

In terms of voluntary practice, the findings have provided an understanding of the current pattern of voluntary work in the country. As in western countries, in Malaysia this case study suggests there are traditional volunteers, and new or reflexive volunteers (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2000) who have different perceptions of how they choose to carry out their voluntary roles. The elders' choice tended to tie more with the group determination and altruistic motivations compared to the emerging younger generations who were more self-determined and valued creativity in committing to volunteering. This study discovered that participants' demand for their contribution to be remunerated is an important element to be considered by the voluntary-based community collaboration.

The issue of communication and nurturing called attention to the communication field. In terms of implications for communication and for social change in Malaysia, it is important to find a way to engage the stakeholders in understanding and meeting the needs of the community they served via effective communication. To work effectively with the



community, stakeholders in this local context will need to understand the link between the meaning of communication and nurturing, and be equipped to support community within the local context and values. Although some communities were in need of help and support, stakeholders will need to understand that many will not initiate or maintain contact in relation to their own needs. This requires a proactive approach from the stakeholders in charge, so as to make contact with community and initiate discussion around community's needs and issues. For communicators more generally, this exploratory study raises concerns as to how community collaborative partnership can effectively incorporate an understanding of socio-cultural and voluntary aspects via collaborative efforts.

It is essential to consider both implications, policy and practice, since the connection between research and practice will make us more open and critical to multiple factors that impact on our practice, as there is no single truth or single solution to everything.

## **7.19 Conclusion**

The major strength of this study is the triangulation of data sources of the responses from the interviews, which provided a rich and diverse understanding of the collaborative partnership process and activities. Through the triangulation of all these sources, I have been able to discover how collaborative partnership survived over the long-term based on multiple perspectives of the stakeholders involved. Another strength is that the researcher who interviewed these particular stakeholders had developed rapport with some participants interviewed through participation in the observed programmes, and ability to adapt herself to the new participants, assisting them to be comfortable to express themselves even on sensitive issues. Finally, this case study can be transferable (Flyvbjerg, 2011) to other similar settings, as the scope of study provides a rich discussion ranging mainly from the nature of the case and its historical context; the accounts of the surrounding influences including government policies; and diverse perspectives from the experiences of multiple-stakeholders in practising collaborative partnerships.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1- List of collected document (6 pages)

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
Constitution		Constitution of Kelab Lions CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (The Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur)	1-16: Constitution 17-22: Appendix A (Minute of Club meeting) and Appendix B (Emblem and Colour)
OFFICIAL LETTER/EMAIL	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
FROM Cheong Yuk Wai – Hitechniaga TO Penolong Pendaftar Pertubuhan	6/01/1999	Alamat Berdaftar Bagi Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur	1
FROM Butt Wai Choon – Microsoft TO Cheong Yuk Wai - CyberCare	17/10/2005	-no title- *about community programmes	1
FROM Suzanne Yap, Manager of Edelman (CyberCare) TO John, MixFM Roadrunners	Aug 2005	Invitation to MixFM Roadrunners	3
EMAIL Ridzwan TO Stephanie, CyberCare	23/07/2001	Re: Request	3
EMAIL Stephanie, CyberCare TO Ridzwan	18/07/2001	Fwd: Request	1
Drafted letter FROM Zainal Abidin Majid, Glaxo Wellcome (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd TO Encik Abu Bakar Othman, Setiausaha Sulit SPBYDPA	10/08/1999	Majlis perasmian Program Kemahiran Profesional Rumah Amal Cahaya Tengku Ampuan Rahimah, Subang Jaya, Selangor (RACTAR)	4

POSTER/ BROCHURE/ LEAFLET	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
Poster	29/08/2009	Rumah Kebajikan Anbu Inlam children & Grin presents Go Green Go Bamboo Planting	1
Hawker Food Carnival	17/09/2005	Lions Malaysia Hawker Food Carnival 2005	1 (Poster) 1 ( Leaflet)
Unicef leaflet		Masyarakat penyayang member kanak-kanak hak mereka	6 (2 pages A4)
Unicef leaflet		Tune in to me: Your little guide to understanding us children better	8 (2 pages A4- a bit bigger)
NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: CYBERCARE	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
The Star Online: TechCentral	3/08/2006 Access: 8/11/06	Microsoft rewards diligent students <a href="http://startechcentral.com/services/printerfriendly.asp?file=/2006/8/3/technology/2006080">http://startechcentral.com/services/printerfriendly.asp?file=/2006/8/3/technology/2006080</a>	1
Microsoft Press Pass	31/07/2006	292 Underserved Students Honoured Under the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Awards <a href="http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4317">http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4317</a>	1
Malaysian Today: Pride & Passion	21- 24/10/2005	A serving of fun	1 (2)
The Star-Metro: Lim Chia Ling	8/09/2005	Food carnival to fund IT projects	1
Star-Metro	14/09/2005	Food event makes a comeback	1 (27)
Kosmo: Zamri Rambli	16/09/2005	IT di rumah kebajikan	2 (30-31: Full page)
Kosmo	16/09/2005	Karnival makanan penjaja Cybercare	1 (31)
Microsoft Press Pass	26/08/2005	Microsoft awards rm30,000 scholarship to student <a href="http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4294">http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4294</a>	1
The Star-In. Tech: Chris Chong	21/07/2005	A cause for digital hope	1 (15: Full page)
The Star-In. Tech	21/07/2005	The business of blogging	1 (16: Full page)
The Star-In. Tech: Chin Mui Yoon	11/07/2005	Instilling good values via IT	1 (9)
The Star-In. Tech: Zam Karim	14/06/2005	Giving deserving students a chance	1 (29)
Microsoft Press Pass	7/06/2005	230 Children Receive Microsoft Education Excellence Awards: <i>40% increase from previous year, Microsoft touches 660 students over past five years</i> <a href="http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4287">http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/press/linkpage4287</a>	1
The Star-Nation	11/05/2005	Ong: All need IT know-how	1 (8)
The Sun Daily-SunValley:	3/11/2000	A trip of a lifetime: For 24 foreign students, their lives will never be the same again	1 (7)



Mahendran Gnasamoothy			
The Star-Metro: Bavani M.	4/01/2000	Lions of CyberCare share	1 (8)
NST-Business Computing: Yu Wui Wui	3/11/1999	Paving the way for electronic commerce *about Hitechniaga	1 (21: Full page)
NST-Sunday Style: Yeang Soo Ching	31/10/1999	Global link-up for our children	2 (10-11: Full page)
NST-Sunday Style: ?	31/10/1999	IT boost for Ozanam House	1 (11)
NST- computimes: Chandra Devi	20/09/1999	Lions Club in alliance for e-community project	1 (14)
PRESS RELEASE/ MEDIA MATTER	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
Media briefing guide	2005	Briefing guide prepared for spokesperson of Rumah Ozanam in aid of LIONS CyberCare underprivileged children development programme & other LIONS community projects	5
Media briefing guide	2005	Briefing guide for media opportunities to leverage the LIONS Malaysian Hawker Food Carnival 2005 in aid of LIONS CyberCare underprivileged children development programme & other LIONS community projects prepared for Cheong Yuk Wai, Chartered Founder, Lions Club of CyberCare	8
Media briefing guide	Sept 2005	Briefing guide Light & Easy (105.9 FM) live radio interview, Thursday, September 15, 2005 prepared for Mr Cheong Yuk Wai, Chartered Founder, Lions Club of CyberCare & Puan Hajah Khatijah binti Suleiman, Vice Chairman, National Council of Welfare and Social Development Malaysia	5
Media plan	2005	Media plan to leverage the LIONS Malaysian Hawker Food Carnival 2005 in aid of LIONS CyberCare underprivileged children development programme & other LIONS community projects	4
Press release for immediate release	26/08/2005	Microsoft awards RM30,000 scholarship to student	2
Programme agenda	26/08/2005	Microsoft Unlimited Potential Higher Education Scholarship Presentation Ceremony	1
Programme for Media	31/01/2002	CEO Tea with YB Datuk Amar Leo Moggie "The Role of Corporations in Shaping the Future of Community Care"	1
Press release for immediate release	31/01/2002	Malaysian corporate leaders come together to transform community care	4
Keynote script	31/01/2002	Keynote address by YB Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia at the Lions Club of CyberCare CEO	4

		event	
Programme agenda	10/12/2001	The role of corporations in shaping the future of community care	1
Press release for immediate release	10/12/2001	CyberCare brings together Malaysian corporate leaders for change in community care	5
Keynote script	10/12/2001	The role of of corporations in shaping the future of community care - Keynote address by YB Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia & Patron of Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur	4
Speech script - corporate	10/12/2001	The role of of corporations in shaping the future of community care – sharing by Mr Butt Wai Choon, Managing Director, Microsoft (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	4
Speech script - corporate	10/12/2001	The role of of corporations in shaping the future of community care – sharing by Badlisham Ghazali, Managing Director, Hewlett-Packard Sales (M) Sdn. Bhd.	4
Press release for immediate release	9/11/2001	CyberCamp helps to bridge the digital divide for underprivileged children	2
Programme itineraries	20/08/2001	Microsoft Foundation Campaign Nationwide Donation Programme	4
Speech script - corporate	20/08/2001	Speech by Butt Wai Choon, Managing Director, Microsoft (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., Launch of Microsoft Foundation Campaign Nation-wide Donation Programme	3
Press release for immediate release	20/08/2001	Microsoft Foundation Campaign and CyberCare Go Nation-wide	5
Fact sheet		Microsoft Foundation Campaign	2
Fact sheet		Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (LCCKL)	5
Press release for immediate release		Redefining community care in the IT era	2
Press release for immediate release	19/05/2001	Personalised attention makes a difference for under privileged children at the CyberCare eEducation Workshop	4
Programme agenda	25/02/2001	Young to Old	1
Press release	19/12/1999	A time for giving & sharing with the CyberCare kids	2
Programme agenda	18/09/1999	Night of a thousand lanterns	1
Press release for immediate release	16/09/1999	CyberCare aims to build New Millennium eCity – National eCommunity Project uses IT innovatively to from smart partnerships	4
Programme agenda	16/09/1999	Launch of CyberCare, National Pilot Programme for eCommunity	1
Speech script – CyberCare	16/09/1999	Launch of CyberCare Thursday, September 16, 1999 – Speech by Cheong Yuk Wai, President, Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur	4
Press release for immediate release	3/08/1999	Community service in the information age – a new era	2
Press release for	20/12/1998	YB Datuk Amar Leo Moggie parties with	2

immediate release		CyberCare kids!	
Programme agenda	20/12/1998	Lions CyberCare Christmas Safari Programme	1
Press release for immediate release	12/12/1998	Majlis perasmian kelab dan pelancaran laman web the Lions Club of Kuala Lumpur	2
Press release for immediate release	12/12/1998	CyberCare website launches with roars!	2
Media questions		List of anticipated media questions for home administrator	1
WEBPAGE	ACCESS	TITLE	PAGE
CyberCare: Orphanage list	8/04/2008	Find a home	17
LCCKL	17/05/07	About CyberCare	1
LCCKL	17/05/07	About CyberCare: Our vision	1
LCCKL	17/05/07	About CyberCare: Our people	1
LCCKL	17/05/07	Be involved	2
LCCKL	17/05/07	Programmes	10
LCCKL	17/05/07		
LCCKL	17/05/07		
CyberCare Community System (3CS)	8/11/2006	The community	1
3CS	8/11/2006	The community: children	3
3CS	8/11/2006	The community: Home administrators	2
3CS	8/11/2006	The community: Volunteers	3
3CS	8/11/2006	The community: Service organisation	1
3CS	8/11/2006	The community: Government	2
3CS	8/11/2006	About Cybercare	1
3CS	8/11/2006	About Cybercare: Our vision and History	2
3CS	8/11/2006	About Cybercare: Why Cybercare exist	2
3CS	8/11/2006	About Cybercare: Internship	2
3CS	8/11/2006	About Cybercare Community System	1
3CS	8/11/2006	About CyberCare: Sponsors	5
3CS	8/11/2006	About CyberCare: Programmes	10
Book published by NITC Malaysia Publication, Rinalia Abdul Rahim & K. J. John (ed)	2000	Access, empowerment, and governance in the information age: Building knowledge societies series Volume 1	140
OTHERS	DATE	TITLE	PAGE
Grading scheme – Grade for computer literacy		eComputer Home Workshop CyberCare Training Progress Report	1
Programme details	1/03/2010	Lifeworks intern selection session	8
Curriculum		MAD Curriculum CyberCare	75
Yayasan Sunbeams		Total numbers of children in Yayasan sunbeams Home 2010	1

document			
Book guidelines from DAGS		Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS): Guidelines for applicants	14
Book published by MIMOS Berhad, K. J. John (ed)	2003	This is our story of turning ripple into tidal waves: a celebration of life-changing information and communication	23 (research related copies)
Book from DAGS		Challenge and Change	16 (research related copies)
Power Point slides presented by Dr Tengku Azzman Shariffadeen at SitEXPO 2004, Cassablanca	18-21/02/2004	National ICT Policy Planning & Strategic Intervention in Malaysia	41
PP slides: Batch 5 (May 2009) Industrial Training Course Assignment		Care4U: A community partnership to develop solutions to social ills and improve the quality of life of our community	15
PP slides from CyberCare	20/05/2009	An Invitation to Participate As A Personal Coach in Community Service	5
Excel document		Cybercare Microsoft EEP statistics	1
CyberCare intern assessment	Batch 25/05-29/08/2009  Batch 5/01-20/04/2009  Batch 2/06-16/09/2008	On-Site Supervisor Industrial Training Evaluation Form: Bachelor of Social Science (Hons.) Psychology	8 interns  8 interns  23 interns
PDF file		Life coach certificate: CyberCare & Sharmini Hensen	1

**Appendix 2 –Summary of stakeholders who can be included and cannot be included to participate in the interview (3 pages)**

Category	Participant	Represent	Involvement	Include	Exclude/ reason
Service Organisation	JN-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration	😊	
Service Organisation	MC-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration	😊	
Service Organisation	MS-SO	Fulltime staff	CyberCare Management & Administration	😊	
Service Organisation	SY-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration	😊	
Service Organisation	YW-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration	😊	
Service Organisation	LSK-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration		☹️ Overseas
Service Organisation	CHL-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration		☹️ Overseas
Government	KJ-Gov	NITC	Grant & policies	😊	
Government	*PF-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies	😊	
Government	*CA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies	😊	
Government	RA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies	😊	
Government	SJ-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies	😊	
Government	PNZ-Gov	NITC	Grant & policies		☹️ Less knowledge on NITC
Government	MMZ-Gov	NITA & DAGS	Grant & policies		☹️ Unavailable
Government	LKJ-Gov	NITC	Grant & policies		☹️ No email respond
Government	TSL-Gov	Ministry	Launching various programmes		☹️ Unreachable
Government	DRA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies		☹️ Change task

Corporation	*CJ-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U	😊	
Corporation	*TH-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U	😊	
Corporation	ML-Corp		Various programmes/ activities	😊	
Corporation	SN-Corp	LifeWorks	MAD Curriculum & Care4U	😊	
Corporation	YMM-Corp	Microsoft Malaysia	Various programmes/ activities		☹ Unreachable
Corporation	LLL-Corp	UTAR	Providing student interns		☹ No email respond
NGO	JF-NGO	Kota Damansara Friends	Community Service Project	😊	
NGO	SL-NGO	Lions Club	CyberCare patron	😊	
NGO	KHW-NGO	Kiwanis	Programme/ activity		☹ Declined
Volunteer	*YY-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3	😊	
Volunteer	*YS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3	😊	
Volunteer	*YYi-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3	😊	
Volunteer	KS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 4	😊	
Volunteer	MG-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	
Volunteer	PQ-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	
Volunteer	RN-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	
Volunteer	DP-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	
Volunteer	J-Vol	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	
Volunteer	X1	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	☹ Technical defect
Volunteer	X2	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5	😊	☹ Technical defect
Volunteer	X3	Current intern	Care4U Programme batch 5		☹ Unavailable
Volunteer	SYL-Vol	Ex-intern	Care4U Programme batch 1		☹ Unreachable
Volunteer	MNY-Vol	Ex-intern	Care4U Programme batch 2		☹ Uninterested
Volunteer	ANS-Vol	Ex-intern	Care4U Programme *batch 2		☹ No email

	respond			
Orphanage (administrator)	JS-OA	Orphanage1	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	P-OA	Orphanage2	YLM Programme	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	RAI-OA	Orphanage3	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	SLO-OA	Orphanage4	Camp Vision Singapore	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	ER-OA	Orphanage5	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	AK-OA	Orphanage6	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	DZ-OA	Orphanage7	Care4U & other programmes	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	AT-OA	Orphanage8	YLM & other programmes	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	TT-OA	Orphanage9	Camp Vision Singapore	😊
Orphanage (administrator)	EDD-OA	Orphanage10	Care4U Programme	😊
				☹ Incomplete-urgent matter
Orphanage (administrator)	MVV-OA	Orphanage11	EEP Scholarship Award	☹ Declined
Orphanage (administrator)	MVT--OA	Orphanage12	Computer training	☹ Declined
Orphanage (child)	UG-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*S-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*K-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*V-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	N-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	T1-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	P-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	T2-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	CSK-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	SV-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	D-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*PO-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*SR-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	*DV-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊
Orphanage (child)	U-Kid	Child participant	Care4U Programme	😊

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 Orphanage (child)

*Note: \* Joint interview*

*RC-Kid	Child participant	YLM	😊
*JN-Kid	Child participant	YLM	😊
*VN-Kid	Child participant	YLM	😊
*ST-Kid	Child participant	Leadership Camp	😊
*NF-Kid	Child participant	Leadership Camp	😊
*NH-Kid	Child participant	Leadership Camp	😊
SH-Kid	Child participant	e-Workshop	😊
TP-Kid	Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient	😊
SF-Kid	Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient	😊
MSI-Kid	Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient	😞 Distance
MIK-Kid	Child participant	EEP Scholarship recipient	😞 Distance



### **Appendix 3 - Sample of interview protocol (6 pages)**

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (English version)**

The main points to be asked for each participant are specifically divided as follows:

#### **Questions for CyberCare board of directors, NGOs, Orphanage home administrators, and volunteers:**

##### **A. Introduction to develop rapport**

- Could you tell me a bit about yourself?
- How did you get involved with CyberCare?

##### **B. Initial interest and involvement**

- How long have you participated in CyberCare?
- What motivate you to participate?
- How do you describe your participation in CyberCare?

##### **C. Historical background and structure of CyberCare**

- Could you tell me about the historical background of CyberCare?
- What is the organizational structure of CyberCare?
- How do you include all the stakeholders in the structure?
- What are their job scopes and functions?

##### **D. CyberCare objective**

- Is there any reason for CyberCare to focus on children/ orphans?
- Is there any reason for CyberCare to utilise Information Communication Technology (ICT)?
- How ICT is being utilised?

##### **E. Initial collaborative partnership**

- What is the basis of collaborative partnership between stakeholders in CyberCare?
- What are the strategies used to invite stakeholders involvement and participation?
- What are the strategies used to establish the collaborative partnership?

##### **F. Sustaining collaborative partnership**

- What are the strategies used to align all stakeholders?
- What are the strategies used to maintain the collaborative partnership?

- What are the strategies used to sustain CyberCare?

#### G. Programmes/ activities

- What are the types of CyberCare's activities and programmes for children?
- What are the objectives for those activities and programmes?
- What are the processes involved in creating and handling those activities and programmes?
- What are the outcomes of programmes and activities that have been conducted?

#### H. Issues and challenges

- Is there any obstacle in carrying out those activities and programmes?
- Is there any obstacle in carrying out the collaborative partnership practice?

#### I. Participation (child/ child-adult)

- How would you describe the participation of children in the programmes?
- Do you take children views into account?
- How children's views are taken into account?
- How children are supported in expressing their views?
- Do you allow children to get involve in decision-making processes?
- How children are involved in decision-making processes?
- How children share power and responsibility for decision-making?
- How would you describe the participation of adults and children in the activities and programmes of CyberCare?

#### J. Outcomes and benefits

- What are the outcomes and benefits of this collaborative partnership practice?

#### K. Reflection

- Could you make some reflection based on your participation?

#### L. CyberCare achievement

- Based on your long term participation in the organisation/ project, could you elaborate the significant progress, achievement and improvement of CyberCare that you have witnessed? ; OR/AND
- Based on your experience and observation, do you think CyberCare has achieved its stated mission and vision? (*related to CyberCare objective*)

M. Opinion/ suggestion

- Do you encourage staff/children/others to volunteer or participate in any CyberCare activity or programme? How do you do this and why?
- What is your hope for CyberCare in future?

N. Thank you and closure

- Is there anything else you want to say I have not asked?

\*Generally, the same questions will be asked to all stakeholders but they will be adapted to their role and involvement in the project. The reason is to get various views on the same issues and to discover the transparency of the information.

**Questions for Public sector:**

A. Introduction to develop rapport

- Could you tell me a bit about yourself?
- How did you get involved with CyberCare?

B. About NITA/ NITC

- In the realisation of the National IT Agenda (NITA) to develop a value-based knowledge society, the National IT Council (NITC) Malaysia has supported a lot of Information Communication Technology (ICT) based projects. Could you give me more details about NITA, NITC and value-based knowledge society?
- What is the latest development of all that?

C. About CyberCare

- CyberCare is one of that ICT based projects, could you tell me more about CyberCare?

D. About CyberCare and DAGS

- CyberCare has been accredited with the Demonstrator Application (DA) status by the National IT Council Malaysia in 1999.
- What is DA?
- Could you tell me about the accreditation and CyberCare further?
- Under the DA, CyberCare was awarded RM495, 000 for one year. Could you tell me more details about the award?
- What were the criteria of CyberCare that made it entitled for the award?
- Do you have any monitoring system to evaluate the progress and achievement of the award recipient?

- If yes, how it was/is implemented on CyberCare?
- If no, how do you ensure that the award was/is being well utilised by the recipient?
- What was the progress of CyberCare during the awarding period?
- How about the progress of CyberCare after the completion of the award?

E. Post award relation

- Does government give any support to CyberCare after the completion of the grant?
  - If not, why?
  - If yes, what kind of support?

F. Knowledge on collaborative partnership in CyberCare

- Do you know about collaborative partnership in CyberCare?
- Could you explain further?

G. CyberCare and government relation/ involvement

- Is there any government involvement in this collaborative partnership?
  - If yes, how do you explain that involvement?
- Did you or any of government staff participate in any of CyberCare activities and programmes?
- How would you view that participation?

H. Participation (child/ child-adult)

- Do you know about children's participation in the programmes and activities of CyberCare?
  - If yes, how would you describe about the participation of children in CyberCare programmes and activities?
  - May you give examples as well?
- How about the participation of children and adults in the programmes and activities?
  - May you give examples as well?

I. CyberCare achievement

- Based on your knowledge, observation and experience, do you think CyberCare has achieved its stated objectives?
- Do you think CyberCare has provided the needs of the community?

J. Opinion/ suggestion

- Do you have any comment or suggestion for CyberCare to improve in future?

- Do you think such project or organisation like CyberCare should be developed more in the future?
- How would you describe about children participation in the country as a whole?
- How do you view the development of ICT in Malaysia?
- How would you describe the utilisation of ICT among the children in Malaysia as a whole?
- How would you describe about the utilisation of ICT among the orphans and less fortunate children in the country specifically?
- Do you think that what has been done by CyberCare is in line with the government aspiration to develop the value-based knowledge society?
- What more should be done to ensure that the value-based knowledge society will be well implemented?

#### K. Government role

- What is the important role played by the government in developing the value-based knowledge society in a country?

#### L. NITA achievement

- How far the NITC through NITA has achieved in developing the value-based knowledge society in Malaysia?

#### M. Thank you and closure

- Is there anything else you want to say I have not asked?

\*Questions for the public sector representatives are meant to discover more about their way of support and involvement in CyberCare. It is also meant to get the data of the current related policy and implementation of ICT and children status in the country.

### **Question for Children:**

#### A. Introduction to develop rapport

- Before we begin, do you have any question?
- Please answer based on your knowledge, your experience, and your feeling. Your true feeling and your true experience. You don't have to create thing, just flashback what you have done. Okay?
- Could you tell me about yourself?

B. About the programme/ activity

- Do you know that this interview is regarding the programme/ activity (name it) you have joined?

Do you think that:

C. Happiness and satisfaction

- You are happy with the programme/ activity?
- You are happy using computer and Internet?

D. Gaining knowledge

- You have learnt new things in the programme/ activity?

E. Socialising

- You are making new friends?

F. Expressing ideas

- You are given chances to voice up your opinion?
- You are being supported in expressing your views?

G. Team participation

- You have planned this programme together with others?

H. You have been listened

- Your expressed ideas have been taken into account?

I. Involvement at planning stage

- You are allowed to take part in the planning processes of the programme/ activity?

J. Involvement in decision-making

- You are allowed to take part in decision-making processes?
- You share power and responsibility from decision-making?

K. Impact of the programme/ activities

- You are having advantage in participating in this programme or activity?

L. Future hope

- You are happy to join other similar programme or activities?

M. Thank you and closure

- What else you want to share?
- What else you want me to know that I don't know about the programme/ activity (name it)?

\*The main purpose of interviewing children is to find out more on the real side of the programme implementation that might have been well documented on paper. It is also focusing on children participation.

\*As semi-structured interviews, the questions are not limited to those stated questions only.

#### **Appendix 4 – Sample of transcription template (1 page)**

##### **Transcription Interview with:**

Video clip:

Video clip duration (hr:mi:se): 00:08:51

Venue:

Time:

Date:

Date of Transcription:

Interviewer: Suhaini Muda (SM)

Interviewee(s):

Position:

Age:

(1)	SM	
(2)	SA	
(3)		
(4)		
(5)		

## **Appendix 5- Sample of member-checking letter (1 page)**

Hi RN

How are you doing?

If you still remember, I am Sue, a doctorate student from Macquarie University Sydney who have conducted an interview with you on..... I am writing to you to get some feedback regarding the interview that I have done with you. I really appreciate if you could spare a few minutes to read this email, open the attachment, and get back to me, preferably within two weeks.

I attached the transcribed interview here. I used RN as your pseudonym. I need your help to just have a quick look and verify the transcription, and sent it back to me. I'm doing this as a part of the 'member check' process.

If you do not have much time, you may just have a quick check on the sentence with \*\*\* or the words with this colour, and please correct it if it's not the right word. I did that because I'm uncertain of what you have said due to the noise in the background.

I hope to receive your reply within two-week time, but in case you need more time or further details, just let me know. If I do not receive any reply from you within those two weeks, I will assume that everything that has been transcribed is correct and you do not have further comment or information to provide. Thus, I will use the transcription data as it is.

Thank you very much for your attention and understanding.

Kind regards



## **Appendix 6- Consent form for adult participant (3 pages)**

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **Research Project: Title**

The study is being conducted by Suhaini Muda. It will form the basis for a Doctor of Philosophy in International Communication under the supervision of Dr Guo Qin and Prof. Naren Chitty

The purpose of this study is to investigate the structure of CyberCare and its strategies for the effective collaborative partnership aspects in sustaining the community system. It will also mean to examine the outcomes and challenges of the collaborative partnership in connecting the children and sustaining the community development project for children with the new application of Information Communication Technology (ICT). It is hope that the information provided will help the researcher to obtain the results that may be useful for the improvement of community development projects and ICT utilisation in future.

I will ask participant to express his/her knowledge, feeling and experience in partnering with CyberCare or involving in its activities and programmes.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary – you are not under any obligation to consent. You may withdraw from the study at any time at which point all written and audio/visual records of your participation will be destroyed. Your withdrawal from this study will in no way affect your relationship with CyberCare or any of its partners.

All aspects of this study, including the results, will be strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access to information about participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication but individual participant will be allowed to choose to be identifiable in such a report with a given consent. The pseudonym will be used if it is preferred by the participant.

I draw your attention to the fact that this project involves video/audio/photographic recordings of participants. The purpose of these recordings is to help the researcher in transcribing the data accurately. These recordings will be:

- Collected on a specific date agreed by the potential participant and researcher.
- Stored in a locked locker in my office and password protected personal computer for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- Accessed by the researcher and supervisors only.
- Used in analysing CyberCare and its programmes and activities.

If you have any concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your participation within the period of storage. These recordings can be accessed by making a written request to the researcher.

You may exclude recordings of you from the study with a discussion with the researcher.

You may prevent recordings being made public by informing the researcher in advance.

The copy of the results of this study will be provided for all participants to access at CyberCare. You may contact CyberCare to view the results.

When you have read the information, Suhaini Muda will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:

Suhaini Muda, M: +60176614897, E: [suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au)

Dr Guo Qin, T: +61298508110, F: +61298509689, E: [qin.guo@mq.edu.au](mailto:qin.guo@mq.edu.au) or/and

Prof Naren Chitty, T: +61298508725, F: +61298509689, E: [naren.chitty@mq.edu.au](mailto:naren.chitty@mq.edu.au)

This information sheet is for you to keep.

## CONSENT FORM

**Research Project:** TITLE

I (*print name*).....willingly participate in the research and agree/disagree  
(*circle your preference*) to be identifiable in the publication of the results of the research project described  
below.

**TITLE OF THE PROJECT:**

**RESEARCHER:**

Suhaini Muda, M: +60176614897, E: [suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au)

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction
2. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher
3. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect my relationship with CyberCare or its partners and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity without my consent.
5. I understand that video/audio/photographic recordings will be made as part of the study. Each recording will start from the beginning of the interview session until the end. All of the recordings are meant to backup the written data and help the researcher in transcribing the data more accurately.

**Signed**.....

**Name**.....

**Date**.....

## **Appendix 7- Consent form for child participant (4 pages)**

### **PARENT/CAREGIVER INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **Research Project: TITLE**

The study is being conducted by Suhaini Muda. It will form the basis for a Doctor of Philosophy in International Communication under the supervision of Dr Guo Qin and Prof. Naren Chitty

The purpose of this study is to investigate the structure of CyberCare and its strategies for the effective collaborative partnership aspects in sustaining the community system. It will also mean to examine the outcomes and challenges of the collaborative partnership in connecting the children and sustaining the community development project for children with the new application of Information Communication Technology (ICT). It is hope that the information provided will help the researcher to obtain the results that may be useful for the improvement of community development projects and ICT utilisation in future.

I will ask participants to express their knowledge, feeling and experience in joining the programmes and activities of CyberCare.

Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary – you are not under any obligation to consent. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time – or you may withdraw your child from the study – at which point all written and electronic records of your child's participation will be destroyed. Your child's withdrawals from this study will in no way affect his/her relationship with the orphanage home or CyberCare.

All aspects of this study, including the results, will be strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access to information about participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The pseudonyms will be used for child participants.

I draw your attention to the fact that this project involves video/audio/photographic recordings of participants. The purpose of these recordings is to help the researcher in transcribing the data accurately. These recordings will be:

- Collected on 22/08/2009, 7.30am during Bamboo Planting event, and 4/09/2009, 5.00pm during the interview session.
- Stored in a locked locker in my office and password protected personal computer for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- Accessed by the researcher and supervisors only.
- Used in analysing programmes and activities carried out by CyberCare.

If you have any concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your child during the period of storage. These recordings can be accessed by making a written request to the researcher. You may exclude recordings of your child from the study with a discussion with the researcher. You may prevent recordings being made public by informing the researcher in advance.

The copy of the results of this study will be provided for all participants to access at CyberCare. You may contact CyberCare to view the results.

When you have read the information, Suhaini Muda will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:

Suhaini Muda, M: +61403724911, E: [suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au)  
Dr Guo Qin, T: +61298508110, F: +61298509689, E: [qin.guo@mq.edu.au](mailto:qin.guo@mq.edu.au) or/and  
Prof Naren Chitty, T: +61298508725, F: +61298509689, E: [naren.chitty@mq.edu.au](mailto:naren.chitty@mq.edu.au)  
This information sheet is for you to keep.

## CONSENT FORM

**Research Project:** TITLE

I (*print name*).....give consent to the participation of my child (*print name*).....in the research project described below.

**TITLE OF THE PROJECT:**

**RESEARCHER:**

Suhaini Muda, M: +61403724911, E:[suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:suhaini.muda@students.mq.edu.au)

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction
2. I have read the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project
4. I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect his/her academic standing or relationship with the orphanage home or CyberCare, and his/her is free to withdraw his/her participation at any time.
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity, and pseudonym will be used instead of my child's given name.
6. I understand that video/audio/photographic recordings will be made as part of the study. Each recording will start from the beginning of each activity with children until the end. All of the recordings are meant to backup researcher's observation and help the researcher in transcribing the data more accurately. These recordings will on:
  - a. 22/08/2009, 7.30am during Bamboo Planting event
  - b. 4/09/2009, 5.00pm during the interview session

Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

**Signed**.....

**Name**.....

**Date**.....

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through its Secretary, (telephone [02] 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix 8 – Final ethics approval letter (1 page)



08 January 2009

Miss Suhaini Muda  
6/161 Herring Road  
North Ryde  
NSW 2113

**Reference: HE24OCT2008-D06164**

Dear Miss Muda

### FINAL APPROVAL

***Title of project: "Effective collaborative partnership for sustainable community informatics"***

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) and you may now commence your research. This approval is subject to the following condition:

1. Please forward a copy of the project description from your grant application and correspondence from the National Information Technology Council, Ministry of Energy, Water and Communication and MIMOS Berhad when these are available.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. Approval will be for a period of twelve (12) months. At the end of this period, if the project has been completed, abandoned, discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are required to submit a Final Report on the project. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. The Final Report is available at: [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms)
2. However, at the end of the 12 month period if the project is still current you should instead submit an application for renewal of the approval if the project has run for less than five (5) years. This form is available at [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms). If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report (see Point 1 above) and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
3. Please remember the Committee must be notified of any alteration to the project.
4. You must notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
5. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/policy)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project **it is your responsibility** to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

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1



## Appendix 9 – Proofread certification memo (1 page)

### Memorandum

<b>Date:</b>	20/6/16
<b>To:</b>	To Macquarie University
<b>From:</b>	Margaret Gauld
<b>Subject:</b>	<i>Thesis entitled :Sustaining collaborative partnership in an ICT-based community service organization to empower children in orphanages: Perspectives from multiple stakeholders</i>

This is to confirm that I have proofread chapters one to seven and the reference list for the above thesis by Suhaini Muda (student number 31755607) which is to be submitted for assessment in June 2016. I am a native English speaker and my credentials include a Master of Arts Degree from the University of Edinburgh, a Certificate of Associateship from the Library Association (UK) and a Certificate in Professional Editing and Proofreading from Cengage Learning Australia.

The work that I performed involved checking the document for any spelling, grammar and typographical errors and pointing out any areas where I felt the wording was unclear. I also checked the reference list for compliance with the APA style. I used the 'Track Changes' feature of MS word to indicate any suggested changes.

I trust that this information will meet with your requirements.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Gauld

## Appendix 10 – Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 1 (15 pages)

Muda, Suhaini (2015, 9-10 July). *Convergent Aims of Collaborative Partnership in a Sustainable Community Service Organisation to Empower Underprivileged Children*. Paper presented at The 1st International Conference on Innovative Communication and Sustainable Development in ASEAN, Bangkok, Thailand. (Incorporated as Chapter 5).

The 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Innovative Communication and Sustainable Development in ASEAN

### Convergent Aims of Collaborative Partnership in a Sustainable Community Service Organisation to Empower Underprivileged Children

Suhaini Muda<sup>56</sup>

#### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to address the issue: to what extents do different collaborative partners in a sustainable community service organisation have similar aims? The stakeholders involved in this study including the service organisation (key stakeholder), corporate and government bodies, non-governmental organisations, orphanage administrators, and volunteers. Interviews with the selected participants from each group of the stakeholders were conducted to gain the understanding regarding what they considered as their aim or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with the service organisation. The findings also included a review of the available documents. Based on the responses, this paper discusses various perspectives of the stakeholders which do not provide an agreement across all stakeholders on what they considered as their aims or focus of collaboration but they intersected with the key stakeholder's aims. This challenges the notion that the partners in a collaborative partnership setting have to develop and be clear of the common aim of the collaborative partnership prior to collaboration. This case study was done in Malaysia within the context of a particular community service organisation for children. Future research may be conducted on the similar issue in different contexts.

**Keywords:** aim, collaborative partnership, sustainability, community service, community service organisation

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### Introduction and Background of a Case Study

Community service organisation in this study has been set up as a non-governmental organisation (NGO). For the NGOs, collaborative partnership can be one of the mechanisms to provide services previously undertaken by the state. Yamamoto (1995) views that through collaborative activities civil societal associations are able to nurture opportunities for individuals to pursue their specific interests and societal and institutional linkages to enable community building. Moreover, inherent within the notion of civil society is the principle of civic virtue and an emphasis on rational, co-operative and moral interactions, both among the members of a society and between them and their government (Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

CyberCare, a Malaysian based community service organisation has initiated community collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders to serve the children in orphanages (also being referred as underprivileged children) through numerous programmes and activities to connect the orphanages to their aims and to include them alongside the ICT development in Malaysia since 1998. This site is selected based on its ability to sustain for twelve years (when the research was undertaken in 2010) which made it significant to study about the sustainability aspects of the collaborative partnership. Stakeholders, programmes and activities are taken into account to be studied as they make up the whole of this site. The stakeholders involved in the study of this collaborative partnership will be detailed out in the method section.

Among the programmes and activities of CyberCare are Education Excellence Programme (EEP) and Care4U. EEP refers to the programme to help the children in orphanages to reach their highest level of education by rewarding the children for every distinction achieved in the local government examinations including Primary School Assessment (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* – UPSR), Lower Secondary Assessment (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah* – PMR), Malaysia Certificate of Education (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* – SPM), and Higher School Certificate (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* – STPM) (CyberCare, 2011). The fund was allocated by Microsoft Malaysia, the key corporate partner at the time, through its Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award (MUPSA). MUPSA was formerly known as Microsoft Foundation Campaign Education Excellence Programme aimed to enable recipients to further their formal education beyond secondary level into university (Microsoft Press Release, 2005). Another programme involving university students is that of Care4U, which started in 2007. Under the Care4U programme, Psychology students from a private university are recruited as interns in CyberCare for a period of fourteen weeks to complete their given assignment. During the internship, the students are trained to be personal trainers and coaches by the professional life coach who is partnering with CyberCare. These interns then coach children in their selected orphanages in life skills, and ICT skills, and guide the children through the completion of the community service project (CSP) of their choice. This coaching or training method is based on the *Mengecapi Aspirasi Diri* - Living My Aspirations - (MAD) curriculum, which was first developed in 2008 by the interns from this programme. It was developed to provide a hands-on coaching to interns in particular. At the time of my fieldwork, CyberCare has had recruited five batches of university students for the internships. This is one of the programmes that was still active and seemed to receive high priority from CyberCare and its partners at the time of my fieldwork.

This article is a part of a twelve-month case study research which was conducted to investigate the issue of sustaining collaborative partnership of multiple-stakeholders in the context of community service organisation. The main focus of this article is to explore to what extent do different partners in longstanding collaborative partnerships have similar

aims? This study gained an understanding of the participants from each group of stakeholders regarding what they considered as their aim or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with CyberCare. This study also seeks to understand the stakeholders' perspectives on agreement, and whether it needs to be forged from the start or it can be done along the way. The continuing section review the literature which relevant to the study.

#### **Definition of Collaborative Partnership**

In terms of defining collaborative partnership, Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton's (2005) book, *The collaborative partnership approach to care: a delicate balance* can serve as one of the examples of collaborative partnership in human service which is applicable to community service. In their definition, they refer to the relationship as a partnership and the way of working together as collaborative. This account of partnership is similar to how Carnwell & Carson's (2008) distinguishes between the term "partnership" as meaning "*what something is*," and "collaborate or to work together in a joined-up way" as "*what one does*." Combining the terms together, Carnwell & Carson (2008: 16) describe collaboration as the verb refers to "*what we do when we engage successfully in a partnership*," in which "*partnership being the noun*." Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton (2005) and Carnwell & Carson (2008) view collaboration as a way of working together which include both people and organisations as the key actors.

Adapting the definitions to my study, I use both terms partnership and collaboration together to include both relationship and the way of working together. The term "relationship" in my study refers to the groups of stakeholders including individuals and organisations that come together to form a partnership, while the way of working together involves how they plan and implement the programmes. However, I do not differentiate between partnership and collaboration based on contract or agreement. The next section reviews about the aim, goal, objective, or focus (will be used interchangeably in this article) and agreement of forming partnerships.

#### **Reaching Common Aims and Agreement**

Various examples in the literature emphasise the importance of reaching agreement on common aims prior to the setup of partnership and collaboration. For examples, Frank & Smith (2006), and Carroll & Steane (2000) require the partners to have agreement between actors to do something. Wildavsky (1986: 242) also presumes the partners "*to have agreed on the project, a rough outline, and division of labour*" as well as motive prior to collaborating. Melaville et al. (1996) assert the need to establish common goals and mutual agreement to share power and resources to achieve the goals prior to collaboration.

What kind of agreement is necessary? Frank & Smith (2006) clarify their view that partnerships require some official or formal agreement. They assert that the agreement does not have to satisfy legal requirements, but that it is enough to ensure that all parties involved know what the partnership is all about: who is doing what, and what outcomes are expected (Frank & Smith, 2006). In contrast, Carroll & Steane (2000) are more rigid in their expectations of agreement. They believe that agreement is very important as the basic terms of agreement are one of the essential forces influencing the partners' beliefs about what should constitute a partnership. They argue that the agreement also determines the norms of behaviour that influence how the partners should behave within the process.

However, in practice, the varying values and interests held by different people or/and organisations may create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Many partnerships have reached agreement on the broad aims but the partners may not have the same understanding of the meaning of the goals due to the lack of



details. This lack of clarity may raise the perception of other partners having a "hidden" agenda (McQuaid, 2000). Besides that, Carroll & Steane (2000) do not exclude the fact that when the agreement is practically no longer adequate, the terms of agreement can be modified or the agreement is terminated with a new one coming into effect.

In a theme-based collaborative advantage theory, Huxham & Vangen (2005; 2008) and Vangen & Huxham (2014) categorised the aims as collaborative, organisational, and individual aims. This theme-based collaborative advantage theory is paradoxical in nature and structured around collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Vangen & Huxham, 2014). The advantage of collaboration is assumed when the organisations come together, and it may seem that the stakeholders only need to be concerned with the collaborative joint aims. In fact, the organisations also bring with them different reasons for involvement as well as the aims of individuals within the organisations. These varying aims can prevent agreement as they may cause confusion, misunderstanding, and conflicts of interest. Huxham & Vangen (2008: 30) summarise this conflict as *"We must have common aims but we cannot agree on them."*

This notion is parallel to that of Wood & Gray (1991) who suggest that both common and differing interests between stakeholders may exist at the start of a collaborative venture, but as the collaboration proceeds, the interests may change or be redefined. Wildavsky (1986: 240) claims that *"the feasibility of the collaborative effort need not be evident from the start but may emerge over time,"* and Thomson & Perry (2006: 27) suggest that *"forging commonalities out of differences can yield highly satisfying results"* further support the suggestion. Wildavsky (1986) explains that collaboration may start with one initial interest in something, communicated to others which later leads to collaborative work. Thomson & Perry (2006) suggest that collaboration starts with differences and progress through negotiation process, and the ability of collaborators to reconcile their self-interest and collective interests can contribute to better collaboration. However, it may challenge some debates that required collaborators to agree on common aims prior to partnership or collaboration.

The reviewed of the literature demonstrates that the scholars show disagreement over the need to have a clear joint aim from the initial stage of the collaborative partnership or to let it develop along the progress. The scholars also offered a different stance on what the details and influence of agreement have on the partnership relationships. My research explores what has initially driven the stakeholders into partnership and how different stakeholders regard their aims in participating in this collaborative partnership. This study also seeks to understand the stakeholders' perspectives on agreement, and whether it needs to be forged from the start or if it can be done along the way.

### Methodology

This qualitative case study was done in Malaysia within the context of a particular community service organisation for children. Creswell (2007: 122) mentions that a researcher can include the site(s) which is a bounded system, *"such as programmes, events, processes, activities, individual or several individuals."* For my study, I chose CyberCare, an NGO, focusing in community service aiming to improve the life of the children in orphanages through the mechanism of collaborative partnership between various stakeholders.

The findings of this study are based on the data from the member-checked interviews with multiple-stakeholders, and the review of available documents, mainly newspaper articles and press releases. The objective of the interviews is to get varied perspectives from multiple-stakeholders from their knowledge and experiences working with CyberCare. Overall, the

participants selected for interviews included five CyberCare, five government, four corporate, two other NGO, nine volunteer, and nine orphanage administrator representatives (refer Appendix 1).

Interviews with the selected participants from each group of the stakeholders were conducted to gain the understanding regarding what they considered as their aim, goal, objective or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with the service organisation. Findings from the interviews were compared to the findings from documents reviewed, and later placed alongside the findings of the previous studies from the literature review in the discussions. The next section begins the findings of this study.

#### **Convergent Aims in Longstanding Collaborative Partnerships**

The overarching finding around aims in a sustainable collaborative partnership is that most stakeholders came into partnership with different objectives but they intersected at some point with CyberCare's objectives. For example, the service organisations' main objective was to empower children in orphanages which were also shared by the volunteers and orphanage administrators. The government's aim was to carry out its national agenda with emphasise on ICT; corporations' aims to pursue their corporate focus; and NGOs' aims to carry out their organisations' interests. On the whole, orphanage administrators provided child participants (the target community) for the programmes and they welcomed volunteers to help their children.

Based on the responses, the research findings discussed the various perspectives of the stakeholders and similarities and differences between their views. Responses have been organised around participants' comments on CyberCare's objectives, merging objectives between stakeholders, perceived common aim, organisation focus, and government agenda as perceived collaborative partnership objectives, aims or focus.

##### ***Service Organisation Objective as Collaborative Partnership Objective***

The findings showed that the majority of participants from the groups of service organisation, orphanage administrator, and volunteer regarded CyberCare's aims as the aims they wanted to achieve in working together. All five participants from the service organisation interviewed shared the same view on the objective of the collaboration, which was to improve the lives of children in orphanages. They normally referred to the programmes that they participated in. For instance, SY-SO mentioned:

Actually at the end of the day, for CyberCare, it's voiced (it comes) down to the improvement of the children basically on the practice. Even like Care4U project, for the past two or three times, it's about believing in themselves ...

Here, SY-SO referred to the final outcome of the programmes, emphasising the aim of CyberCare to give positive impact on the self-development of the children through collaborative programmes. In addition, YW-SO looked at the ideal change for children, as embedded in the vision of the organisation, "*to let the children dream and to realise their dreams.*" He justified what he was doing with CyberCare at the moment in relation to the results that he wished to achieve in the long-term:

Ideally, CyberCare would like to see a future where there are no orphans. That means we would not like to see homes being formed artificially to house displaced children or to house single parented children or to house orphans. I like to see a future where all children will have a home, a real home. This means that if anyone is to be orphaned, he will be adopted into another home. That will be the idea ...

Instead of envisioning a long lasting existence, YW-SO appeared to anticipate the end of their collaborative efforts once this long-term aim had been achieved. This will possibly happen when orphanage no longer exists because in the current structure, CyberCare's main role is to link orphanages with other stakeholders.

Similar to the view of the service organisation, all of the orphanage administrators referred to CyberCare's focus when they discussed the objective of the collaborative partnership. They generally showed an understanding of what the collaborators did to bring awareness and improve the lives of the children in orphanages. An interesting finding emerged from an interview in which SLO-OA, the orphanage administrator from Orphanage4 where she showed her support for the objective of CyberCare programmes. She believed that the orphanage children who were normally viewed as "*underprivileged*" because they were being placed under the care of the institutions could become "*privileged*" children by offering them more opportunities to get involved with "*good programmes*" like CyberCare programmes. As CyberCare envisioned, the orphanages regarded the opportunities provided by programmes with "*good objectives*" as ways to develop the children in orphanages and improve their living condition. Other orphanage administrators like P-OA from Orphanage2 also shared a similar perspective, but were not as certain as SLO-OA when she based it more on her assumption. Even though both participants (SLO-OA and P-OA) showed different degrees of certainty, both assumed that there was something good in CyberCare's objectives based on the programmes that CyberCare has done with the children at their orphanages. The differences from the service organisation's view can be seen in the way both stakeholders view the functions of orphanages. While CyberCare members portrayed their dissatisfaction with the orphanage structure, the administrators perceived it as providing a better place for child development, better perhaps, because of the opportunities provided by projects like CyberCare, even than some "ordinary" homes.

Similar to the service organisation and orphanage administrators, most of the volunteers interviewed related the objective of the collaborative partnership to the vision and mission of CyberCare which says "*every child has the right to dream, and every child has the right to fulfil their dreams.*" A majority of volunteers also linked the collaborative objective to the objectives of particular programmes of CyberCare. However, very few volunteers clearly showed their knowledge about partnerships in CyberCare, and those who did were mostly senior volunteers who had gone through the internship programmes earlier.

Despite CyberCare's main intention to equip the children with both self-development and ICT skills, and instil their awareness to contribute to the community, what was more apparent to the orphanage administrators was the objective of changing the children's sense of self-esteem through the programmes. In contrast, the volunteer group seemed to describe CyberCare's aims holistically, to include all aspects of personal development, ICT skills, and community service aspects as in the Care4U programme. Such differences may be due to the degree of involvement of the stakeholders with the children's programmes. Volunteers who have gained both theoretical understanding from the curriculum, and practical understanding from their involvement in the implementation of the programme from the beginning until its completion may be able to provide a wider interpretation of CyberCare's objective compared to the orphanage administrator group who just based their findings on what they had been informed of, and their distant observations. Nevertheless, all three stakeholders discussed here seemed to value child participation for empowerment by explicitly mentioning "*improving children's personal development*" and "*self-esteem*," "*giving rights to children to achieve their dreams*," and "*encouraging children's participation*" as CyberCare's related objective. Besides recognising CyberCare's aim as a collaborative partnership objective,



some stakeholders were also aware of the differences between various partners, as discussed in the following subsection.

***Forging Commonalities out of Differences as a Collaborative Partnership Objective***

Some of the stakeholders discussed differing objectives held by various stakeholders. In dealing with these various objectives, CyberCare showed their tolerance of different views by trying to unite all objectives of the partners in collaboration. One of the corporate stakeholders, and a couple of volunteers also seemed to believe that a collaborative partnership objective can be achieved by forging commonalities out of differences. These will be shown in the following discussion.

Besides emphasising the aim of CyberCare itself, YW-SO at the same time realised that the partners in the collaboration may have different objectives to CyberCare, “*So, the collaborative partnership in other words will be trying to marry the objectives of the corporate sponsors, right, the partners, and us.*” Here, the objective of the collaborative partnership can be viewed as the objective of both CyberCare and the other stakeholders, which are viewed by YW-SO as being closely linked. This is in contrast to the other two corporate stakeholder (CJ-Corp and ML-Corp) perspectives, which focus on the needs of their own individual organisations, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

SN-Corp from LifeWorks perceived the collaborative partnership objective through a macro lens. She recognised the diverse values and objectives of different stakeholders in the collaborative partnership that they have in CyberCare, but did not believe that this prevented them from continuing their collaborative work under one objective of CyberCare. SN-Corp clarified:

I guess if you look at the context, they all have got different values and objectives but do they come together to meet the one objective that CyberCare wants to achieve? Yes! They do that, and they work very nicely in that way.

Here, SN-Corp view can be categorised as the individual organisation objective and a collaborative partnership objective they shared in common. However, other corporate stakeholders in my study did not appear to have similar agreement on what leads to satisfactory outcomes.

What is also interesting in SN-Corp’s view is that, besides emphasising the commonality they shared, she also valued the sharing of differences. SN-Corp further explained how various partners can work with their differences:

... It is like, “Okay, let us see what we can do or create, let’s see what we can do differently.” I bring some new ideas, and we share and figure out what we can create and do differently, this is the most important.

Similar to SN-Corp, two volunteer participants who have been coached by YW-SO and SN-Corp in the recent Care4U programme, related the focus of the collaborative partnership to what the founder of CyberCare, YW-SO and his partner, SN-Corp from LifeWorks, shared and wanted to do. For instance, RN-Vol looked at how the two can complement their foci:

... She’s (SN-Corp) from the coaching line and Mr. YW-SO is from the technology line. So they have the same mission, they have the same vision to contribute back to the society with the children. So they collaborate and use their expertise to contribute to society.



These extracts showed that despite all of the members in the service organisation and volunteer groups' agreement on the objective of CyberCare to be the objective of their collaborative partnership, they were aware of the potential differences, but those were the differences they could deal with. YW-SO simply mentioned that the different objectives will be combined but did not specify how it can be done. However, both SN-Corp and the volunteers provided clearer discussion on how the differences that the two partners have can be combined to work for what CyberCare aimed for. While SN-Corp emphasis combining different ways to achieve their aims, the volunteers' emphasis combining different types of expertise to achieve the same vision.

#### *Corporate Focus as Being in Common with the Aim of the Service Organisation*

This section discusses the corporations' perspectives of what was in common between their own organisations' aims and CyberCare. The analysis of the corporate statements in the media showed that these stakeholders appeared to regard their aims as in common with CyberCare's objective. For example, the newspaper article (Ching, 1999) reports Benedict Lee, the managing director of Microsoft Malaysia as saying, "*CyberCare mission is absolutely in tune with our own thinking and mission and we are proud to be part of it.*"

In contrast to SN-Corp, who emphasised achieving CyberCare's aim out of differences, the analyses of the available documents showed that the partnerships with other corporate partners, as with Microsoft, were being set up with the common objectives and beliefs between the key corporate stakeholders and service organisation. The findings showed that the corporations were looking for a partner that can fit with the focus of the programme of the corporations. However, this is only based on the statement in public documents.

As the founding corporate sponsor to CyberCare, it was no surprise to find out that Microsoft, through its Microsoft Foundation Campaign, shared common objectives and beliefs with CyberCare. The shared beliefs within the collaborative partnership between Microsoft and CyberCare were acknowledged by Bill Gates in his speech during a brief interaction session with children during his visit to the country. He stated as follows:

CyberCare and Microsoft share a common belief that every individual, regardless of their economic, religious, and cultural background, be empowered with IT skills and knowledge to excel in life by having access to learning tools, such as the Internet (Microsoft, 2000).

The emphasis on the word "excel" here shows a different set of language to "dreams" which may illustrate a more skills-based aspiration. It stressed on an achievement as opposed to a process based focus. Besides this, the underlying objective of the Microsoft Foundation Campaign itself was to let people know that protecting intellectual property rights will bring benefits to the community as Microsoft was returning a portion of anti-piracy settlements and damages to the communities in which it operates via charitable organisations (Ching, 1999). Another corporate partner, Samsung, awarded the grant through its DigiAll Hope programme for CyberCare to continue its collaborative work aimed at "*enriching the lives of the underprivileged through technology and technological advancement*" (Yoon, 2005). This statement's use of "enriching" is an interesting choice of word, as it literally points towards money as well as figuratively implying other things. It also showed a slightly different emphasis here as Microsoft emphasised providing information access through the usage of technology while Samsung stressed how technological advances can better contribute to children's lives.

The findings, mainly from newspaper articles and press releases, showed that the majority of corporate participants relate their collaborative objective in the partnership with

CyberCare with the ways they wanted to pursue their collaborative works. Overall, Microsoft was the only company that really highlighted both firm-serving (combating anti-piracy) and public serving (contributing to community) motives. The other corporate partners appeared to place greater emphasis on their public-serving motives, demonstrated in the Samsung statement of aim above. However, the findings could not confirm whether that seeming transparency contributed to the Microsoft long-term partnership with CyberCare.

*Partner Organisation Focus as Collaborative Partnership Objective*

While the analysis from the available documents showed that the corporate stakeholders clearly emphasised common aim between partners, interviews with recent corporate participants provided different views. When asked about the objective of their collaborative partnership with CyberCare, the two corporate partners, PIKOM and Accenture merely linked the partnership with their own programme needs or corporate objectives. For example, CJ-Corp from PIKOM suggests that CyberCare was brought into partnership to help PIKOM to achieve its own aim in MAINPC project which is *"to bring the ICT credibility to the poor and the underprivileged."* This shows that CyberCare was important at that time to accommodate the needs of the corporation. In this kind of relationship, it seems likely that the collaboration continues as long as the need continues, with both partners in need of each other. ML-Corp from Accenture viewed that the change in corporate objective (e.g. from child focus to environmental focus) may also lead to a change of partners.

These two corporate participants show that partners came to have different objectives. Moreover, their responses reveal different findings from the statements of different corporate stakeholders in the available documents. What is apparent here was that the stakeholders who emphasised more on achieving their own corporate objectives were in partnership with CyberCare for a shorter duration, compared to the corporate stakeholders who make explicit their common aims with CyberCare.

The partners' emphasis on their own organisations' foci could also be seen from the interviews with NGO participants. When describing the objective of their collaborative partnership, both views of NGOs are relative to the focus area of their organisations' movements. SL-NGO looked at how CyberCare was functioning as a part of the Lions Club and emphasised community inclusion in the process. SL-NGO made it clear that the aim of the club's partnership with CyberCare was to bring its expertise and available resources to work together to raise funds and invite community participation rather than to supply direct monetary assistance. The connection of the collaborative partnership objective to the organisation's movement can also be seen from JF-NGO who leads an environmental organisation. He regarded the objective of the specific Community Service Project (Bamboo Planting) to preserve the environment as the collaborative partnership objective. JF-NGO also acknowledged the uniqueness of the programme which attracted him lay in the element of research during the planning, where both interns and children did some research before they decided to plant bamboo.

These findings showed that both corporate and NGO stakeholders emphasised the importance of the collaborative partnership to carry out the aim of the corporations or to match with the organisations' movements. This condition may link to what they can do with their available resources, and expertise. The final subsection will look at the perceptions of the government officials regarding what constitutes the objectives of government partnership with multiple stakeholders.

### ***Collaborative Partnerships' Objectives as Set by Government***

All government stakeholders insisted that the partners adopt a government agenda in carrying out their collaborative efforts. RA-Gov mentioned the purpose of the collaborative partnership in which government funded the piloted programme was used to justify future budgets and programmes plan based on the piloted project. KJ-Gov emphasised that the grant required the partners to carry out the long-term government agenda which is the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA). He explained that the Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS) is used to carry out the agenda by covering 70% of the project cost. In return, the promoter has to show commitment by having good vision and noble project with good actors. KJ-Gov further stressed that this structure will benefit both promoter and the community.

The government through DAGS was meant to encourage more community participation with the provided fund, and created an avenue for the community to work with the corporation. The NITA aims for Malaysia, eventually, to develop into a values-based knowledge society where physical development will go alongside spiritual development by the year 2020. This aim supported government officials' emphasis on *"tripartite partnership"* (government, corporation, and community) in DAGS model as a working structure of this collaborative partnership.

In the implementation, KJ-Gov who referred to the government through DAGS as the "second party" to the agreement emphasised two important criteria of DAGS: the requirement for the presenter of the project as the "first party" to be a promoter, and requirement for the partnership to bring the partners as the "third party" in the projects during the presentation. In the case of CyberCare, he referred the "third party" to the orphanage community. He repeatedly mentioned that the *"government required the partnership to include third party participation from the design stage."* KJ-Gov considered the "third party" to be represented by the managers, orphanage administrators, or the volunteers during the project proposal presentation.

This implementation model was what KJ-Gov considered to be a uniquely new effective design which he considered different from common government funding practices in Malaysia at the time. He believed this multiparty, participatory structure was a way of promoting transparency and accountability. Participants of the service organisation agreed with KJ-Gov's analysis. MC-SO acknowledged that the transparency in their collaborative structure resulted from the monitoring process required by the government, as also discussed by the government officials.

Government participants in this collaboration seemed to imply control in various situations. For example, KJ-Gov's explanation also showed that, CyberCare was being set up by the community which involved a bottom-up approach and process where the initiation began from the community members. However, the financial management during the award period was controlled by the government which involved top-down process in which the government allocated the fund under certain terms and conditions and having its officials to monitor the usage. These findings will be discussed and concluded in the following section.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

It has been argued that partners have to be clear about the aims of joint working if they wish to execute any strategy or policy. Much of the literature stresses the importance of partners reaching agreement on common aims prior to setting up of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton, 2005; Melaville et al., 1996; Wildavsky, 1986). However, the findings of this research show that merging different aims



rather than reaching agreement on common aims was more practical in carrying out and sustaining the collaborative efforts.

This case study supports the observation that in practice, the different values and interests held by different people and/or organisations create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The findings of this study support the notion that both common and differing interests between stakeholders exist at the start of a collaborative venture. These common and differing interests may be changed or redefined as the collaboration proceeds (Wood & Gray, 1991). A few cases in this collaborative partnership indicated where the partners had common interests in the beginning, but realised they had differences later on.

As Huxham (2003) and Huxham & Vangen (2000; 2008) suggest in their discussion of practices of partnership, the findings of this study showed that the stakeholders did not wait for total consensus on aims before starting their collaborative programmes. This research also showed that rather than grieving over their different aims, stakeholders in this partnership developed their understanding, and found ways to adapt to the differences. In fact they focused on what they could work on with the resources that they had at the time.

In contrast to Vangen & Huxham (2014), Huxham & Vangen (2005; 2008), and Huxham (2003) suggestions for the collaborators to identify their individual, organisational and collaborative aims in order to focus on aligning their collaborative aims, the partners in this partnership could not identify such three types of aims clearly. Also, they could not mention clearly whose aim is considered as the collaborative aim. Different stakeholders demonstrate different views when describing their collaborative aim. In the context of my study, what made the partners successfully carry out their collaborative programmes was not mainly their clear understanding of different types of aims but what they can do with what they have, and what they aim for. For example, at the time when the corporations have their corporate responsibility fund allocation that can be used to support CyberCare's programmes, they collaborated but when their focus changed and was not relevant with CyberCare's cause, they ceased to collaborate. The active relationship in this collaborative partnership setting appears to be based more on a dyadic interaction between CyberCare and one partner rather than all partners coming together to the table.

Despite the findings from the available documents showing that the corporation which is reported to have common aims with CyberCare demonstrated as CyberCare's long-term partner, it is hard to conclude that having common aims contributes to sustainable collaborative partnership. One of the NGO stakeholders (SL-NGO), for example, who regarded his organisation's focus as the aim of joint working also had a long-term relationship with CyberCare.

This study demonstrates that CyberCare is the key partner that kept this collaborative partnership moving. Regardless of these diverse aims, the findings indicate that as long as the key player can adapt and merge these aims together, the collaborative partnership efforts will be sustained.

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Appendix: Summary characteristic of the participants interviewed

Category	Participant	Represent	Involvement
Service Organisation	IN-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MC-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MS-SO	Full-time staff	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	SY-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	YW-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Government	KJ-Gov	NTTC	Grant & policies
Government	*PF-Gov	DAGIS	Grant & policies
Government	*CA-Gov	DAGIS	Grant & policies
Government	RA-Gov	DAGIS	Grant & policies
Government	SI-Gov	DAGIS	Grant & policies
Corporation	*CI-Corp	PKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	*TH-Corp	PKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	ML-Corp	Acerware	Various programmes/ activities
Corporation	SN-Corp	LifeWorks	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
NGO	JF-NGO	Kata Dharma Friends	Community Service Project
NGO	SL-NGO	The Lions Club	CyberCare patron
Volunteer	*YY-Vol	Ex-Intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YS-Vol	Ex-Intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YY-Vol	Ex-Intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	KS-Vol	Ex-Intern & current volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 4
Volunteer	MG-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5

The 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Innovative Communication and Sustainable Development in ASEAN

Volunteer	PQ-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	RM-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	DP-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	J-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Orphanage (administrator)	JS-OA	Orphanage 1	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	P-OA	Orphanage 2	YLM Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	RAI-OA	Orphanage 3	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	SLO-OA	Orphanage 4	Camp Vision Singapore
Orphanage (administrator)	ER-OA	Orphanage 5	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	AK-OA	Orphanage 6	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	DZ-OA	Orphanage 7	Care4U & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	AT-OA	Orphanage 8	YLM & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	TT-OA	Orphanage 9	Camp Vision Singapore

\*Joint Interview



## Appendix 11- Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 2 (7 pages)

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### Engaging Underprivileged Children in Collaborative Partnership via a Curriculum

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#### Abstract

Curriculum is one of the collaborative partnership strategies used in the community efforts to develop the underprivileged children in Malaysia. This curriculum was developed by the community members to assist community partnership efforts to impart ICT knowledge and skills, personal development elements, and encourage learners to contribute to the society via a CSP. Based on the available documents, this paper examines how the curriculum is able to bring the stakeholders together in the collaborative partnerships, and how underprivileged children are engaged in the efforts. This analysis will focus on the distinctive conjunction of personal development, ICT, and community service elements in the curriculum.

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**Keywords:** Curriculum; children; collaborative partnership; ICT; community service.

#### 1. Introduction

Information communication technologies (ICTs) have grown rapidly in Malaysia due to positive support, especially from the government and corporate sectors in terms of policy buildings, financial allocation, putting up resources in place, and offering affordable Internet access. Since its independent in 1957, the development programmes of Malaysia have been conducted through five-year development plans according to the needs and resources of the country within those specific periods. Currently, the country is in its Tenth Development Plan

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(2011-2015), ICT is considered as one of the twelve National Key Economic Areas, the approach taken to transform the country into high income economy based on specialisation (*Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015*, 2010). However, this constructive development also instils a fear that some segments of the society like children in orphanages might be left behind. These children will also be referred as underprivileged children throughout the discussion of this paper. They are being considered as underprivileged because they are being placed in orphanages due to various family issues, lacking in education and struggling with a lot of emotional and psychological problems.

Realising the importance of including these children alongside national ICT development, CyberCare initiated community collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders to serve the children through numerous programmes and activities since 1998 (Muda, 2009). The stakeholders involved are ranging from orphanage administrators, corporations, government, volunteers, and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The children in orphanages are considered as indirect stakeholders because when the organisation was set up, it centred around one specific orphanage and there is no child in its board members (Muda, 2009). Based on a qualitative case study of collaborative partnership in CyberCare, this paper mainly focuses on the curriculum used in carrying out Care4U programme. This paper identifies how the curriculum gets the stakeholders to work together in the collaborative partnership, and how underprivileged children are engaged in collaborative partnership efforts. It begins with the background of *Mengecap Aspirasi Diri-MAD* (Living my Aspirations) curriculum, followed by the theoretical review of collaborative partnership and curriculum components, and the analysis of MAD content.

## 2. Background of MAD curriculum

The MAD Curriculum was first developed for the purpose of a project called *Menguasai Aplikasi Internet dan PC- M.A.I.N.PC* (Mastering Internet and PC applications), organised by the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry Malaysia (PIKOM) with seven key partners including four corporations, one government sector, and two NGOs with a vision to bridge digital divides between urban and rural communities (*MAD Curriculum* 2008). Each partner has its own specific responsibility in the implementation of the project.

All of the corporate stakeholders involved including PIKOM were actually the main key players in the ICT industries nationally and internationally. Their involvement mainly in supporting the smooth running of the curriculum implementation by providing facilities and infrastructure, computer hardware and software, sponsorships, technical support and maintenance, and Internet connection. The government stakeholder involved in providing telecentre and computer training facility. The other NGO served as a patron to CyberCare at that time and involved in controlling the account flow, and providing volunteers and network support. CyberCare was responsible to develop, design, and implement the training curriculum, and conduct pilot studies to test the suitability and effectiveness of the training curriculum.

The uniqueness of MAD curriculum lies in the incorporation of three distinct elements of personal development, ICT and community service. It incorporates personal development aspects together with ICT learning in order to help individuals to increase their self-confidence, positive beliefs, motivation, and other positive values while mastering ICT skills. These have come into focus based on the experiences and difficulties faced by the stakeholders involved in serving the children during the early years. Ultimately, this curriculum aims to raise public's awareness on community service and involvement in contributing to the society.

## 3. Collaborative partnership and curriculum

Pertaining to partnership, there are many definitions given from diverse field of knowledge. As simply defined by Frank and Smith (2006), partnership is about people working together in a mutually beneficial relationship which oftentimes doing things together that might not be able to be achieved alone. This implies the sharing of resources, work, risk, responsibility, decision-making, power, benefits and burdens. Viewing from inclusive education Todd (2007) asserts that partnership between children and young people, with parents and professionals is clearly very important for the development of inclusion, and the challenge is to move beyond the conceptual notions of partnership towards collaborative practices experienced by all parties. Brown et al. (2002) discuss the changes in how the people or service providers put their efforts to improve outcomes for children where they came to adopt collaborative partnership. Osborne and Murray (2000) stress that collaborative partnership does not have to involve equitable power relationships but all partners have a significant contribution to make. These demonstrate that, depending on situations, it is important for the stakeholders to find ways to work with each other to sustain their

collaborative works. One of the ways is by using a tool such as a curriculum to provide them with the means of getting together and contribute.

Based on a more formal structure of curriculum in school education system, Beauchamp (1982) views three legitimate uses of the word curriculum as referring to a document prepared for purposes of describing the goals, scope and sequence of culture content selected for purposes of attaining the selected goals, a curriculum system which has its purposes on the development of a curriculum, organised implementation and evaluation of that curriculum, and as a field of study. Eash (1991) believes that the holistic effect of a curriculum derives from the integration of its components similar to the interactive orchestration of component systems in the human body. Hence, he provides five widely agreed upon components which are in line with Beauchamp (1982) definition of curriculum.

The first component concerns the learner and society as a framework. It is the first guiding construct among curriculum planners in determining learner's ability, needs, interest, motivation, and potential for learning particular cultural content. The second guiding construct is society's orientation to nurturing or using the individual which describes the society's preferences over individual. The assumptions guiding the choices in provisioning components of the curriculum largely emerge in the answer to the questions of whether a curriculum is to be based on: 1) the needs of the learner, 2) the needs of the society, or 3) a position that is a reconciliation of the two. The second involves aims and objectives (purposes). Aims and objectives become significant for they assume a directing relationship to the provisioning of the subsequent components. They evolve and change as cultures and their participants change. The issue which concern scholars such as Eash (1991) is the curricula inadequacy in reflecting these changes and how to keep a curriculum up to date.

The third deals with content or subject matter with its choice, scope, and sequence (learning experiences). Guided by knowledge of learners' abilities and a position on society's requirements of learners' knowledge of subject matter, the curriculum planner exercises selection in the choice of subject matter and develops a scope, the range of the subject matter to be studied, and sequence in which the subject matter is to be studied. These selections are translated through materials like textbooks, curriculum guides and other directives to teachers and learners. In this case, MAD curriculum is the learning experiences that have been compiled into the modules to guide the coach and learners involved in the programme.

The fourth discusses the modes of transaction, for example methodology and learning environment (organisation). They are designed to accompany the presentation of subject matter. They are viewed as major determinants in learners' outcomes especially as they affect attitudes of students as well as content mastery. As suggested by Joyce and Weil, the role of the teacher and learner in the transaction of learning and their respective degree of choice in determining the modes of learning, for instance learner active/ learner passive or verbal mode/ symbolic mode may provide further classifications of direct or indirect modes of transaction (as cited in Eash, 1991). Modes of transactions in the MAD curriculum involve a cycle: the passing down of the learning experiences from the coach/ coaches of Cybertcare to undergraduate university interns, and then to underprivileged children and the cycle will continue when these children will be able to contribute back to the community. The final component is evaluation. As an integral element to a curriculum, evaluation may give emphasis to providing the individual with information on performance to guide the learner to the next steps in the sequence of the subject matter. The evaluation is thus related as a guide to modes of transaction and sequencing.

## 5. Content of the curriculum

The curriculum focuses on three main elements of personal development (PD), ICT skills, and CSP. It is the product of collaborative partnerships which builds collaborative partnerships as well. In brief, the structure and content of the curriculum are presented in *Figure 1*.

### 5.1. Structure of coaching and approach

The structure of coaching and approach serves as guidelines for coaches and facilitators involve in the programme. This section is further divided into four substructures of coaching, approach, building rapport, and introducing MAD Curriculum. The first substructure emphasises the need to have a lead coach and facilitators to run each coaching session. It clarifies clearly about the roles and functions of the lead coach/ coach and facilitator including the issues they need to be aware of in the programme. Among the important points, a coach is reminded to



respect and accept the learners as they are, treat them equally, and observe appropriate ethical conducts to remain objective.



Fig. 1: The structure and content of MAD curriculum.

### 5.2. Main modules (Personal development)

This section includes three main modules of passion and motivation, belief and feelings, and focus. In the first module, passion and motivation, the objectives are to help instill passion and motivation among learners towards ICT learning, and to ensure learners are ready and excited to start their journey throughout the curriculum. It is carried out in six sessions. In each session, it mentions the objective, duration, activities, and also material if there is any. Additionally, in goal setting session, the coach gives lecture based on S.M.A.R.T goal setting: S - specific/ special, M - measurable/ meaningful, A - achievable/ as if now, R - realistic/ relevant, and T - timely/ tangible. At the end of session, learners are asked and guided to fill in the form about their goals based on SMART technique.

The second module aims to change learners' limiting beliefs to empowering ones. It contains three sessions: 1) cause and effect for the learners to learn about living on causes and not effects of life; 2) limiting beliefs for the learners to identify limiting beliefs that often come into their minds and to change; and 3) empowering beliefs to expose the learners to empowering beliefs that can help them realise their goals. Rather than filling each session with facts only, the coach is encouraged to share his/her personal experience relating to the concept as well, and to explain the concept of detaching and not taking negative comments personally to avoid misunderstanding.

The third module is designed to help learners to focus on their goals once they have set them, and equipped with constructive beliefs that they can achieve them. It is carried out in four sessions which begins with creating awareness of focusing to achieve a goal, and ends with the learners' reflections on what they have learnt and how they would apply it in their lives. As in the previous modules, this module also highlights some potential problems and suggestions, and the thoughts from the trained coaches.

### 5.3. Main module (ICT)

This main module of ICT (mastery) is the fourth module in this curriculum and contains eight ICT focused sessions. It aims to equip learners with ICT knowledge in theory and application. It begins with preparation session to teach the learners about taking initiative to prepare them for the ICT lessons. The first ICT session begins with the learning of computer fundamentals, and paint and notepad. After that the learners involve in the detachment session where they learn how to give and accept feedback constructively. The coach guides the learners by using comparison examples. At the same time the coach is also aware of the potential problems and how to deal with that.

Then, the intensive learning of ICT continues with second ICT sessions focuses on Microsoft word, third ICT session focuses on both Microsoft word and Microsoft excel. The fourth ICT session focuses on Microsoft Power Point. The learners start to learn Internet application in the fifth ICT session onwards. It starts with the learning of

how to search information online, use email, to how to create and update blog. The learners also start to create a proposal for CSP in the sixth ICT session. And in the final ICT session, the learners apply all of the knowledge and skills they have in preparing for CSP such as preparing power point slides, letter, and flyer.

#### 5.4. Main module (CSP)

In this fifth module, the learners have to apply all the learning in personal development and ICT training to make a difference to themselves and also outside themselves. Specifically, this CSP module aims to: i. Enable the learners to put into practice what they have learned and apply it in real-life setting; ii. Instil teamwork among the learners; and iii. Build strong character among the learners. CSP module includes the sessions of group formation, finding a project, organisation of project, publicity, managing the volunteers, preparation, project kick-off, and post-mortem. Each of the sessions is having its specific objective(s) and instructions of how it should be carried out.

#### 5.5. Supplementary and recommendation modules

This final section contains ice-breaking and team building modules. These two modules act as supplementary to the main modules mentioned above. In the Ice-breaking module, some activities and games are suggested to help relax the learners and bring them into the mood of excitement. They can be used to illustrate certain concepts that the coach wishes to explain. The team-building module helps the learners to develop a sense of teamwork among them in achieving a common objective.

In the recommendation section, the curriculum developers are aware of some weaknesses of the curriculum. They are concern that the curriculum might not be suitable to all age groups especially young children who might not fully understand concepts like limiting beliefs or exercises like visualisation to fully benefit from the curriculum. This curriculum only acts as a guideline for coaches, and is not rigid where coaches have to follow exactly of what is stated.

### 6. Discussion

This collaborative partnership involves various stakeholders of different backgrounds in an agreement to bridge digital divides between urban and rural communities. CyberCare has come to focus on underprivileged children. The content of the curriculum and its plan of implementation show that each of the stakeholders – both in ICT and human services areas – are able to benefit from the partnership.

As the concept of partnership focuses on significant contribution of the stakeholders involved rather than equitable power relationship (Osborne & Murray, 2000), I will argue that this curriculum will able to align them together and maintain their partnership in the long run as they are able to share the same vision for ICT and community besides other differences, and this involves doing things together that might not be able to be achieved alone (Frank & Smith, 2006). This curriculum will not be able to be developed and implemented if it is not because of various contributions made by the stakeholders who collaborate in the partnership. In this case of collaborative partnership, CyberCare and its volunteers ranging from university students to life coaches were involved with the designing and implementing the curriculum.

Applying the concept of curriculum components as explained by Eash (1991), the way the curriculum focused on developing the children with the personal strength, ICT and community service skills have demonstrated the stakeholders' chosen framework of assumptions. In this discussion, the learners' guiding construct is simply referred to the needs of the learners that include the intern students and children from orphanages, and the society's guiding construct is further specified into the needs of the stakeholders and the general society. The needs of the learners are the main concern in constructing this curriculum. Among them as being portrayed in the curriculum are learners' needs to develop their abilities, strengths, and potentials as individuals and leaders, to become confidence, know their goals, have empowering beliefs, and have ICT knowledge and skills. These needs are relevant considering this curriculum is also targeted for use for underprivileged children. As the main developers were also the intern students of Psychology who have gone through the coaching programme, the content of the curriculum also highlighted some important terms with scholarly defined explanations such as various terms used for rapport building. In term of stakeholder needs, the focus of the curriculum on ICT reflected the corporation orientations, which are the key players of ICT industries. It serves their needs in marketing their products, creating demands, increasing sales, and

developing social capital for their future needs for human resource. Supporting community related activities can also help them in creating and developing the image of the corporations and serve their purposes of corporate social responsibility.

The content of the curriculum as a whole demonstrates the general needs of the general society. These needs are mostly related to the accepted values and ethical conducts, and other significant needs of the society. For instance, in introducing the learners to the curriculum, the structure of coaching and approach are explained clearly. In that part, the emphasis is being put on the roles of the individual subjects of the curriculum, particularly the coach and learner. It explains what the coach should do and what the coach should not do where the coach is reminded of societal values that should be observed and ethical issues that should be avoided.

Purposes of the curriculum are clearly stated in the curriculum which reflect a construct provisioned for a sequence of study (training) and map out the arena for a teacher's (in this case refers to a coach) directed effort (Eash, 1991). The aims and objectives of the whole MAD curriculum are divided into its general aim to bridge digital divides between urban and rural communities, main aim to encourage learners to contribute to the society with their ICT knowledge that they have acquired into the execution of the CSP, and long term aim to increase public's awareness on community service and participation among the society. Then in each specific module, each specific objective is mentioned. Some modules have specific objective from session to session. All these purposes reflected the assumptions of the learner and society needs mentioned in the discussion of the first component earlier. As this curriculum means to provide modules to guide coach and learner in the process of achieving collaborative partnership vision, the curriculum really served the purpose. The curriculum developer also aware about the important to keep the purposes up to date according to the needs as it is mentioned at the end of the curriculum section that the curriculum is not a final one and it is open to change in the future.

Although the terms used and roles are explained precisely (coach, lead coach, and facilitator), some are used without further explanation like the terms animator and ICT trainer/ trainer, and assistant. In an occasion, the word animator is mentioned together with the coach: "The coach and animators deliver the concepts that they have prepared." Here it shows that the coach and animator are different people but it is not clear if animator is also play the role of facilitator.

In other passages ICT trainer/ trainer and assistant are also mentioned together (John, 2003):

- Trainers should know how to balance the speed so that fast learners would not feel bored while slow learners would not find it hard to catch up.
- It is highly advisable to have a main ICT trainer with as many assistants as possible to give personal attention to each learner.

It is no clear explanation anywhere in the curriculum whether ICT trainer/ trainer and assistant can be the same people who serve the role as a coach or facilitator too. In the explanation of the ways that can be used to build rapport, the verbal and nonverbal effects of communication upon other people, which claimed to be based on a research are clearly described with certain percentages given. However, the exact details of the source are not clearly mentioned, which make it looks like a made-up story rather than a convincing fact.

Based on Eash (1991) explanation, the organisation of the subject matter and the plan of implementation of MAD curriculum are the key factors that demonstrate the modes of transaction of MAD curriculum. How the content is being delivered and who are the people involved in the process are showed. This is one of the significant parts to see how the stakeholders are brought together in the collaborative partnership via a curriculum. Generally, the methods of content delivery are planned to flow in cycle.

Then the content flows from the first cycle to the second cycle involving the learners. Here, the learners refer to the undergraduate student interns in CyberCare. Using the same curriculum they have been trained with, these learners will become coaches and deliver the curriculum content to underprivileged children in orphanages who formed the third cycle. At this stage the interns are still having connection with their coaches. Whenever they face a problem in the process, they will consult their coaches.

Together with the children, the interns plan a CSP to be carried out at the end of their internship period of fourteen weeks. For the purpose of the project planning, they put together what they have learnt throughout the modules into practice and acquiring the leadership skills. This CSP project is the stage where many other stakeholders involving members of the community, NGOs, orphanage administrators, corporate and government sectors are brought together in the realisation of the project. It is also the stage where the interns and children are becoming closer to the community. On the event, they can show the community that they can make a difference.



This curriculum is also designed to see that in the end the underprivileged children involved will be able to come back and contribute to the community.

After the finished of the CSP, the coaches, interns, and children will celebrate their accomplishment together. The interns will carry out a post-mortem with the children, and the coaches will carry out a post-mortem with the interns, and this is where the final component of evaluation is involved. Some of the feedbacks from the previous interns are mentioned in the explanation of the modules of the curriculum as well which are seemed like testimonials to promote the programme and curriculum. The coaches will also conduct the individual assessment on each intern and the reports of their performances will be sent to their university. Based on the current format of evaluation, it is seemed that the evaluation of the curriculum is being sought from the selective stakeholders only. What is lacking is the thorough evaluation from all stakeholders involved in the programme and the members of the community. In order for the curriculum and programme to be improved in future, the specific format on how the evaluation should be done and analysed has to be constructed as well.

The focus of the curriculum on the three main elements of PD, ICT skills, and CSP in engaging underprivileged children in the collaborative partnership representing a new approach of developing a community, and with commitment of all stakeholders involved to implement the documented curriculum, it can be a good example for a community project which makes meaningful use of ICT. However the stakeholders' vision in constructing a curriculum which is "to bridge digital divides between urban and rural communities" needs to be reviewed. It is because the issue of digital divide is highly debatable.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has shown that it is beneficial for the community project that involved various stakeholders with different backgrounds like CyberCare to have a comprehensive written guideline such as a curriculum to align them together under a similar purpose, so as to provide a clear direction of their collaboration, and to help them to carry out their role in an organised manner. More people have realised that to prevent or close the digital divide among the children or individuals, providing them with the ICT skills or access alone may not be the best solution. What is more effective is to include both human and technological aspects in the process as CyberCare framework which include the combination of personal development, ICT knowledge and skills, and CSP. Studying the content of the curriculum alone is not the best way to identify the engagement of the children and people involved. What can certainly be identified is the ways the curriculum designers intended to engage the learners. Thus it is important for us to observe the implementation process as well.

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## Appendix 12- Peer reviewed/ refereed Paper 3 (12 pages)

Muda, Suhaini (2009, 4-6 November) *Empowering underprivileged children through community informatics: partnership strategy of an electronic community in Malaysia*. Paper presented at Prato CIRN Community Informatics Conference 2009, Prato, Italy. (Partially incorporated in Chapter Two)

Prato CIRN Community Informatics Conference 2009: Refereed Paper

### **Empowering underprivileged children through community informatics: partnership strategy of an electronic community in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** The rapid expansion of Information Communications Technology (ICT) globally has brought advantages and opportunities worldwide and also to the Malaysian society. Besides offering greater potential for human advancement, the global technological breakthroughs are accompanied by concerns of increasing digital divide (DD). Therefore, effort should be taken to reduce the DD at the earlier stage since the failure to tackle the DD and to increase ICT skills in the immediate future could reduce the ability of the people to compete effectively in many important areas. Children in orphanages who are normally being viewed as underprivileged segment of the society are highly possible to be excluded from the ICT development. In this case, collaborative partnership (CP) is taken as one of the approaches that could be used to include them in the effort to bridge the DD. Based on the analysis of available documents and interview, this paper presents a structure of a community informatics for empowering underprivileged children in Malaysia, and discusses the roles played by various stakeholders that keep them working together in an electronic community (eCommunity). This is a part of the initial findings of the ongoing research on a case study of an eCommunity in Malaysia.

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the structure of collaborative partnership (CP) of an electronic community (CyberCare Electronic Community - CEC) in Malaysia. It is based mainly in the urban area of Klang Valley. In order to bridge the digital divide (DD), CEC employs CP strategy with the utilisation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to empower the underprivileged children (children in orphanages) in Malaysia. The application of CP strategy by community initiatives is considered as an emerging trend in carrying out a community development project (CDP) in Malaysia, as most of the previous CDPs were handled by the public sectors alone. Involvement from other parties in the past was at a minimum level. There is also the lack of studies of CP in community informatics (CI) that focus on children. As a part of the initial findings, this study is important for the researcher to obtain a preliminary understanding of CP strategy in a chosen organisation by beginning with the study of its structure. The findings will also provide the new insights of the emerging practice in empowering children.

Since 1991, Malaysia has started to emphasise on ICT as focal area in the country's policies and development plans. For instance, its five-year development plans such as: Vision 2020, the National Information Technology Council (NITC) ("Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991-1995," 1991), the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA), and Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) ("Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000," 1996) provide specific tasks and frameworks towards the advancement of ICT in the country. Despite bringing advantages to the society, such deployment of ICT also contributed to the growing issues of DD. This problem arises because the ICT breakthroughs offer greater potential of advancement only for people who have access to the technology and technology know-how. In Malaysia, the children in orphanages are community



regarded as underprivileged segment in a society. Without proper intervention, the DD is going to increase among these children. This state of social exclusion caused by the DD could be reduced, as suggested by Keeble (2003), by using ICT to build and extend communication links and enabling improved access to information sources and services.

CP, a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain (London, 1995) is one of the strategies that could be used in placing effort to close the DD. The initiative by CEC through its CP is one of the efforts taken to bridge the DD among the children in orphanages. This CP represents the most challenging efforts as it involves new relationship among the orphans, orphanage administrators, service organisation, corporations, volunteers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government. In the process, each stakeholder must find a way to proceed in consistent with its community and unique set of circumstances.

Therefore, the remainder of the paper discusses the conceptual framework of this research. Afterwards, the method is explained briefly. Then, the findings continue with the discussion of partnership and stakeholders' roles which shaped the structure of CEC. Finally, the paper summarises the discussion with suggestion for future research.

## Conceptual Framework

CP is viewed as a process through which partners who see different facets of a problem are able to constructively explore their differences and search solutions beyond their perceived possibility (London, 1995). Osborne and Murray (2000) stress that CP does not have to involve equitable power relationships but all partners have a significant contribution to make.

Based on the report of Family Support America in 1996, Brown et al. (2002) observe the changes in how the people or service providers put their efforts to improve outcomes for children. They view that in previous years those people concentrated only on children. In contrast, numerous service providers now have come to understand that the best way to serve and preserve children is to serve and preserve the supportive networks that benefit children. As a solution, many communities established CP involving all relevant partners closest to the children in serving the children (Brown et al., 2002).

In analysing a partnership structure of CEC, there are five key dimensions that can be combined to form a set of characteristics of a partnership. These dimensions are useful in categorising classes of partnerships and for understanding a particular partnership arrangement. These dimensions include (McQuaid, 2000):

1. What the partnership is seeking to do – it deals with the purpose of entering into partnership which could be strategic driven, concerning major long-term issues or project driven, involving only specific projects.
2. Who is involved - the key actors involved and their relationship structure in the partnership.
3. When - the life stage that the partnership is in, involving the changing relationships and activities over time.
4. Where or whom - the power base of the partnership arrangement. It may focus on different scales of geographical area or on particular client group area.
5. How the activities are carried out – the implementation mechanisms of who does what and how in management

Gurstein (2000; 2007) defines full wording of CI short form as the applications of ICT to enable and empower community processes. In enabling and empowering community processes, he clarifies that ICT makes the achievement of community objectives to overcome DD possible.

He also mentions about the importance of examining the conditions of ICT access, which is to ensure that ICT access can be functional to the excluded populations and communities. Therefore, ICT is used to support a community to achieve its specific goals.

The increasing development of CI has changed the perspective of CI players where they started to recognise that access to ICT itself is not sufficient. What is further needed is to make meaningful access of ICT. Thus, more CI projects are searching a way to make meaningful access to ICT. CEC which based on CP strategy is one of the examples of such CI projects.

## Method

This is an exploratory part of a case study research for a doctorate degree which aims to examine the structure of CEC. The researcher collected and analysed the related documents for three months (April-July 2009). The documents are collected mainly from the archive of Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (LCCKL) and its website. The documents collected consist of newspaper articles, press releases, speeches, constitution of LCCKL, formal letters consisting communication between stakeholders, meeting minutes, posters of past activities, and pages from the websites. The documents dated from 1999 to 2009. The most current newspaper articles dated in 2007. Then the documents are sorted and arranged chronologically, according to the published dates. Afterwards, the documents were sorted and selected further to match their content to the research objectives. For the purpose of examining the CP strategy in CEC structure, nine newspaper articles, five web pages, and a club constitution were sorted and reviewed. Then, the content of each article is analysed to answer the research questions and the themes are created. The researcher also added some input from an interview that has been conducted with the Director of LCCKL, and the data is added to the themes accordingly.

## Partnership and the Roles of Stakeholders

In 1999, LCCKL, together with its partners Hitechniaga Sdn Bhd and Microsoft Sdn Bhd planned to build a New Millennium eCity which aims to link 25 orphanages across the country under CEC project (Devi, 1999). The eCity provides all of the elements that exist in a physical city such as resources for education, entertainment, business and commerce through the use of IT. LCCKL's president envisions, "CEC is about smart partnerships and linking the children of the world to nurture a global culture of sharing, caring, love, and leadership to realise their infinite possibilities" (Devi, 1999). The CEC which comprises of children, orphanage administrators, corporations, government sectors and the community-at-large are able to interact online, crossing traditional barriers to communication and learning (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999). In other words, it explains that CEC aims to help transform the culture of receiving to community care where children are proud to lead and serve the community.

Viewing the corporate commitment to eCity project at that time, Benedict Lee, Managing Director of Microsoft Malaysia stresses:

Our partnership with CEC is for long term. We want to give people the ability to access information and knowledge from any device, any time, any place. This is the vision we share, and we all want to see CEC succeed with flying colours (Ching, 1999).

CEC which focuses on training children the ICT skills and facilitates communication between the stakeholders is inviting more participation as mentioned by LCCKL's president, "We will

continue to work together with any interested parties, and we're prepared to go the extra mile to help our children realise the infinite possibilities they possess" (Chong, 2005; Karim, 2005).

During the recent interview with the charter founder and current director of LCCKL, Cheong Yuk Wai (2009) explained that CEC has focused on different areas based on different needs from phase to phase. During the first five years of CEC, the members were focusing on building the trust with the orphanages and getting the children online. They focused on the things that the orphanage administrators can understand like donating computers to the orphanages and trained the children on ICT skills in eWorkshops. As they progress and the orphanage administrators trust them, they started to focus on content and address the real issues that are affecting the children on a more personal level. They also started to introduce more programmes to help the children in orphanages like Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM) and Care for You (C4U) with the curriculum called MAD (*Mengecapai Aspirasi Diri*).

This shows that the stakeholders involved are able to come together to share the same vision for children in CEC. In this instance, both corporations and LCCKL agree to commit for a long-term which means their CP is a strategic driven rather than merely a project driven (McQuaid, 2000). Over time, the stakeholders or potential stakeholders (e.g. home administrators) may change their views and priorities to suit the needs at that time. It helps them to improve the practice. Provided that the stakeholders involved accept the changes, this CP strategy will help maintain the commitment and increase networking among the stakeholders.

CP practice allows CEC to be flexible and cope with a broad array of issues dealing with the children in orphanages. In analysing the partnership structure, it is important to identify precisely the types of actors and the manner in which they contribute to a partnership (McQuaid, 2000). Therefore, the roles and involvement of the range of key actors in CEC are structured as in Figure 1 and further discussion of each follows:

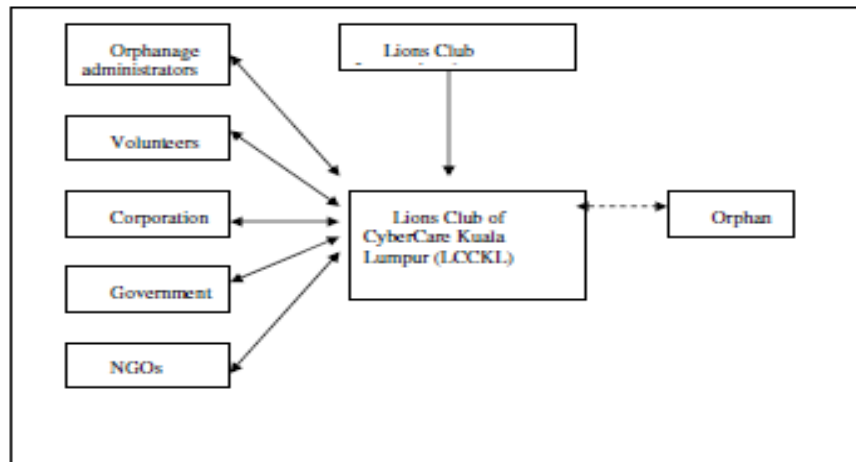


Figure 1: Collaborative Partnership in CyberCare eCommunity Structure

*Lions Club of CyberCare Kuala Lumpur (LCCKL)*

LCCKL has been developed from a CDP called CyberCare. That project was initiated by a group of Malaysians whom aspire to make a difference to the abandoned, abused and orphans in April 1998 (*About Cybercare: Our Vision*, 2007). The organisation was formed when the volunteers realised that they need to be recognised to convince others to work with them (Wai, 2009). From their experience, when they approached orphanages as a group of volunteers, it was not easy for them to get access to the orphans as the orphanage administrators did not trust them. That was how they decided to register themselves with an organisation. They formed LCCKL on 12 December 1998 with its initial founders and members of the club became the board of directors (*About CyberCare: Our Vision and History*).

Under the Lions Club label, LCCKL has to report to the Lions International (*About CyberCare: Our Vision and History*). The different of LCCKL from other Lions Clubs because it focuses on a single ICT project for the orphans rather than fund raising activities. This is clarified by Dr Junedah Sanusi, its Vice President in 2001 (Low, 2001) and Cheong Yuk Wai, its current Director (Wai, 2009). As an organisation, LCCKL is also being governed by the regulations of the Registrar of Society (*About CyberCare: Our Vision and History*). Besides its committed services to the community, that was how it started to gain recognition and confidence from the potential stakeholders.

LCCKL functions as a service organisation in CEC structure. It aligns the stakeholders and serves the children. The board of directors in LCCKL consists of a President, Immediate Past President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Third Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Lion Tamer, Tail Twister, Membership Director and not more than seven elected Directors. All officers, excluding the Immediate Past President shall be elected annually ("Constitution of Kelab Lions Cybercare Kuala Lumpur (The Lions Club of Cybercare Kuala Lumpur)," ).

In February 1999, the creation of a Professional Community Care System allowed the LCCKL to hire a full-time community service team to develop a professional organisational structure, processes and system to carry out the CEC project and refine the CEC initiatives into repeatable community projects that can be adopted by others (*About CyberCare: Our Vision and History*). The project team also assists in coordinating registered volunteers to sustain their participation level as these volunteers are normally working on part-time basis. Overall, the full-time team helps to provide continuity and build momentum to align the efforts of stakeholders and other interested parties to leverage on.

From the range of key actors, LCCKL is the most active key actor in strategising the CP for CEC. The most active role played by LCCKL is in mobilising the CP in CEC. Bailey (McQuaid, 2000) defines mobilisation as the process of creating partnership through a top-down process or a bottom-up catalytic process. Based on the journey of LCCKL, its establishment is based on the local initiatives who involved in the upwards process. They work at the grassroots level, use local resources and address local needs in developing strategies to be recognised and to achieve their shared vision. In the long run, such partnership will reduce external dependency and get more autonomous control (McQuaid, 2000).

*Orphanage administrators*

Orphanage is widely defined as an institution devoted to the care of orphans. Orphans here include children whose parents have deceased or otherwise unable to care for them. According to the Child Act 2001 of Malaysia ("Child Act 2001," 2001), every child is entitled to protection and assistance in all circumstances without regard to any distinction. The Act also acknowledges the family as the fundamental group in society which provides the natural environment for the



growth, support, and well-being of all its members, particularly children. However, in the case of a child is being poorly treated by the family, or in the absence of family member to take charge, he/she is considered as a child in need of care and protection. Hence, placing this child in an orphanage is one way of providing him/her for care and housing.

In orphanages, people who are responsible to look after them are called administrators. They are similar to caregivers or caretakers in a psychological term. A caregiver refers to a person who has responsibility for meeting the physical and psychological needs of an infant, child or dependent adult ("Caregiver," 1998). In Malaysia, the orphanage administrators may be the founders or just administrative staff. These are the people who have dedicated their lives spending time and taking care of the orphans. They are the people LCCKL has to go through to get contact with the orphans. Even most of them want only the best for the children under their care; the fact is that, most of them provide only the most basic custodial care, neglecting the social-emotional needs of the children as shared by the director of LCCKL from his experience.

Using ICT as a tool in CEC, LCCKL aims to link all orphanages in Malaysia in order to fill up the space that is neglected before. In the process, LCCKL links the orphanages by stages. In the beginning of its vision to improve the quality of child lives and help them to be part of the information age (Devi, 1999), LCCKL has set up network with five orphanages in Klang Valley with its own initial fund of RM20,000 (Low, 2001; Ramli, 2005). By the time LCCKL was able to link up with the Lions Club International in December 1998, the Club had already linked up seven orphanages. In 1999, twelve orphanages in the Klang Valley participated in the programme (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999). At that time, LCCKL aimed to expand its network to twenty five orphanages across the country by the end of the first quarter of 2000 and to involve more than 500 children (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999). Early 2000, it has linked fifteen orphanages through the Internet (M., 2000). In 2001, more than 33 orphanages linked to the platform (Low, 2001). Since 2005, it has successfully linked ninety orphanages with over 5000 youths in Malaysia (Chong, 2005; Ying, 2005).

Here, we can see that the number of participating orphanages in CEC is increasing from time to time. The results are created in stages. In the beginning, when the orphanage administrators were new to LCCKL or the idea of CEC or CP, it was not easy to get them involve. At some points, when LCCKL has developed trust between the prospective stakeholders, the involvement from the orphanages started to increase. All these happened in stages and once the trust is developed, the stakeholders will continue to collaborate or they might cease to involve. Eventually, McQuaid (2000) viewed that key individuals may change their views as well as the peoples' priorities and role in partnership.

#### *Children/Orphans*

The children have been placed in orphanages for various reasons. The studies of orphanages in Malaysia show that the major factors that are normally contribute to the children to be placed in orphanages are due to the parent being a single parent (59%) and children having the broken families (23%) (*The Community: Children*). While other contributing factors as revealed by the same studies include pure orphans – deceased parents (7%), poor families who live below the poverty line (5%), abandoned (5%), and delinquent (1%).

Based on LCCKL's source, the age range for children in 108 orphanages in Malaysia is between four to eighteen years old. The orphanages are providing shelters, food and clothing to over 6000 children from disadvantaged background. According to Wai (2009), most of them enter orphanages at the age of ten and above and did not receive proper education before that. When they are placed in orphanages, they will be sent to attend schools to equip them with education like the rest of other children. Irrespective of their knowledge level, they are admitted into classes with children of their own age in school. Thus, a number of these children are not

able to catch up with the school lessons like the rest of other children in schools. That has resulted to the high rate of schools' drop out among these children at young age.

Besides lacking in education, these children are also struggling with their emotional and psychological drawbacks. Taking one of the orphanages in Malaysia as an example, Datin Elsie Das, Honorary Secretary and Chairman of Education Committee from Rumah Ozanam gave the fact about the children under her care. She explained that many children of Rumah Ozanam come from disadvantaged backgrounds where they have been neglected and abused and thus, they tend to have various emotional and psychological needs, and very low self-esteem (Chong, 2005).

Furthermore, Wai explained about the children's performance in school based on their public examination achievements. He says:

Students from underprivileged homes performed well in the UPSR (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah*-Primary School Assessment) and PMR (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah*-Lower Secondary Assessment) examinations, but not in the SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*-Malaysia Certificate of Education) and STPM (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia*- Higher School Certificate) examinations. Based on a study conducted with Microsoft, we've found that most of these children do not think about higher education (Karim, 2005; Ramli, 2005).

Realising all the problems and needs of these orphans, LCCKL has been reaching out to underprivileged children since 1998, through CEC to improve the IT-literacy among the children, and at the same time, instilling confidence and leadership skills in them (Ching, 1999; Chong, 2005; Devi, 1999; M., 2000; Ramli, 2005).

In CEC structure, orphans are considered as stakeholders too but they are not direct stakeholders (Wai, 2009). It is because when LCCKL is set up, it centred around one specific orphanage where they do what they can for one orphanage. CEC does not have a child in its board member and the child does not tell them what to do. LCCKL only discovers what the children want through the volunteers' interaction with them in various programmes. In the end LCCKL would like to see the future without orphans in orphanages. That means, if there is an orphan, he or she will be adopted into a real home with a real family (Wai, 2009). That is why the dotted line is used to connect the orphans and LCCKL in figure 1.

Based on spatial dimension of partnership (McQuaid, 2000), children in orphanages are the focus of CP in CEC structure. They mostly reside in the urban areas of the country. The main focus of this partnership is to transform their life conditions in a long term.

#### *Volunteers*

Volunteers in CEC are the members of LCCKL who called themselves CARE team and have the ambitious plan for orphans (Ching, 1999). Since 1999, LCCKL has rallied the support of more than 800 volunteers with an average age of 22 to 30 to journey with the children in various activities to develop personal qualities and leadership (*About CyberCare*, 2007).

There are many ways to volunteer for CEC. The public can volunteer to be eMentor or teacher (Ching, 1999). eMentor is for a child to have someone he/she can interact with, and can trust to seek friendship, advice and support. A volunteer is also responsible to teach computer skills and other activities such as handicraft to children. The volunteer can also be eFoster parent to sponsor a child financially and at the same time give him/her emotional support and guidance via Internet (chat or video conferencing) (Ching, 1999). Others may involve donating computer equipment or providing computer maintenance and consultation training services for free, sponsoring Internet

line, advertising on LCCKL website, and contributing to ongoing fundraising project of CEC (Ching, 1999).

CEC also attracts volunteers through its existing stakeholders, mainly corporations (Wai, 2009). One of its strong stakeholders in CEC is a private institution which provides its members to volunteer with LCCKL. Wai (2009) also mentioned that the main challenge in getting volunteer involvement is to get someone who is committed to contribute time and share love with the children.

As these volunteers are heterogeneous, they may have different purposes (McQuaid, 2000) too. Some may come because they are attracted to a single programme, others may be caused of a long term programme. Some may come to give while some come to get. Whatever the purpose is, normally it will determine their involvement. For instance, if they come for a single programme, they may choose to leave after the programme finished. However, the purpose may change over time. As in the case of CEC which contains many single programmes to be carried out continuously, a volunteer who might initially come to join a single programme may continue to volunteer in a long term if that single programme attracts him/her to give commitment for a long term.

#### *Corporation*

The long term involvement of Microsoft in CEC is made viable through the Microsoft Foundation Campaign as Benedict Lee, Managing Director of Microsoft Malaysia at that time says:

Microsoft's long-term involvement with CEC is made possible through the Microsoft Foundation Campaign which is the corporate philanthropy arm of Microsoft Malaysia. As at mid September, the company has donated RM383000 worth of software, hardware and service to CEC. This includes software and hardware upgrades, multimedia PCs and Internet access, and training for orphanage administrators and the children (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999).

The company's mission of developing Asia's most successful e-commerce community has called Hitechniaga to get involve with CEC. According to Han K. Hoh, Hitechniaga chief operating officer at that time, "By sponsoring CEC, we want to help the children who are in need and prepare them for a future based on e-communities" (Devi, 1999). As Han and Cheong Yuk Wai, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Hitechniaga mentioned, their corporate involvement includes donation of office premises and equipment, sponsorship of full facility management for the hosting and operation of all web initiatives and provision of technology development support for all orphanages from its Technology Service Centre nationwide (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999).

Microsoft also shows its commitment further when the company also involved in awarding scholarship to the excellent students under its Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award (MUPSA). At the LCCKL Award Ceremony, where the students received MUPSA, Butt Wai Choon, Managing Director of Microsoft Malaysia at that time says, "We acknowledge that we as corporation can play a vital role to enhance the learning experience" (Karim, 2005). Scholarship recipients are awarded a yearly grant of up to RM10000 which covers tuition, board and lodging. The disbursement however subjected to the nature of the course. Microsoft has pledged to commit RM500000 to the CyberCare's Education Excellence Programme, and at that time, has disbursed about RM225000 (Karim, 2005).

Samsung has also involved in CEC project. Under its DigitAll Hope programme, Samsung supported YLM programme for underprivileged children in 2005. With the theme "Imagine a



brighter tomorrow today", Digital Hope aimed at enriching the lives of the underprivileged through technology and technological advancement to bridge the DD. Samsung has been funding community projects in Southeast Asia and Australia through Digital Hope. Since 2003, it has contributed RM6.3 million to the regional social programme (Chong, 2005; Yoon, 2005). Hewlett-Packard and Dell have also sponsored orphanages under CEC network with a minimum of one to two computers each (Ying, 2005).

Based on his experience, Wai (2009) noticed that in the beginning two years of LCCKL establishment, the focus of LCCKL is to put ICT infrastructures for the orphans in orphanages. At that time a lot of big corporations were willing to collaborate by sponsoring computers and other material things. But when CEC progress and focus more on Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM), he realised that corporations do not like difficult things. Most corporations only want orphanages to focus on material things and do not want to be associated with child-related issues.

The ICT policy animators viewed that the private sector's contribution is crucial to the development of policy and implementing long-term solutions (Adam, James, & Wanjira, 2007). It is because they believe that the private sector is able to bring into the partnership the culture of initiative, innovation, implementation and risk-taking that is critical for implementing successful policy outcomes. LCCKL's decision to include corporations to become part of the stakeholders in CEC is considered as a smart move. They continue to make a more lasting and deeper positive impact on children and society in the future by sponsoring an ongoing project.

Simultaneously, the stakeholders should also know how to handle their differences. London (1995) points out about the need for different stakeholders to explore their differences and search solutions constructively. In this situation, we can see that how stakeholders making decisions in continuing their CP in CEC. That is all depending on how they deal with their differences and come out with the solutions. The stakeholders who can see the reason for continuing may remain and the ones who can hardly see it anymore may choose to leave.

#### *Government*

Government makes laws, gives direction by mapping out policies, implements and enforces rules, and settle dispute arising from rules enacted (Molen & Salam, 2005). In Malaysian context, the government is very visionary with the country's development as can be seen in its development policies.

In early 1998, NITC introduces the Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS), which provides grants to deserving projects under the demonstrator applications programme ("Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005," 2001). In 1999, CEC was selected as one of the national eCommunity building projects eligible for the DAGS under the auspices of the NITC. DAGS has allocated about RM500000 to fund a full time project team of the National Pilot Programme (NPP) to Seed an eCommunity of orphanages for one full year. It supports the NPP to meet the objectives in using ICT to improve the quality of underprivileged children's lives (Ching, 1999; Devi, 1999).

Tan Sri Leo Moggie, the chairman of Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) and patron of the LCCKL welcome Microsoft's education initiatives as they are essential to help Malaysia bridge the DD (Karim, 2005). He is positive about bridging the DD as he also mentioned that the government and corporate sector have many programmes in place to boost the implementation of ICT among Malaysians.

Based on the available data so far, the government CP role in CEC structure is ambiguous. If there is an unambiguous involvement of government, it was during the early years when CEC was formed. The government supported CEC financially when it awarded DAG to CEC's project. When a project is awarded with this grant, it will be monitored and the success will be evaluated. In this case, the government should have been in a close collaboration with CEC for some times. However, in later years, not much documented data could be found to discover about the active



involvement of government in the structure. This situation could be related to similar situation in other countries. For example in UK, its central government helps funding key community workers to aid local-capacity building to enable local communities to generate their own initiatives and draw relevant bodies into partnership (McQuaid, 2000). The same concept of government practice may have been applied in Malaysia too.

#### *Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)*

NGOs are organisations independent of governments, and which have humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives (Moten & Salam, 2005). In the beginning, literature on NGOs in the developing world focused primarily on groups involved with economic development, where it reflected governments' treatment of NGO as 'mere subsidiaries of government agencies' as viewed by Yamamoto (Weiss & Hassan, 2004). Since 1990s, such attention has shifted towards advocacy-oriented NGOs such as human rights and women's groups, most of which have a distinctly political bent (Weiss & Hassan, 2004). Weiss and Hassan (2004) also viewed that the mass volume of voluntary associations in the developing world focused initially on charitable work and social services which often oriented around organised religion, and then focus more on community development, and now increasingly focus on politicised issues such as the environment and civil liberties.

LCCKL is an NGO that focuses on social services for community development with the utilisation of ICT in CEC. There are not so many documented data that could be found about other NGOs involvement with CEC but they are there. This may due to their preference to work behind the scene in CEC. For instance, MAD curriculum which is used in one of the CEC's programme has been developed by the collaborated initiatives of individual volunteers, corporate representatives, LCCKL and other NGOs (Wai, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this paper has demonstrated how CP strategizes CEC structure. The main factor that determines the successfulness of CEC in continuing its CP lies in the ability of the stakeholders to share the same goal to promote social change. Sharing the same goal does not mean playing the same roles as mentioned by Osborne and Murray (2000) who viewed the power distribution in partnership. As shown in CEC structure, LCCKL is the key stakeholder that aligns stakeholders, and involves in developing and researching programmes. When it comes to implementation, it needs involvement from all other stakeholders. The corporations' important roles are financing the programmes. The government support and recognition of the project helps CEC to invite more stakeholders. The stakeholders come from different backgrounds and have different purposes of entering the partnership but that do not restrict them from collaborating when they know their priorities.

In enabling and empowering the children via ICT, CEC is using the strategic application of ICT (Gurstein, 2000, 2007) in the process of bridging the DD in the community and promoting social change. The progress might be slow but it is good that the stakeholders are experimenting and researching the programmes and ICT access. In the process, the stakeholders may learn from each other too.

According to Cornell Empowerment Group, empowerment should allow people lacking an equal share of valued resources to gain greater access and control over those resources (Melkote, 2000). In the context of CEC, these people hereby refers to the orphans, who are not only lacking of ICT access and skills, but also low in self-esteem. These analyses of the CEC structure are not enough to represent how the orphans are fully included in the empowerment process. Thus, to

discover more about that, further research is needed to analyse the programmes and activities that has been carried out for the orphans in CEC.

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