

### 6.3 THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT APPROACH

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This last of the main approaches to understanding the basis of successful N-S collaborations puts the emphasis on the environment, or the social, economic, and political/administrative settings of projects. It suggests that sustainable skills-building efforts depend greatly on a congenial or "enabling" environment surrounding projects, or at least on the minimization of negative influences. The relevant environment of a N-S collaboration (say, in a government department or a business joint venture) would normally include:

- the general health of the economy at a given time,
- the policy and regulatory context (i.e., macroeconomic policy and the rules governing the economy and the activities of private and public institutions),
- the "social scaffolding" of projects, that is, the cultural norms and social realities that affect their operation and sustainability;
- the general health of the government administrative apparatus, which affects the services that any private or public institution in which N-S collaborations are located can depend on; and
- the general political climate, as well as the ability of the political system to garner support and acceptance for the initiatives of change agents (i.e., whether, to a significant degree, the system is participatory and democratic, open in information flows, and equitable in terms of benefits).

The policy implication of this environmental approach is that successful N-S collaborations depend as much on a healthy or enabling environment as on the progress made in the institutional development of any single host organization. For example, the institutional development of any one (say, governmental) institution depends greatly on the