

Summary report of the INTOSAI CBC Workstream Peer-to-peer (P2P) Cooperation Webinar 20 January 2022

Implementation & Monitoring

The third session of the P2P webinar series on exchanging lessons learned on the project management cycle in medium to long-term peer-to-peer cooperation was led by SAI United Kingdom and SAI New Zealand. The webinar's focus was on "implementation and monitoring", with representatives from a variety of SAIs virtually discussing the dilemmas and challenges associated with these phases of the project management cycle.

Project Implementation (SAI New Zealand)

During the first part of the webinar, three important theoretical aspects of the implementation of a peer-to-peer cooperation project were highlighted: flexibility and having good communications, having the right resources to implement the programme, and understanding the context and environment that your partner SAI is operating in. Switching between implementing in-person and implementing online in Covid-times has required flexibility from all involved parties.

The participants were divided into breakout groups and asked to discuss their experiences of successful implementation of projects, the main factors that have helped their SAI to keep projects on track, and what they think is necessary to embed good implementation. The findings of these discussions were shared in plenary and a number of common issues emerged.

- Participants agreed that it is important to share ownership as the project is a partnership that is demand-driven and needs-based.
- The ability to facilitate a continuous dialogue throughout the programme (either in-person or online) is essential. Having a clear contact point at your partner SAI helps with this.
- It was recognised that having a clear project design in which specific dedicated teams are appointed is imperative.
- While the project is generally delivered by a project team it is important to have buy in for the partnership at senior levels of your SAI. The tone at the top is important for organisational involvement.
- A continuous dialogue between these teams, as well as with the partnering SAI and the donors, is beneficial to the implementation of the project.
- It was acknowledged that it is crucial to develop a good relationship with the partnering SAI as well as the donor which requires honest and open communication. Strong relationships can help to ensure sustainable development.
- Understanding the phase of the annual audit cycle your partnering SAI is in, helps to understand the needs of this SAI and allows for keeping track of what the partnering SAI aims to work on.
- Maintain close relationships with other partners working in the region. This helps you to be aware of other projects happening and where there may be room for collaboration or coordination.

Project Monitoring (SAI United Kingdom)

The second part of the webinar focused on the monitoring process. This aspect is crucial to build a good relationship with the partnering SAI as well as other stakeholders. It is important to realise that monitoring and evaluation are not the same step in a project, even though they draw from similar core data and have similar criteria. The difference is that evaluation is a separate phase in the programme whilst monitoring is not an isolated step as it is a continuous and ongoing process.

The participants were divided into breakout groups and were asked to discuss their experiences with successful monitoring projects. They were also asked to share some thoughts on how we can accurately and purposefully monitor what exactly we can do to embed good monitoring. The findings of the breakout sessions are summarised below.

- Participants agreed that it is important to understand early on in the project what the expectations of the involved parties are (both of the SAIs as well as the donors).
- Clear and open communication is key to a good monitoring process.
- A monitoring framework with standardized criteria can be helpful.
- It was recognised that the aim is to have the partnering SAIs develop their own ability to execute monitoring processes and to be able to report on their findings.
- Having good data, and good access to data, can be a challenge, but is a crucial part in executing a good monitoring process.
- It was advised to build on joint responsibility in which multiple parties (such as donors) are invited to discuss the progress of a project on a peer-to-peer level.
- It is necessary to have a clear structure of the monitoring process that all stakeholders can benefit from.
- Continuous, mid-term and ongoing monitoring can cause the involved parties to realign their aims if necessary.

Concluding remarks: Sustainable change through honest and open communication

There is a clear link between implementation and monitoring. These two aspects ask for large investments in soft skills and the building of relationships. Flexibility, ownership, shared responsibility, and aligning the project with the partner SAI's own strategic plan are crucial to be able to execute a good implementation and to ensure continuous and ongoing monitoring. We need to have clear expectations in the beginning of the project. Throughout the project, it is important to continuously keep the purpose of achieving sustainable change in mind.