

Summary report of the INTOSAI CBC Workstream Peer-to-peer (P2P) Cooperation Webinar 25th of November 2021

The second session of the Webinar Series on exchanging lessons learned on the project management cycle in medium to long-term peer-to-peer cooperation was led by SAI France and IDI. The webinar's focus was on "design and planning", with representatives from a variety of SAIs addressing the dilemmas and challenges associated with these stages.



The major topic in the conversations about designing and planning peer-to-peer projects was what representatives of SAIs had learnt thus far and what possible additional success criteria for developing peer-to-peer projects in the "new normal" are. To kick off the discussion, participants were asked what they viewed as the most challenging aspect of designing and planning peer to peer projects; 82% opted for "having an honest discussion with the partner-SAI on their needs and what should be prioritized", and 53% voting for "analysing the risks for the project and identify effective control measures". With examples and case studies from personal experiences, IDI and SAI France illustrated the problems in the design and planning phases.

Elements for a successful project at the design and planning stage

The following question was the subject of the first session: *What would be, in order of importance, the elements to be taken into account for a successful project at the design stage?* Participants were asked to participate in smaller groups to discuss one of the elements in detail. With these discussions, the importance of the individual elements (written in cursive below) could be assessed. The findings of these talks were shared in plenary, and certain common views emerged.

Establish a result framework for the project with indicators for the impact of the SAIs work (such as audit findings being acted upon by the Executive).

- Assessment: low to medium importance.
- The notion of having a result framework was deemed valuable since it amongst others allows donors to understand what they receive out of the project. However, constructing a framework with an impact element is challenging, as the outcomes are very long term and developing the framework demands a significant amount of time and energy. It seems that developing a framework is necessary, but it should not be overemphasized if it does not have a lot of practical applicability.

Always seek to include support to execution and reporting of real audits, to ensure the project support to developing various capacities is linked to core SAI activities

- Medium to high importance.
- This aspect is seen as significant, but can be difficult to implement in practice due to changes in the operational context. Different learning cultures should be taken into account.

Do a risk assessment of the project together with all the managers in the SAI.

- Assessment: high importance.
- It is deemed critical to incorporate management in the early phase of the project. However, in general, it is not required to have all managers present. It was acknowledged that ideally, a main liaison person should be identified who can bring in the relevant individuals and that can facilitate the right conversations.

Plan some support activities to strategic management (planning, monitoring, reporting, and follow-up of progress and results for all SAI activities), to ensure institutional anchoring of all project activities.

- Assessment: high importance.
- It is considered an important activity due to the large range of support activities available, as well as the importance of the relationship with the institutional component. All types of support should be aligned with the strategic plan, and supporting SAIs in developing strategic plans is a good starting point since it is a way of anchoring support in the institution.

Reach out to other ongoing partners of the SAI to explore if the planned support could be integrated or set up with strong collaboration.

- Assessment: medium to high importance.
- Reaching out is considered vital in the design and planning stage to comprehend the working landscape, but it must be tailored to the project and opportunities since it depends on the contact and type of support. Time is viewed as the main challenge to establishing and conducting support in partnership

Potential criteria to consider when designing and planning

The world and operating in the SAI landscape have altered dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic. The following issue was the subject of the second round of discussions: *What would be potential new criteria to consider when developing and planning projects in the new normal?*

The common principles to take into account during design and planning mentioned:

- It is important to take into account the context of working with our limitations.
- It is necessary to include sufficient material (IT support) in the budget.
- It is challenging to establish and continue good relationships, therefore it should be assessed which activities can be done online or in-person in the planning phase. Online and physical presence should be mixed depending on the activity.
- New types of soft skills and ICT skills should be cultivated. It is critical to grasp online etiquette when developing soft skills in a remote environment.
- Opportunities to learn more about new approaches and methods of assistance, particularly in the fields of ICT, should be taken advantage of.
- SAIs must identify areas where they rely heavily on ICT and look for possibilities to employ new actors.
- SAIs need to be watchful of cyber security and other security concerns.

Concluding remarks: New criteria or principles for design and planning in the new normal

The objective of this second webinar in the series was to list criteria that should be considered during the design and planning stage, as well as to formulate lessons that may be implemented in the future:

- ICT is an important area, and support should be considered in this area.
- An initial IT review can be useful to identify relevant areas of support.
- For each activity, it needs to be planned whether it should be carried out online or physically. Some principles should be established before making a decision.

- Include partners with capacities to support in ICT, it appears to be an area where the employment of consultants typically is often required, which should be planned and resourced differently.
- The use of learning platforms can be a good approach, but it can also present various challenges and result in reduced efficiency and effectiveness.
- To be able to support ICT, SAIs must plan and develop their capacities within the SAI.
- Soft skills are still critical to building relationships and understanding.
- Developing etiquette for how to deliver support online is key.

Next webinar

The next webinar will be held on the 20th of January (9-11 CET) and will be led by SAI UK and SAI New Zealand (theme: “implementation and monitoring”).